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**RIPLEY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA GIRLS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 21, 2018) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Tori Starcher of Ripley High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade West Virginia Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Starcher is the first Gatorade West Virginia Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Ripley 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 Starcher as West Virginia'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, Starcher 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 state's reigning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, the 5-foot sophomore swept the 800-meter run, the 1,600-meter run and the 3,200-meter run at the Class AAA state meet this past season, leading the Vikings to the state title. Starcher also took sixth in the 800 at the New Balance Nationals Outdoor this month, setting a state record with her time of 2:07.42, which ranked No. 8 in the nation among prep competitors at the time of her selection. Starcher also earned national rankings in the 2-mile run (10:24.46, No. 13), the mile (4:51.15, No. 26), the 1,600 (4:49.14, No. 33) and the 3,200 (10:29.87 No. 52).

A member of the Ripley High student council, Starcher established the Ripley Youth Running Club, which promotes running skills and physical fitness. She has also volunteered locally as part of multiple community service projects through her church youth group. "No female athlete in the state was more dominant this past year than Tori," said Steve Blinco, head coach of Morgantown High.

Starcher has maintained an unweighted 4.14 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her junior year of high school 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.

Starcher joins recent Gatorade West Virginia Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year McKenna Smith (2016-17 & 2015-16, Bridgeport High School), Anacia Hines (2014-15, St. Albans High School), Amelia Paladino (2013-14, University High School), Maggie Drazba (2012-13, St. Marys High School), Emily Godwin (2011-12 & 2010-11, Buckhannon-Upshur High School), Bria Welker (2009-10, Frankfort), Taylor Brown (2008-09, Jefferson), Meghan Mock (2007-08, Berkeley Springs), and Kaylyn Christopher (2006-07, Preston) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Starcher 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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