

## **WINCHESTER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MASSACHUSETTS VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (January 13, 2020) — In its 35<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Dasha Smolina of Winchester High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Massachusetts Volleyball Player of the Year**. Smolina is the first Gatorade Massachusetts Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Winchester 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 Smolina as Massachusetts' best high school volleyball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Volleyball Player of the Year award to be announced in January, Smolina 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-7 senior setter recorded 690 assists and 295 digs this past season, leading the Sachems (25-1) to the Division 1 state championship match. Smolina also tallied 130 kills, 89 service aces and 18 blocks. A Division 1 First Team All-State selection, Smolina was the co-MVP of the Middlesex League. She concluded her prep volleyball career with 1,338 assists. A

Commended National Merit Scholar, Smolina has volunteered locally at a food bank and homeless shelter. She has also donated her time as part of multiple community service initiatives through her school's National Honor Society. "Dasha is one of the strongest and most complete players I have seen come through our league," said Scott Roy, head coach of Woburn High School. "She can make all the sets, even if on the run or off the net. She is a solid blocker and can pass like a libero."

Smolina has maintained a weighted 3.99 GPA in the classroom. She remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Smolina joins recent Gatorade Massachusetts Volleyball Players of the Year Riley James (2018 – 19 & 2016-17, Barnstable High School), Emma Smallcomb (2017-18, Westborough High School), Corinne Cox (2015-16 & 2014-15, Notre Dame Academy), and Julia Flynn (2013-14, Notre Dame Academy) among the state's list of former award winners.

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

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