

**FALMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MAINE VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 15, 2019) — In its 34<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Annika Hester of Falmouth High School as its 2018-19 Gatorade Maine Volleyball Player of the Year. Hester is the second Gatorade Maine Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Falmouth 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 Hester as Maine'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, Hester joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including USA Volleyball players Kayla Banwarth (2006-07, Wahlert High School, Iowa), Alisha Glass (2005-06, Leland Public High School, Mich.), Jordan Larson (2004-05, Logan View High School, Neb.) and Foluke Akinradewo (2004-05, St. Thomas High School, Fla.).

The 6-foot-3 sophomore outside hitter led the Yachtsmen to a 16-1 record and the Class A state championship this past season. Hester recorded 312 kills, 58 service aces and 15 blocks. The Maine Sunday Telegram Player of the Year, she was also a First Team All-State selection and a two-time All-Southern Maine Activities Association honoree.

Hester has volunteered locally on behalf of her school's Environmental Action Committee and youth sports programs. "Annika Hester really is the total package," said Nicole Kane, head coach at South Portland High School. "She's a powerhouse of an athlete with a solid all-around game. She plays great defense, has a consistent and difficult serve and is just a force at the net. She's also a great teammate."

Hester has maintained an A average in the classroom. She will begin her junior year of high school 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.

Hester joins recent Gatorade Maine Volleyball Players of the Year Molly Mawhinney (2017-18, South Portland High School), Kayley Cimino (2016-17, Greely High School), Jocelyn Moody (2015-16, Biddeford High School), Sarah Shelton (2014-15, Ellsworth High School), and Katrina Meserve (2013-14, Falmouth High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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

Since the program's inception in 1985, Gatorade Player of the Year award recipients have won hundreds of professional and college championships, and many have also turned into pillars in their communities, becoming coaches, business owners and educators.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit [www.Gatorade.com/POY](http://www.Gatorade.com/POY), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](http://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](http://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).