

**MERCY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MICHIGAN VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 15, 2019) — In its 34th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Jess Mruzik of Mercy High School as its 2018-19 Gatorade Michigan Volleyball Player of the Year. Mruzik is the second Gatorade Michigan Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Mercy 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 Mruzik as Michigan'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, Mruzik 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-1 junior outside hitter recorded 420 kills and 165 digs this past season, leading the Marlins (52-3) to the Division 1 state semifinals. Mruzik also posted 65 service aces and 50 assists while compiling a kill percentage of .514 and a hitting percentage of .417. The captain of the 2018 USA Volleyball Youth National Team, Mruzik missed 12 matches for Mercy at the beginning of the season while competing at the NORCECA Continental Championships in Honduras. The United States won the tournament and Mruzik was named MVP.

A member of the Animal Rights Club at Mercy High, Mruzik has volunteered locally as a youth volleyball coach. "Jess is a tremendous athlete with great speed, strength and jumping ability," said Jen Cottrill, former head coach at Novi High School, who retired in 2017. "She has the ability to completely take over the game in so many ways."

Mruzik has maintained a 3.39 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play volleyball on scholarship at the University of Michigan 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.

Mruzik joins recent Gatorade Michigan Volleyball Players of the Year Erin O'Leary (2017-18 & 2016-17, Novi High School), Gia Milana (2015-16, Romeo High School), Katherine Carlson (2014-15, Notre Dame Preparatory School), and Carli Snyder (2013-14, Dakota High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Mruzik 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, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.