

**ROCK BRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MISSOURI 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 **Ella Swindle** of **Rock Bridge High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Missouri Volleyball Player of the Year**. Swindle is the first Gatorade Missouri Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Rock Bridge 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 Swindle as Missouri'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, Swindle 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 junior setter compiled 690 assists and 173 digs this past season, leading the Bruins (34-6) to the Class 5 state semifinals. Swindle also tallied 141 kills, 57 blocks and 36 service aces while posting a .576 kill percentage and a .494 hitting percentage. An alternate on the USA Volleyball Under-18 Women's National Team, Swindle is ranked as the nation's No. 8 recruit in the Class of 2023. A three-time Class 5 First Team All-State selection, she concluded her junior year with 2,213 assists and 373 kills in her prep volleyball career.

A member of the Rock Bridge High student council and a school ambassador, Swindle has volunteered locally with Kids Across America, and she has donated her time at a homeless shelter and food bank. "Ella is highly developed as a setter and runs our offense with the highest IQ," said Trevor Koelling, head coach of Rock Bridge High School. "Ella tallies impressive numbers in all skills and led our team to a final four state finish."

Swindle has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play volleyball on scholarship at the University of Texas beginning in the fall of 2023.

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.

Swindle joins recent Gatorade Missouri Volleyball Players of the Year Addison Beagle (2020-21, Liberty North High School), Birdie Hendrickson (2019-20 & 2018-19, Logan-Rogersville High School), and Gabby Blossom (2017-18, St. Joseph's Academy), 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, Swindle 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. Swindle 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.

###