

**ST. HENRY DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KENTUCKY VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 11, 2022) — In its 37th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Taylor Preston** of **St. Henry District High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Kentucky Volleyball Player of the Year**. Preston is the first Gatorade Kentucky Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from St. Henry District 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 court, distinguishes Preston as Kentucky's best high school volleyball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Volleyball Player of the Year award to be announced in January, Preston joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners, 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-2 senior outside hitter led the Crusaders to a 36-8 record and their first state championship since 1981 this past season. Preston recorded 460 kills, 148 digs, 42 blocks and 21 service aces. MVP of the state tournament, she was a First Team Under Armour All-American and a First Team All-State honoree.

Preston has served as a student ambassador in her school and has volunteered locally on behalf of the Boonespring nursing home and youth volleyball programs. "Taylor Preston is a terrific player," said Connie Hulsmeyer, head coach at Mercy Academy. "She does everything for St. Henry—passes half the court, attacks from anywhere, she's a good blocker and she has a tough serve."

Preston has maintained a 3.97 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at the University of Oklahoma 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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Preston joins recent Gatorade Kentucky Volleyball Players of the Year Eleanor Beavin (2020-21, Mercy Academy), Anna DeBeer (2019-20, Assumption High School), and Rylee Rader (2018-19 & 2017-18, Assumption High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Gatorade has a long-standing history of serving athlete communities and understands how sports instill valuable lifelong skills on and off the field. Through Gatorade's "Play it Forward" platform, Preston has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national organization of their choosing that helps young athletes realize the benefits of playing sports. Preston is also eligible to submit a short 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 \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 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 or follow us on social media on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.