

**MARIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MICHIGAN 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 Ava Brizard of Marian High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Michigan Volleyball Player of the Year. Brizard is the third Gatorade Michigan Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Marian 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 Brizard as Michigan'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, Brizard 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 junior outside hitter led the Mustangs to a 37-5 record and the Division 1 state championship this past season. Brizard compiled 598 kills, 412 digs, 37 blocks and 35 service aces while posting a .492 kill percentage and a .395 hitting percentage. She recorded 26 kills and 10 digs in Marians 3-0 win over Lowell High in the state final. Ranked as the nation's No. 75 recruit in the Class of 2022 by PrepVolleyball.com, Brizard was a Division 1 First Team All-State selection. She concluded her junior year with 1,536 kills and 1,340 digs in her prep volleyball career.

Brizard has volunteered locally as a youth volleyball coach and with Summer in the City, through which teens invest their creativity and compassion into the city of Detroit. "Ava is dangerous and has a killer-instinct," said Rocky Cameron, head coach of Divine Child High. "At the high school level, I haven't seen anyone defend her—neither block nor dig."

Brizard has maintained a weighted 4.17 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play volleyball on scholarship at North Carolina State University beginning in the fall of 2022.

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.

Brizard joins recent Gatorade Michigan Volleyball Players of the Year Jess Mruzik (2019-20 & 2018-19, Mercy High School), and Erin O'Leary (2017-18 & 2016-17, Novi High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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