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**NEWTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE GEORGIA BOYS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 22, 2017) — In its 32<sup>nd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Elija Godwin of Newton High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Georgia Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Godwin is the first Gatorade Georgia Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Newton 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 Godwin as Georgia's best high school boys track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year award to be announced in June, Godwin joins an elite alumni association of state track & field award-winners, including Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt High School, Iowa), Allyson Felix (2002-03, Los Angeles Baptist High School, Calif.), Robert Griffin III (2006-07, Copperas Cove High School, Texas), Grant Fisher (2013-14 & 2014-15, Grand Blanc High School, Mich.) and Candace Hill (2014-15, Rockdale County High School, Ga.).

The 6-foot-1, 190-pound junior tripled at the Class 7A state meet this past season, winning the 200-meter dash with a wind-aided time of 21.01 seconds and breaking the tape in the 400-meter dash (46.40) before capturing gold in the triple jump with a career-best leap of 47-feet, nine inches. Those 30 individual points by Godwin helped the Rams finish fifth as a team. He earned silver at this month's Brooks PR Invitational with a season-best clocking of 46.23 in the 400, which ranked as the nation's No. 10 time among prep competitors this season at the time of his selection. His career-best 20.71 in the 200 at last month's Prefontaine Classic, where he took third, along with his career-best triple jump effort at the state meet ranked No. 5 and No. 42 in the nation, respectively, in 2017.

A dedicated youth track volunteer every summer, Godwin is deeply involved in the community service efforts of his church parish throughout the year. "Elija is the epitome of a student-athlete," said Newton High School head coach Kevin Barnes. "He's completely dedicated to his team and teammates, and his work ethic and attitude are outstanding. Any track coach would love to have a team full of competitors like this guy."

"His range as a sprinter and prowess in the triple jump make Godwin not only one of the most versatile high school athletes in the country, but also one of the most dynamic," said Erik Boal, editor for Dyestat.com. "He excels in the most competitive settings, as evidenced by his efforts at the Georgia state meet, and his desire to improve indicates his senior year has the potential to be one of the best for any prep athlete in 2017."

Godwin has maintained an 85.7 average in the classroom and will begin his 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 Player of the Year Selection Committee, 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.

Godwin joins recent Gatorade Georgia Boys Track & Field Athletes of the Year Isaiah Rogers (2015-16, Campbell High School), Ryan Clark (2014-15, Banneker High School), Kenny Selmon (2013-14, Pace Academy), Henry Dwyer (2012-13, Athens Academy), Jonathan Jones (2011-12, Carrollton High School), O'Neal Wanliss (2010-11, Holy Innocents Episcopal School), David Smith (2009-10, Lovejoy High School), Ken Gilstrap (2008-09, Miller Grove High School), Christian Taylor (2007-08, Sandy Creek High School), and Ben Hubers (2006-07, McEachern High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Elija will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants - one for each sport - will be announced throughout the year.

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](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

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