

**CRANSTON EAST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE RHODE ISLAND 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 Lauren Milani of Cranston East High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Rhode Island Volleyball Player of the Year. Milani is the first Gatorade Rhode Island Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Cranston East 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 Milani as Rhode Island'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, Milani 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 5-foot-10 senior outside hitter recorded 194 kills and 73 digs this past season, leading the Thunderbolt (9-2) to the Division I state tournament quarterfinals. Milani also compiled 24 blocks and 15 service aces while posting a kill percentage of .561 and a hitting percentage of .402. A three-time First Team All-State selection, she was the 2019 Rhode Island Volleyball Coaches Association Player of the Year.

Milani has volunteered locally at a youth after-school program, and she has donated her time to the Warm Hearts Warm Feet sock drive to benefit the homeless. "Lauren is the complete volleyball player," said Ron Enos, head coach of Barrington High. "She is dominant in the front both hitting and blocking, and her passing and defense are what every coach wants in an all-around player."

Milani has maintained a weighted 4.63 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at Central Connecticut State University 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.

Milani joins recent Gatorade Rhode Island Volleyball Players of the Year Keri Spittler (2019-20, North Kingstown High School), and Maile Somera (2018-19, 2017-18 & 2016-17, Barrington High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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

###