

## **MOUNT ST. MARY CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE OKLAHOMA VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (January 9, 2025) — In its 40<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Livia Ward** of **Mount St. Mary Catholic High School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade Oklahoma Volleyball Player of the Year**. Ward is the first Gatorade Oklahoma Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Mount St. Mary Catholic 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 Ward as Oklahoma’s 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 5-foot-10 senior setter led the Rockets to a 39-1 record and the Class 5A state championship this past season. Ward amassed 1,233 assists and 372 digs, including a 40-assist, 16-dig effort in Mount’s 3-0 win over Booker T. Washington High in the state final to earn match MVP honors. An American Volleyball Coaches Association Second Team All-American honoree, Ward also compiled 150 kills, 59 blocks and 43 service aces while posting a .402 kill percentage on the year. She concluded her prep volleyball career with 3,659 assists, 1,255 digs and 515 kills.

An accomplished artist, Ward won the Best in Show award at the 2023 State Fair of Oklahoma Student Art competition. She has volunteered locally at the Oklahoma Food Bank and as a youth volleyball coach. “Livia is a very talented athlete,” said Heather Benedix, head coach of Christian Heritage High School. “She made a big difference on her team and has for years. She makes incredible sets and puts the ball exactly where her hitters want it. They would not have had the high level of success they had this year without her.”

Ward has maintained a weighted 4.54 GPA in the classroom and ranks No. 1 in her class. Taking advantage of NCAA early signing rules, Ward inked a financial-aid agreement that paved the way for her to enroll at Washington State University, where she will play volleyball. She graduated from high school in December and will attend classes in the spring semester.

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.

Ward joins recent Gatorade Oklahoma Volleyball Players of the Year Maren Johnson (2023-24, Jenks High School), Kathrin Rowe (2022-23, Edmond Memorial High School), Mackenzie McGuire (2021-22, Broken Arrow High School) and Audrey Buford (2020-21, Bishop Kelley High School), 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](http://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](https://x.com/Gatorade).