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**NORTH ANDOVER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MASSACHUSETTS BOYS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 22, 2017) — In its 32nd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Erick Duffy of North Andover High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Massachusetts Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Duffy is the first Gatorade Massachusetts Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from North Andover 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 Duffy as Massachusetts' 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, Duffy 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, 172-pound senior won the national championship in the pole vault at this month's New Balance Nationals Outdoor. Duffy broke his own state record by 6 inches to claim the national title, clearing 17 feet, 1 inch with a leap that ranked No. 9 in the nation among prep competitors this spring at the time of his selection. Duffy set the previous record of 16-7 at the state meet, where he also took first place in the 110-meter hurdles with a time of 14.10 seconds, leading the Scarlet Knights to a second-place finish as a team. His best wind-legal time in the 100 hurdles (14.24) ranked No. 77 in the nation at the time of his selection.

Duffy has volunteered locally at a food pantry and as a youth soccer and track coach. "Erick Duffy was phenomenal this year," said Mike Leal, head coach of Central Catholic High. "He is a fierce competitor whose versatility is one of the things that makes him so special."

Duffy has maintained a 4.19 weighted GPA in the classroom. He will attend Harvard University, where he will compete in track and field, beginning 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.

Duffy joins recent Gatorade Massachusetts Boys Track & Field Athletes of the Year Thomas Ratcliffe (2015-16, Concord-Carlisle High School), Sean Caveney (2014-15, Andover High School), Garrett O'Toole (2013-14, Middlesex School), Alex Niemiec (2012-13, Chicopee Comprehensive High School), Josh Lampron (2011-12 & 2010-11, Mansfield High School), Sam Bombaugh (2009-10, Falmouth High School), Mark Vetere (2008-09, Andover High School), Omar Aden (2007-08, Charlestown High School), and Mark Amirault (2006-07, Xaverian Brothers High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Erick 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.

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