

**MCGILL-TOOLEN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ALABAMA VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 13, 2023) — In its 38th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Anna Grace Sparks** of **McGill-Toolen Catholic High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Alabama Volleyball Player of the Year**. Sparks is the seventh Gatorade Alabama Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from McGill-Toolen Catholic 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 Sparks as Alabama'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, Sparks joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners, including Lexi Sun (2016-17, Santa Fe Christian School, Calif.), Jordan Larson (2004-05, Logan View High School, Neb.), Foluke Akinradewo (2004-05, St. Thomas High School, Fla.) and April Ross (1999-00, Newport Harbor High School, Calif.).

The 5-foot-10 senior outside hitter led the Yellowjackets to a 51-8 record and the 7A state championship this past season. Sparks amassed 576 kills, 314 digs, 39 blocks and 41 aces, including 17 kills and 10 digs in the state championship match while earning MVP honors at the 7A state tournament. She was named 7A First-Team All-State by the Alabama High School Volleyball Coaches Association and was American Volleyball Coaches Association First-Team All-American.

Sparks has volunteered locally with Fostering Together Gulf Coast, collecting supplies for babies in foster care in the Gulf Coast Region, and on behalf of Friends of Exceptional Children, a school club dedicated to special needs children. She also has donated her time to the annual Little Sisters of the Poor Lawn Party, which raises funds for the Little Sisters of the Poor elderly care facility. "She has a full arsenal of shots and never shied away from the big moments," said Huntsville High School head coach Melanie Donahoo. "She stood out a lot offensively with hitting, but her defense and serve-serve were really good, too."

Sparks has maintained a 3.79 weighted GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play volleyball on scholarship at Queens University of Charlotte 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.

Sparks joins recent Gatorade Alabama Volleyball Players of the Year Audrey Rothman (2021-22, Spain Park High School), Rya McKinnon (2020-21, Hoover High School), Grace Carr (2019-20, Mountain Brook High School), and Lillie Fromdahl (2018-19, McGill-Toolen Catholic High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Being a Gatorade Player of the Year means paying it forward for the next generation. Through Gatorade's Play it Forward initiative, every Player of the Year receives a grant to give to one of Gatorade's social impact partners, supporting Gatorade's ambition to fuel the future of sport. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 organizations.

For nearly 40 years, Gatorade has honored high school athletes at the top of their game as teammates, supporting their communities and achieving academic success. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes and community leaders, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport.

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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