

**FALMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MAINE 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 Annika Hester of Falmouth High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Maine Volleyball Player of the Year. Hester is the second Gatorade Maine Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Falmouth 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 Hester as Maine'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, Hester 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-4 senior outside hitter recorded 93 kills, 20 digs, 17 service aces and 10 blocks during a pandemic-shortened season, leading the Yachtsmen to a 4-2 record. The state's two-time returning Gatorade Volleyball Player of the Year, Hester had sparked Falmouth to Class A state titles in each of the past two full seasons. A three-time All-State honoree, she was a 2020-21 Under Armour First Team All-American, the first in state history.

Hester has volunteered locally on behalf of her school's Environmental Action Committee and youth sports programs. "Annika Hester is just on her own level," said Kim Stoddard, head coach at Scarborough High. "She's definitely a standout on the court. There's no one better than her in the state."

Hester 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 San Diego 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.

Three-time winner Hester joins recent Gatorade Maine Volleyball Players of the Year Molly Mawhinney (2017-18, South Portland High School), and Kayley Cimino (2016-17, Greely High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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