

**FORT MYERS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE FLORIDA 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 Paris Thompson of Fort Myers High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Florida Volleyball Player of the Year. Thompson is the first Gatorade Florida Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Fort Myers 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 Thompson as Florida'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, Thompson 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 senior outside hitter recorded 413 digs, 228 digs, 42 service aces and 24 blocks this past season, leading the Green Wave (19-3) to the Class 6A semifinals. The Florida Dairy Farmers Miss Volleyball and Class 6A Player of the Year, Thompson was a VolleyballMag.com First Team All-American, a MaxPreps Second Team All-American and a 2020-21 Under Armour Second Team All-American.

Thompson has volunteered locally on behalf of the Humane Society, hurricane relief efforts and her school's Unified Basketball team, which serves physically and intellectually challenged youth. "Paris Thompson is just an amazing volleyball player," said Michelle Dill, head coach at Charlotte High. "She's one of the best I've ever seen come from our area. She has a great all-around game."

Thompson has maintained a 3.55 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at the University of Notre Dame 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.

Thompson joins recent Gatorade Florida Volleyball Players of the Year Annie Cate Fitzpatrick (2019-20, Trinity Catholic High School), Savannah Vach (2018-19, Oviedo High School), Marlie Monserez (2017-18, Bishop Moore Catholic High School), and Stephanie Samedy (2016-17, East Ridge High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Thompson has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Thompson 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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