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**UNION CATHOLIC REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW JERSEY GIRLS 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 Sydney McLaughlin of Union Catholic Regional High School as its 2016-17 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 Regional 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 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 returning Gatorade Female High School Athlete of the Year, McLaughlin broke her own national high school and World Junior (Under-20) records in the 400-meter intermediate hurdles with a time of 54.03 seconds at the Non-Public A championship meet this past season. The 5-foot-9 senior also won the 400-meter dash in a meet-record 51.88 and the 200-meter dash in a state-record 22.96, both of which ranked as the No. 1 times among U.S. prep competitors in 2017 at the time of her selection. A 2016 U.S. Olympian, McLaughlin won the 400 hurdles at this month's New Balance Nationals Outdoor in 54.22—the seventh national title of her career to go with a World Youth title. The 17-year-old's winning time of 38.90 in the 300 hurdles at April's Arcadia Invitational set another national prep record by more than a full second. She clocked the fastest 400-meter relay split in high school history (49.85) at NBNO this past weekend, and during the indoor season she broke national records in both the 300 and 400-meter races.

A volunteer for the Central Jersey Chapter of HOPE Worldwide, McLaughlin has participated in multiple community service projects, including distributing fire safety and disaster relief information on behalf of the American Red Cross. She has also served as a soup kitchen staffer and as part of a teen outreach project in association with her church community, and has donated her time to Hurricane Sandy recovery efforts. "At this point in her young career, Sydney McLaughlin captures imaginations in a way that is rare," said Doug Binder, DyeStat.com Editor-in-Chief. "She seems to have all the tools and traits that could lead to her becoming the face of USA Track and Field in years to come. She is on her way to becoming a global star in the sport, a Sanya Richards- or Allyson Felix-type star."

McLaughlin has maintained a 3.46 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at the University of Kentucky 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.

Three-time winner McLaughlin joins recent 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.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Sydney 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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