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**NEW CASTLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE INDIANA VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 16, 2018) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Melani Shaffmaster of New Castle High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Indiana Volleyball Player of the Year. Shaffmaster is the second Gatorade Indiana Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from New Castle High School.

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 Shaffmaster as Indiana's best high school volleyball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Volleyball Player of the Year award to be announced in January, Shaffmaster joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including USA Volleyball players Kayla Banwarth (2006-07, Wahlert HS, Iowa), Alisha Glass (2005-06, Leland Public HS, Mich.), Jordan Larson (2004-05, Logan View HS, Neb.) and Foluke Akinradewo (2004-05, St. Thomas HS, Fla.).

The 6-foot-3 sophomore setter and right-side hitter led the Trojans to a 34-6 record and the Class 3A state championship this past season. Shaffmaster amassed 456 kills, 952 assists, 219 digs, 101 blocks and 74 service aces. The MaxPreps National Sophomore Volleyball Player of the Year, Shaffmaster has already recorded 1,863 assists, 758 kills and 469 digs in her prep volleyball career.

A member of her school's student council, Spanish club and Renaissance Leadership committee, Shaffmaster also organized a health and beauty supply drive for New Castle's Christian Love Help Center. "Melani Shaffmaster absolutely destroyed us," said Jason Young, head coach at Hamilton Southeastern High. "She served us off the court. They don't win a state championship without her."

Shaffmaster has maintained a weighted 3.95 GPA in the classroom. She has verbally committed to play volleyball on scholarship at the University of Minnesota beginning in the fall of 2020.

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 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.

Shaffmaster joins recent Gatorade Indiana Volleyball Players of the Year Nia Robinson (2016-17, Cathedral High School), Kendall White (2015-16, Cathedral High School), Carly Skjodt (2014-15, Carmel High School), Azariah Stahl (2013-14, Elkhart Central High School), Lauryn Gillis (2012-13, New Castle High School), Emily Wolfert (2011-12, Yorktown High School), Taylor Morey (2010-11, Muncie Burriss Laboratory School), Taylor Unroe (2009-10, Muncie Burriss Laboratory School), Darcy Dorton (2008-09, Delta High School) and Caitlin Cox (2007-08, New Castle Chrysler High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Shaffmaster will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants - one for each sport - will be announced throughout the year.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow the conversation on Twitter #GatoradePOY. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit <http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com/>.

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