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**SHADOW RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEVADA 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 Whittnee Nihipali of Shadow Ridge High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Nevada Volleyball Player of the Year. Nihipali is the first Gatorade Nevada Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Shadow Ridge 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 Nihipali as Nevada'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, Nihipali 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-2 senior outside hitter led the Mustangs to a 31-12 record and their first Class 4A state championship this past season. Nihipali amassed 463 kills, 410 digs, 61 service aces and 48 blocks. A First Team All-State honoree, she was named the Sunset Region and the Southern Nevada Player of the Year.

A youth leader at her church, Nihipali has volunteered locally on behalf of youth volleyball programs. "Nihipali can do a little bit of everything," said Phil Clarke, head coach at Palo Verde High. "She's big and powerful, smart and efficient. She plays all six rotations and you have to worry about her at all times."

Nihipali has maintained a 4.40 weighted GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at the University of Arizona this fall.

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.

Nihipali joins recent Gatorade Nevada Volleyball Players of the Year Sydney Berenyi (2016-17, Silverado High School), Cali Thompson (2015-16, Coronado High School), Berkeley Oblad (2014-15, Coronado High School), Deja Harris (2013-14, Calvary Chapel Christian School), Lyndsey Anderson (2012-13, Spanish Springs High School), Makenna Lommori (2011-12 & 2010-11, Yerington High School), Siga Appelgate (2009-10, Green Valley High School), and Hayley Spelman (2008-09 & 2007-08, Durango High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Nihipali 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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