

STERLING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE ILLINOIS VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (January 13, 2020) — In its 35th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Lexi Rodriguez of Sterling High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Illinois Volleyball Player of the Year**. Rodriguez is the first Gatorade Illinois Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Sterling 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 Rodriguez as Illinois' best high school volleyball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Volleyball Player of the Year award to be announced in January, Rodriguez 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 5-foot-6 junior libero led the Golden Warriors to a 36-6 record and a second-straight Class 3A state championship this past season. Rodriguez compiled 415 digs, 232 assists and 32 service aces. She missed 13 matches in the middle of the season while helping Team USA win a gold medal at the FIVB Girls U18 World Championships in Egypt. A three-time Champaign Gazette First Team All-State selection, she concluded her junior year with 1,618 digs and 474 assists in her prep volleyball career.

A three-year class president at Sterling High, Rodriguez has volunteered locally for community-beautification projects, and has donated her time as a youth volleyball coach. "Lexi is worth the hype and then some," said Amanda Carlson, head coach of Belvidere North High School. "Can she make flashy, dramatic and impressively difficult plays? Absolutely. But what separates her from pretty much any other libero we've faced is her ability to make the mundane plays with relative ease and with precision."

Rodriguez has maintained a weighted 3.64 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play volleyball on scholarship at the University of Nebraska beginning in the fall of 2021.

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.

Rodriguez joins recent Gatorade Illinois Volleyball Players of the Year Taylor Landfair (2018 – 19, Plainfield Central High School), Mica Allison (2017-18, The High School of Saint Thomas More), Charley Niego (2016-17, Mother McAuley High School), Molly Haggerty (2015-16 & 2014-15, St. Francis High School), and Ali Frantti (2013-14, Richmond-Burton Community High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Rodriguez 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.

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