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**COX MILL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 16, 2018) — In its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Taylor Rowland of Cox Mill High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade North Carolina Volleyball Player of the Year. Rowland is the first Gatorade North Carolina Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Cox Mill 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 Rowland as North Carolina'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, Rowland 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 senior outside hitter led the Chargers to a 27-8 record and the Class 3A state quarterfinals this past season, amassing 520 kills, 392 serve receptions, 227 digs and 55 service aces in the process. The state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, Rowland concluded her prep career with 1,837 kills, 632 digs, 205 service aces and 86 total blocks.

Rowland helped organize the Be Bold for Gold Volleyball Day in October to raise money to benefit cancer research. She also works with children's programs at her church in addition to coaching youth volleyball. "Taylor Rowland is the real deal," said David Brooks, the head coach at Mallard Creek High. "Having played against her for high school ball and club ball, she is the all-around player. Being around high school volleyball for 10 years now, I have not seen many Taylor Rowlands, as she truly is a special kid."

Rowland has maintained a weighted 3.45 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at Auburn 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 Rowland joins Gatorade North Carolina Volleyball Players of the Year Julia Scoles (2015-16, South Iredell High School), Katharine Franz (2014-15, Charlotte Country Day School), Darian Mack (2013-14, Wakefield High School), Eve Davis (2012-13, Charlotte Latin School), Madison Bugg (2011-12 & 2009-10, Cardinal Gibbons High School), Kristen Harris (2010-11, Apex High School), Andrea Beck (2008-09, Mt. Tabor High School) and Katie Kabbes (2007-08, Cardinal Gibbons High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Rowland 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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