

**HOOVER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ALABAMA VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 6, 2021) — In its 36th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Rya McKinnon of Hoover High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Alabama Volleyball Player of the Year. McKinnon is the first Gatorade Alabama Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Hoover 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 McKinnon as Alabama's best high school volleyball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Volleyball Player of the Year award to be announced in May, McKinnon 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-9 junior outside hitter led the Buccaneers to a 50-1 record and the Class 7A state championship this past season. McKinnon amassed 566 kills, 269 digs, 50 service aces and 29 blocks. The AL.com Super All-State Player of the Year, she was also MVP of the Class 7A state tournament. McKinnon was named a VolleyballMag.com First Team All-American and a MaxPreps First Team All-American.

McKinnon has served as a tutor for younger students and has volunteered locally on behalf of food donation drives and youth volleyball camps. "Every opponent has to make their game plan around Rya McKinnon," said Grace Burgess, head coach at Oak Mountain High. "She's the best outside hitter in the state, and she's also their best defensive player and serve-receive passer, and a threat behind the service line. She contributes so much to the game as a whole."

McKinnon has maintained a 4.18 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior 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 works with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

McKinnon joins recent Gatorade Alabama Volleyball Players of the Year Grace Carr (2019-20, Mountain Brook High School), Lillie Fromdahl (2018-19, McGill-Toolen Catholic High School), Kenya McQuirter (2017-18, McGill-Toolen Catholic High School), and Lauren Chastang (2016-17, Bayside Academy), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," McKinnon has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. McKinnon is also eligible to submit a 30-second video explaining why the organization they chose is deserving of one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants, which will be announced throughout the year. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$2.7 million across 1,117 organizations.

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 playeroftheyear.gatorade.com, on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

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