

**TIMOTHY CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ILLINOIS VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 9, 2025) — In its 40th year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Abby Vander Wal** of **Timothy Christian High School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade Illinois Volleyball Player of the Year**. Vander Wal is the first Gatorade Illinois Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Timothy Christian High School.

Gatorade Player of the Year is the top honor in high school sports, celebrating the nation’s best high school athletes for their success on the court, in the classroom and in the community. The award distinguishes Vander Wal as Illinois’ best high school volleyball player, and she joins an impressive group of alumni that spans CEOs, coaches and star athletes such as April Ross (1999-00, Newport Harbor High School, Ca.), Kerri Walsh Jennings (1995-96, Archbishop Mitty High School, Ca.) and Ayden Ames (2023-24, Prosper High School, Texas).

The 6-foot-3 senior outside hitter recorded 455 kills and 220 digs this past season, leading the Trojans (39-3) to the Class 2A state semifinals. Vander Wal also compiled 73 service aces and 30 blocks while posting a .584 kill percentage and a .501 hitting percentage at net. An American Volleyball Coaches Association First Team All-American and ranked as the nation’s No. 2 recruit in the Class of 2025 by PrepDig.com, Vander Wal was a member of the U.S. Under-21 Women’s National Team that won the gold medal at the NORCECA Championships this summer. She concluded her prep volleyball career with 1,398 kills.

Vander Wal is a member of the concert choir and student activities committee at school and the youth group at her church. She has served as a Young Life Wyldlife leader and small group leader/mentor for junior high school girls. She has also volunteered locally through her church by visiting and singing with dementia patients. In January 2024, she served with Habitat for Humanity for a week and a half helping to demolish and build residences for those in need. She has also helped coach at numerous youth volleyball camps, both school camps and club camps. “Abby is a smart player on the court and has a vertical leap that rivals Michael Jordan in his prime,” said Doug Wilbrandt, head coach of Marian Central Catholic High School. “She is a true leader and showed that both on the bench and on the court.”

Vander Wal has maintained a weighted 3.61 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to play volleyball at the University of Texas this fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states across 12 different high school sports – 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.

Vander Wal joins recent Gatorade Illinois Volleyball Players of the Year Ellie White (2023-24 & 2022-23, Mother McAuley Liberal Arts High School), Katie Hurta (2021-22, Nazareth Academy) and Rachel Muisenga (2020-21, Benet Academy), among the state’s list of former award winners.

As part of Gatorade’s commitment to breaking down barriers in sport, every Player of the Year also receives a grant to donate to a social impact partner. To date, the Gatorade Player of the Year program has provided more than \$5.6 million in grants to winners across more than 2,000 organizations.

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 Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://www.instagram.com/Gatorade), Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) and X(Twitter) at x.com/Gatorade.

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