

**Contact: Kelsey Rhoney (312-729-3685)**

**CHUGIAK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE ALASKA GIRLS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 21, 2018) — In its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Emma Nelson of Chugiak High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Alaska Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Nelson is the first Gatorade Alaska Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Chugiak 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 Nelson as Alaska'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, Nelson 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 5-foot-11 senior won the high jump, long jump and the triple jump at the Division I state meet this past season, leading the Mustangs to a second-place finish as a team. Nelson's high jump clearance of 5 feet, 9 inches broke the state record and ranked No. 34 among prep competitors in 2018 at the time of her selection. She also clinched her third straight long jump state title (17-5). Nelson entered the state meet already owning school records in the long jump (17-6.75) and the triple jump (37-9). A four-year team MVP, Nelson was named the state's Div. 1 Female Athlete of the Meet after winning her fourth, fifth and sixth jumping titles.

A ballet dancer and cellist, Nelson is also a competitive Nordic skier. She has volunteered locally at various races and has donated her time to the Special Olympics. "Emma is an absolutely phenomenal athlete with a great work ethic, just a phenomenal competitor," said Kathleen Navarre, head coach of Dimond High. "She's a top-notch kid who works hard, and her high jump. She cleared 5-9 and I think she would've cleared 5-11 with that record jump."

Nelson has maintained a B average in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at Oregon State University 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.

Nelson joins recent Gatorade Alaska Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Izabelle Ith (2016-17, Petersburg High School), Tanner Ealum (2015-16, Anchorage Christian High School), Allie Ostrander (2014-15 & 2013-14, Kenai Central High School), Audrey Michaelson (2012-13, Colony High School), Morgan Dampier (2011-12 & 2010-11, Wasilla High School), Lierin Flanagan (2009-10, Kenai Central High School), Gabrielle Todd (2008-09, Bartlett High School), Leah Francis (2007-08, Juneau-Douglas High School), and Andrea Crook (2006-07, Bartlett High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Nelson 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).

###