

**SPARTA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW JERSEY 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 MacKenzie Wiggins of Sparta High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade New Jersey Volleyball Player of the Year. Wiggins is the first Gatorade New Jersey Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Sparta 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 Wiggins as New Jersey'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, Wiggins 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 5-foot-11 senior outside hitter led the Spartans to a 16-1 record and the Group 2, Section 1 Tournament championship this past season. Wiggins compiled 220 kills, 120 digs, 28 service aces and 10 blocks while posting a kill percentage of .449 and a hitting percentage of .327. Wiggins recorded 18 kills and 10 digs in Sparta's 2-0 match win over Demarest High in the sectional title match. A transfer from Texas prior to her junior year, she concluded her prep volleyball career with four-year totals of 1,312 kills and 707 digs.

Wiggins has volunteered locally as a peer tutor and as a youth volleyball coach. "MacKenzie Wiggins is pretty dominant and Sparta uses her to attack early and often," said Greg Racz, head coach of West Morris Mendham High. "She's one of those players that you can't really stop and just have to try to slow down a little."

Wiggins has maintained a weighted 3.83 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at Iona College 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.

Wiggins joins recent Gatorade New Jersey Volleyball Players of the Year Anna Morris (2019-20 & 2018-19, Immaculate Heart Academy), Julia Morris (2017-18, Immaculate Heart Academy), and Elena Montgomery (2016-17, Ramapo High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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

###