

**MARIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MICHIGAN 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 **Ava Brizard** of **Marian High School** is the **2021-22 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 court, 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 January, Brizard 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 state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 6-foot-1 senior outside hitter led the Mustangs to a 53-1 record and a second-straight Division 1 state championship this past season. Brizard amassed 602 kills and 408 digs along with 53 service aces, 41 blocks and 24 assists, posting a .518 kill percentage and a .436 hitting percentage. She compiled 26 kills and 16 digs in Marian's 3-1 win over Skyline High in the state final. The state's Miss Volleyball winner and a 2021 American Volleyball Coaches Association First Team All-American selection, she concluded her prep volleyball career with 2,138 kills and 1,748 digs.

Brizard has volunteered locally with Summer in the City in Detroit, a non-profit organization that helps local communities with service projects and youth camps, and she has donated her time as a youth volleyball coach. "In my 20 years of coaching, I have never seen a player with this level of skill and this kind of character to the game of volleyball," said Mayssa Cook, head coach of Marian High School. "We repeated as state champions and Ava certainly brought her 'A' game."

Brizard has maintained a weighted 4.16 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at North Carolina 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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Two-time winner 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.

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, Brizard 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. Brizard 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.

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