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**SANDIA PREPARATORY SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW MEXICO 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 Cat Kelly of Sandia Preparatory School as its 2017-18 Gatorade New Mexico Volleyball Player of the Year. Kelly is the third Gatorade New Mexico Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Sandia Preparatory 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 Kelly as New Mexico'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, Kelly 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 state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-9 senior outside hitter led the Sun Devils to a 22-2 record and a third-straight Class 4A state championship this past season. Kelly recorded 345 kills, 206 digs, 22 blocks and 21 service aces while posting a kill percentage of .595 and a hitting percentage of .503. A two-time member of the Albuquerque Journal All-Metro First Team, Kelly is a four-time First Team All-Class 4A selection. She concluded her prep volleyball career with 1,155 kills and 706 digs.

Kelly has volunteered locally as a youth volleyball and basketball coach and as part of fundraising campaigns to benefit breast cancer research. She has also donated her time to multiple initiatives in association with the Helping Hands Community Service Club. "Cat is a six-rotation player on the court and can do it all," said Jordan Russell, head coach St. Pius X High. "She may be quiet, but her level of play and leadership of her team is unmatched in New Mexico."

Kelly has maintained a 3.51 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at New Mexico State University 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.

Two-time winner Kelly joins Gatorade New Mexico Volleyball Players of the Year Abby Stomp (2015-16, La Cueva High School), Amanda Carroll (2014-15 & 2013-14, Sandia High School), Julia Warren (2012-13 & 2011-12, La Cueva High School), Nathalie Castellanos (2010-11, Gadsden High School), Halie Harton (2009-10, Goddard High School), Kristin Valencia (2008-09, Moriarty High School) and Kayla Hammond (2007-08, Rio Rancho High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Kelly 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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