

**J.L. MANN ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH CAROLINA 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 Lauren McCutcheon of J.L. Mann Academy as its 2020-21 Gatorade South Carolina Volleyball Player of the Year. McCutcheon is the first Gatorade South Carolina Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from J.L. Mann Academy.

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 McCutcheon as South Carolina'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, McCutcheon 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 senior outside hitter recorded 334 kills, 195 digs, 35 service aces and 27 blocks, leading the Patriots (21-3) to the state quarterfinals this past season. McCutcheon is a First Team All-State honoree and a 2020-21 Under Armour Honorable Mention All-American. She is a member of the USA Deaf Volleyball National Team, and won a gold medal at the 2019 Pan American Deaf Games.

McCutcheon has served as a mentor for children with cochlear implants and has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics and at an area nursing home. "Lauren McCutcheon is a remarkable athlete and a true leader," said Haleigh Smith, head coach at Greenville High. "She plays great defense, has great serve receive and is a huge offensive weapon with a powerful arm swing."

McCutcheon has maintained a 3.68 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at the University of South Carolina 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.

McCutcheon joins recent Gatorade South Carolina Volleyball Players of the Year Sophie Fischer (2019-20 & 2018-19, Nation Ford High School), and Thayer Hall (2017-18 & 2016-17, Dorman High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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