

**BENET ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE ILLINOIS VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 6, 2021) — In its 36<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Rachel Muisenga of Benet Academy as its 2020-21 Gatorade Illinois Volleyball Player of the Year. Muisenga is the second Gatorade Illinois Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Benet Academy.

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 Muisenga as Illinois'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, Muisenga 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 setter led the Redwings to a 10-0 record and the East Suburban Catholic League Tournament championship this past season. Muisenga compiled 231 assists, 65 digs, 30 kills and 17 blocks, and she recorded 31 assists along with four blocks in a 2-1 match win over Marist High in the East Suburban Catholic League Tournament championship match. A 2020 American Volleyball Coaches Association First Team All-American, Muisenga led Benet to the 2019 Class 4A state title and was a 2019 PrepVolleyball.com National Junior of the Year finalist.

A member of the Benet Academy student government, Muisenga has volunteered locally at the People's Resource Center, which provides food and other basic necessities to those in need. "What makes Rachel so dangerous on the court is her ability to move the ball so quickly to her hitters," said Jen DeJard, head coach of Mother McAuley High. "She is constantly creating opportunities to score because her release is so fast on the ball. Having a solid setter who makes great decisions is a game-changer for a team."

Muisenga has maintained a weighted 3.12 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at Penn State University beginning 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.

Muisenga joins recent Gatorade Illinois Volleyball Players of the Year Lexi Rodriguez (2019-20, Sterling High School), Taylor Landfair (2018-19, Plainfield Central High School), Mica Allison (2017-18, The High School of Saint Thomas More), and Charley Niego (2016-17, Mother McAuley High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Muisenga has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Muisenga 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com), on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade).

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