

**BEDFORD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE NEW HAMPSHIRE VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 11, 2022) — In its 37<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Caleigh O'Connell** of **Bedford High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade New Hampshire Volleyball Player of the Year**. O'Connell is the first Gatorade New Hampshire Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Bedford 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 O'Connell as New Hampshire'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, O'Connell 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 5-foot-11 senior setter and right-side hitter led the Bulldogs to a 15-0 record and a second-straight Division I state championship this past season. O'Connell compiled 437 assists, 198 kills, 162 digs, 71 service and 34 blocks while posting a kill percentage of .633 and a hitting percentage of .406. The 2021 Division I Player of the Year and a three-time Division I First Team All-State selection, she concluded her prep volleyball career with a school-record 1,756 assists.

O'Connell has volunteered locally with the Animal Rescue League of New Hampshire and as an elementary school teaching assistant and youth volleyball coach. "Caleigh O'Connell is single-handedly the hardest-working athlete I have ever had the pleasure of coaching—period," said Anna McGann, head coach of Bedford High School. "The talent she had in 2020 has only grown because her work ethic is simply unmatched."

O'Connell has maintained a weighted 4.30 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at Bucknell 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 O'Connell joins recent Gatorade New Hampshire Volleyball Players of the Year Kara Kelliher (2019-20, Nashua South High School), Leah Creteau (2018-19, Spaulding High School), and Maddie Norris (2017-18, Hollis-Brookline 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, O'Connell 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. O'Connell 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY), Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://instagram.com/Gatorade) and Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade).

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