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**UNION CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEW JERSEY GIRLS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 23, 2016) — In its 31st year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Sydney McLaughlin of Union Catholic High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade New Jersey Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. McLaughlin is the first Gatorade New Jersey Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Union 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 track, distinguishes McLaughlin as New Jersey's best high school girls track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year award to be announced in June, McLaughlin joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Allyson Felix (2001-02, Los Angeles Baptist, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.), Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.), Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt HS, Ia.) and Bianca Knight (2006-07, Ridgeland HS, Miss.).

The state's returning Gatorade Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year, McLaughlin won the 400-meter intermediate hurdles with a time of 54.46 seconds at the New Balance Nationals Outdoor championships, breaking a 32-year-old national prep record set by former U.S. Olympian Leslie Maxie in 1984. The 5-foot-8 junior eclipsed the previous record by a yawning 0.74 seconds. McLaughlin swept the 400-meter dash in 51.87 seconds and the 400-meter hurdles in 56.23 at the state Meet of Champions this past season. She also ran the second leg of the winning 4x400-meter relay quartet, which broke the tape at the MOC in 3:46.68. In addition, McLaughlin swept the 400 (52.44) and the 400 hurdles (57.37) at the Non-Public A group championships, leading the Vikings to the title as a team. Her 400-meter dash time at the Meet of Champions broke her own state record and ranked No. 1 among U.S. prep competitors in 2016 at the time of her selection. The 400 clocking was the 18th-fastest 400 in U.S. prep history. McLaughlin's historic 50.93 auto-timed 400-meter split at NBNO anchored Union Catholic's national prep record-breaking Swedish medley relay time of 2:07.99. She also owned the nation's No. 11 time in the 200-meter dash (23.53) at the time of her selection.

McLaughlin has maintained a 3.55 GPA in the classroom. A volunteer for the Central Jersey Chapter of Hope Worldwide, McLaughlin has participated in multiple community service projects throughout Perth Amboy, including distributing fire safety and disaster relief information to residents on behalf of the American Red Cross. She has also donated her time to Hurricane Sandy recovery efforts in Toms River, especially the cleanup of Cattus Island Park. In addition to serving as a soup kitchen staffer and as part of a teen outreach project in association with her church community, McLaughlin has assisted at a local youth track event as a meet official. The founder of her school's Juggling Club, she volunteered at an area juggling camp last summer.

"She runs from the beginning to the end of each and every event and achieves a consistency of performance that makes her invaluable on any team," said Walter Anderson, head coach at rival Camden Catholic High. "She is a catalyst. The other members of her team catch fire from her. Because of her enthusiasm and dedication, her teammates emulate her, and the team as a whole is infected with her spirit. She is the spark that ignites the roaring fire, and others cannot help but be warmed by her flame."

McLaughlin will begin her senior year of high school 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 high school sports leadership team in partnership with [USA TODAY High School Sports](#), which work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Two-time winner McLaughlin joins Gatorade New Jersey Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Keturah Orji (2013-14, Mount Olive High School), Olivia Baker (2012-13, Columbia High School), Ajeé Wilson (2011-12 & 2009-10, Neptune High School), Myasia Jacobs (2010-11, Paramus Catholic High School), Jillian Smith (2008-09, Southern Regional High School), Melanie Thompson (2007-08, Voorhees High School), and Danielle Tauro (2006-07, Southern Regional High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit www.gatorade.com/poy.

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