

**NEW CASTLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE INDIANA 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 **Melani Shaffmaster of New Castle High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Indiana Volleyball Player of the Year**. Shaffmaster is the second Gatorade Indiana Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from New Castle 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 Shaffmaster as Indiana'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, Shaffmaster joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including USA Volleyball players Kayla Banwarth (2006-07, Wahler 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-4 senior setter led the Trojans to a 35-1 record and the Class 4A state championship along with a No. 5 national ranking as rated by PrepVolleyball.com. The state's Gatorade Volleyball Player of the Year as a sophomore, Shaffmaster amassed 948 assists, 280 kills, 267 digs, 51 service aces and 47 blocks this past fall. A 2019-20 Under Armour First Team All-American and a First Team MaxPreps All-American, she is also a three-time First Team All-State selection.

A member of her school's Student Council, Shaffmaster has volunteered locally on behalf of youth volleyball programs. "Melani Shaffmaster is just special," said Jason Young, head coach at Hamilton-Southeastern High School. "She's athletically gifted and she puts the ball in the perfect place for her hitters. She's a match-up nightmare. Honestly, she's so talented I believe if she continues to improve, she has a chance to set for the National team at some point in her career."

Shaffmaster has maintained a 3.94 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at the University of Minnesota 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 Shaffmaster joins recent Gatorade Indiana Volleyball Players of the Year Kenzie Knuckles (2018 – 19, Yorktown High School), Nia Robinson (2016-17, Cathedral High School), Kendall White (2015-16, Cathedral High School), Carly Skjodt (2014-15, Carmel High School), and Azariah Stahl (2013-14, Elkhart Central High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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