

**ST. THOMAS AQUINAS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KANSAS 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 Caroline Bien of St. Thomas Aquinas High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Kansas Volleyball Player of the Year. Bien is the second Gatorade Kansas Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from St. Thomas Aquinas 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 Bien as Kansas'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, Bien 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 senior outside and right-side hitter led the Saints to a 29-2 record and the Class 5A state championship this past season. Bien compiled 242 kills with a .428 kill percentage and a .319 hitting percentage, along with 257 digs, 73 assists, 29 service aces and 24 blocks. A 2020 American Volleyball Coaches Association First Team All-American, she is ranked as the nation's No. 14 recruit in the Class of 2021 by PrepVolleyball.com. She concluded her prep volleyball career with 1,298 digs and 1,123 kills.

A school ambassador, Bien has volunteered locally as a peer mentor and a math tutor. She also donated her time as a nanny and tutor to the children of an essential worker during the pandemic. "Caroline is the consummate all-around player," said Nancy Dorsey, head coach of St. James Academy. "She is good at everything and plays with such a poise that it seriously looks effortless. She can do everything."

Bien has maintained an A average in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at the University of Kansas 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.

Bien joins recent Gatorade Kansas Volleyball Players of the Year Kendra Wait (2019-20, Gardner Edgerton High School), Audrey Klemp (2018-19, St. James Academy), Taylor Kuper (2017-18, Olathe Northwest High School), and Madison Lilley (2016-17, Blue Valley West High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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