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**Contact: Kelsey Rhoney (630) 854-3851**

**GATORADE® NATIONAL VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR:  
THAYER HALL**

*Olympian and Pro Beach Volleyball Player April Ross Surprises Winner with Honor*

**Roebuck, S.C.** (January 22, 2018) - In its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Thayer Hall of Dorman High School (Roebuck, S.C.) as its 2017-18 Gatorade National Volleyball Player of the Year. Hall was surprised with the news by Olympian and Pro Beach Volleyball Player April Ross.

Check out the surprise video [here](#).

"I still remember the day when I was honored as the Gatorade National Volleyball Player of the Year and winning the award is one of the most memorable moments in my career," said Ross. "It's such a rare accomplishment, so I was honored to be able to be a part of today's celebration by surprising Thayer with the award."

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the field, distinguishes Hall as the nation's best high school volleyball player. A national advisory panel comprised of sport-specific experts and sports journalists helped select her from 440,000 high school volleyball players nationwide. Hall is now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade Female High School Athlete of the Year award, to be presented at a special ceremony prior to The ESPY Awards in July.

The 6-foot-4 senior outside hitter led the Cavaliers to a 43-6-1 record and the Class 5A state championship this past season. The state's two-time returning Gatorade Volleyball Player of the Year, Hall recorded 638 kills, 361 digs, 43 service aces and 36 blocks. A member of the U.S. Women's Junior National Team and the only high school player on the squad, she was MVP of the U-20 Pan Am Cup and the East MVP at the 2017-18 Under Armour All-America game. Hall is a three-time Class 5A Player of the Year, earned All-American honors from MaxPreps and was named both the national ALL-USA Player of the Year and the FloVolleyball Player of the Year.

Also a talented artist, a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and a devoted member of her church community, Hall has volunteered locally on behalf of The Spartanburg Soup Kitchen, Samaritan's Feet, the Special Olympics and the Carolina Miracle League.

"The best power hitter the high school game has seen since Gatorade's 2005-06 National Player of the Year Megan Hodge, Thayer Hall has a strong build and an innate sense of the game," says John Tawa, publisher of PrepVolleyball.com. "She can unload with precision to all areas of the court. Defensively, she couples the wingspan of a 6-foot-4 player with the mobility of someone six inches shorter. As intense as they come, Hall possesses the unyielding

desire to be as effective at digging the ball as she is at putting it down. Hodge won three consecutive national championships at Penn State. Hall has the potential to make that kind of impact in Gainesville."

Hall has maintained a weighted 4.94 GPA in the classroom. She has enrolled early at the University of Florida for the spring semester and signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship.

"Thayer is an excellent student-athlete who has earned recognition as the nation's best high school volleyball player while also excelling in the classroom and making a difference in her community," said Gatorade Senior Vice President and General Manager Brett O'Brien. "Thayer's statistics on the field speak for themselves, but even more impressive is the example she sets for younger student-athletes and impact she has had on her teammates. Thayer represents everything we look to celebrate in a Gatorade Player of the Year recipient."

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Hall also has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of his choosing. She is also eligible to win one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants for her organization of choice, which will be announced throughout the year.

The Gatorade Player of the Year program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states that sanction high school football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, boys and girls soccer, baseball, softball, and boys and girls track & field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade high sports leadership team in partnership with the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Former notable Gatorade National Players of the Year include:

- Super Bowl Most Valuable Player Peyton Manning
- 2015 NBA first overall pick Karl-Anthony Towns
- Three-time WNBA champion Maya Moore
- Four-time track & field gold medalist Allyson Felix
- Three-time beach volleyball gold medalist Kerri Walsh
- Three-time Cy Young Award winner Clayton Kershaw

For more information on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of former winners, and future announcement dates, visit the Gatorade Player of the Year Web site at [PlayeroftheYear.Gatorade.com](http://PlayeroftheYear.Gatorade.com) on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](https://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).

**ALL-TIME GATORADE NATIONAL VOLLEYBALL PLAYERS OF THE YEAR**

YEAR	NAME	HIGH SCHOOL	STATUS
2017-18	Thayer Hall	Dorman, Roebuck, SC	University of Florida
2016-17	Lexi Sun	Santa Fe Christian, Solana Beach, CA	University of Texas
2015-16	Khalia Lanier	Xavier College Prep, Phoenix, AZ	Univ. Southern California
2014-15	Mikaela Foecke	Holy Trinity Catholic, Fort Madison, IA	Univ. of Nebraska
2013-14	Alexa Filley	Assumption, Louisville, KY	Auburn University
2012-13	Lauren Carlini	West Aurora, West Aurora, IL	USA Volleyball
2011-12	Jordan Burgess	Berkeley Preparatory, Tampa, FL	Stanford Grad.
2010-11	Krista Vansant	Redlands East Valley, Redlands, CA	USA Volleyball
2009-10	Ashley Wittman	Shakopee, Shakopee, MN	Vital Volleyball Coach
2008-09	Gina Mancuso	Papillion-La Vista, Papillion, NE	Univ. of Nebraska Coach
2007-08	Kelly Murphy	Joliet Catholic Academy, Joliet, IL	USA Volleyball
2006-07	Alix Klineman	Mira Costa, Manhattan Beach, CA	AVP Pro Beach Volleyball
2005-06	Megan Hodge	Riverside, Durham, NC	USA Volleyball
2004-05	Cynthia Barboza	Wilson Classical, Long Beach, CA	Retired Pro
2003-04	Cynthia Barboza	Wilson Classical, Long Beach, CA	Retired Pro
2002-03	Kristin Richards	Timpanogos, Orem, UT	Retired Pro
2001-02	Bre Ladd	Canyon Del Oro, Tucson, AZ	Univ. of Arizona Grad.
2000-01	Ogonna Nnamani	University, Normal, IL	Retired Pro
1999-00	April Ross	Newport Harbor, Newport Beach, CA	AVP Pro Beach Volleyball
1998-99	Logan Tom	Highland, Salt Lake City, UT	Maccabi XT Haifa (Israel)
1997-98	Sara Sandrik	Pelham, Pelham, AL	Stanford Grad.
1996-97	Denise Boylan	Benet Academy, Lisle, IL	Notre Dame Grad.
1995-96	Kerri Walsh	Archbishop Mitty, San Jose, CA	Retired Pro

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