

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: 1-800-88-GATOR (42867)

Gatorade National Volleyball Player of the Year: Megan Hodge

Durham (N.C.) volleyball star named nation's top high school performer

DURHAM, N.C. (January 25, 2006) – Entering its third decade of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade® Thirst Quencher, in partnership with *Scholastic Coach & Athletic Director* magazine, today announced Megan Hodge of Riverside High School (Durham, N.C.) as the 2005-06 Gatorade National Volleyball Player of the Year.

The award, which recognizes athletic achievement as well as the academic performance and overall character of its recipient, distinguishes Hodge as the nation's best high school volleyball player. A national advisory board comprised of sportswriters and sport-specific experts from around the country selected Hodge from the more than 385,000 female high school volleyball players nationwide. Hodge is now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade Female High School Athlete of the Year Award, to be presented at an awards ceremony the afternoon prior to The ESPY Awards in July.

Hodge, a versatile 6-foot-3-inch senior who plays all positions on the floor, led the Lady Pirates with 363 kills, 30 blocks, 197 digs, 109 assists, and 86 aces. Hailed as the best girls' volleyball player in North Carolina history, Hodge won her second consecutive Gatorade North Carolina Volleyball Player of the Year award and was a unanimous choice as the Pac-6 Conference Player of the Year.

The daughter of Michael and Carmen Hodge, both former members of the Virgin Islands' national volleyball teams, Megan has built an impressive résumé of her own. She is a four-time Pac-6 All-Conference performer at Riverside. At the international level, Hodge was selected to the USA Girls Youth National Team in 2004 and 2005. She was named tournament MVP in leading the U.S. squad to the gold medal of the 2004 NORCECA Championships in Puerto Rico, and participated last year in the 2005 FIVB Girls' Youth World Championships in Macau, China.

Hodge announced earlier this month she will attend Penn State University in the fall, headlining what is projected to be one of the nation's elite recruiting classes.

--more--

“Megan is the most amazing player I’ve ever trained,” says Riverside High head coach Blaine Tendler, who was also an assistant coach with USA Volleyball’s High Performance Program last summer. “There is no position she can’t play – and play well. Megan is a great person on and off the court. Her passion and drive to compete will carry her a long way.”

A star in the classroom, Hodge owns a 4.5 GPA and scored 1800 on the SAT. In addition, she is active in her church and community, is a member of the Riverside High Student Council and is a peer mentor for students with special needs.

“Without question, Megan is deserving of recognition as the nation’s best high school volleyball player based on her performance and the tremendous athletic ability she’s demonstrated,” said Gatorade Senior Vice President of Sports Marketing Tom Fox. “But she is also a shining example to peers and aspiring young players of what a leader and a student-athlete should be. She represents everything we hope for in a Gatorade Player of the Year recipient.”

The Gatorade Player of the Year program recognizes one winner in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, and awards one National Player of the Year in five boys sports (football, soccer, basketball, baseball, track & field) and five girls sports (volleyball, soccer, basketball, softball, track & field). In addition to athletic performance, award criteria include the achievement in the classroom and overall character. Previous Gatorade National Player of the Year award winners include:

- NFL all-time leading rusher Emmitt Smith
- Two-time NFL Most Valuable Player Peyton Manning
- WNBA all-time leading scorer and rebounder Lisa Leslie
- Captain of the U.S. men’s national soccer team Claudio Reyna
- Reigning American League Most Valuable Player Alex Rodriguez
- Beach volleyball gold medalist Kerri Walsh
- Reigning 200-meter world champion Allyson Felix

For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information and lists of past winners and future announcement dates, visit www.gatorade.com/playeroftheyear.

ALL-TIME GATORADE NATIONAL VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR HONOREES

Year	Name	High School/Location	Status
2005-06	Megan Hodge	Riverside/Durham, NC	High School Senior
2004-05	Cynthia Barboza	Wilson Classical/Long Beach, CA	Stanford Univ.
2003-04	Cynthia Barboza	Wilson Classical/Long Beach, CA	Stanford Univ.
2002-03	Kristin Richards	Timpanogos/Orem, UT	Stanford Univ.
2001-02	Bre Ladd	Canyon Del Oro/Tucson, AZ	Univ. of Arizona
2000-01	Ogonna Nnamani	University/Normal, IL	U.S. National Team
1999-00	April Ross	Newport Harbor/Newport Beach, CA	Ponce Leonas (Puerto Rico)
1998-99	Logan Tom	Highland/Salt Lake City, UT	Volero Zurich (Switzerland)
1997-98	Sara Sandrik	Pelham/Pelham, AL	Stanford Grad.
1996-97	Denise Boylan	Benet Academy/Lisle, IL	Notre Dame Grad.
1995-96	Kerri Walsh	Archbishop Mitty/San Jose, CA	AVP Pro Beach Volleyball