

Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3656)

**SMITHTOWN HIGH SCHOOL EAST STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW YORK 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 Daniel Claxton of Smithtown High School East as its 2016-17 Gatorade New York Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Claxton is the first Gatorade New York Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Smithtown High School East.

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 Claxton as New York'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, Claxton 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, 138-pound senior won the high jump national championship at this month's New Balance Nationals Outdoor with a clearance of 7 feet, 1/4 inches. Claxton also won the event at the state championship meet this spring with a clearance of 7-0. His season-best effort of 7-1.75 ranked as the nation's No. 7 performance among prep competitors in 2017 at the time of his selection.

Also a talented musician, he has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics and youth sports programs. "Dan is one of the most talented athletes that any coach could be lucky enough to have on their team," said Smithtown East coach Megan Holden. "He's also one of the most knowledgeable, coachable, approachable and humble athletes you will ever meet."

Claxton has maintained a 3.56 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at the University of Connecticut 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.

Claxton joins recent Gatorade New York Boys Track & Field Athletes of the Year Rayvon Grey (2015-16, Beacon High School), Rai Benjamin (2014-15, Mount Vernon High School), Benjamin Bonhurst (2013-14, Smithtown High School West), J.J. Stallworth (2012-13, Connetquot High School), Nick Ryan (2011-12, Fayetteville-Manlius High School), Chad Noelle (2010-11, Greene Central High School), Mike Quercia (2009-10, Marcellus Senior High School), Will Cole (2008-09, Hamburg High School), Kyle Merber (2007-08, Half Hollow Hills West High School), and Walter Henning (2006-07, St. Anthony's High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Daniel 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.