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**BELLE FOURCHE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA 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 Shayla Howell of Belle Fourche High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade South Dakota Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Howell is the first Gatorade South Dakota Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Belle Fourche 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 Howell as South Dakota'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, Howell 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-9 senior won the 100- and 200-meter dash along with the long jump and the triple jump at the Class A state meet for a second straight year this spring, leading the Broncs to a second-place finish as a team. Howell set meet records in the 100 (12.03 seconds) and the long jump (19 feet, 3.25 inches). She entered the state meet ranked No. 1 in Class A in six events (100, 200, 400, high jump, long jump, triple jump) and No. 1 in the state in the long jump, triple jump and 400. She concluded her prep career with 12 state titles.

An equestrian enthusiast and trainer of horses, Howell is a three-time state qualifier in rodeo. She has volunteered locally as part of community-beautification projects and an elementary school literacy outreach program. "Shayla Howell is a very gifted track and field athlete," said Troy Sturgeon, head coach of Brandon Valley High. "She is a great sprinter and possibly an even better long and triple jumper.

Howell has maintained a 3.97 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at the University of Wyoming 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.

Howell joins recent Gatorade South Dakota Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Krista Bickley (2016-17, Brandon Valley High School), Cortney Dowling (2015-16, 2013-14 & 2012-13, T.F. Riggs High School), Macy Heinz (2014-15, Ipswich High School), Kari Heck (2011-12 & 2010-11, Washington High School), Jasmyne King (2009-10, 2008-09 & 2007-08, Rapid City Central), and Leslie Brost (2006-07, Watertown) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Howell 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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