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**NORTHWEST HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE MARYLAND GIRLS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 24, 2010) — In its 25<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Olivia Ekpone of Northwest High School as its 2009-10 Gatorade Maryland Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Ekpone is the first Gatorade Maryland Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Northwest 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 Ekpone as Maryland'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, Ekpone joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Allyson Felix (2001-02, Los Angeles Baptist, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.), Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.), Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt HS, Iowa) and Bianca Knight (2006-07, Ridgeland HS, Miss.).

The state's 2007-08 Gatorade Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year, Ekpone won the 100-meter dash with a time of 11.94 seconds, the 200 in 23.89 and the 400 in 53.60 seconds at the Class 4A state meet this spring, leading the Jaguars to second place as a team. Also the Outdoor Track & Field Athlete of the Year as named by *The Washington Post*, the 5-foot-7 junior sprinter ran the second leg for the winning 4x400-meter relay quartet that finished in 3:48.28. Her 200- and 400-meter state meet clocking both ranked No. 14 in the nation among prep competitors at the time of her selection. Ekpone also produced the country's No. 36 performance in the 100, breaking the tape in 11.82 seconds at the Caribbean Scholastic Invitational.

Ekpone has maintained a 3.41 weighted GPA in the classroom. In addition to donating her time as a youth track and soccer instructor and in association with the Golf 4 Kids Academy, she has volunteered locally with her church, at the children's hospital and on behalf of Blankets for the Homeless.

"She has no fear," said Dave Knight, head coach of the Maryland Titans Track Club. "She's definitely blessed with a lot of God-given talent. Competing at the level that she does, there are others who have that talent, but she has that extra edge. She has no fear attacking the processes and the work that it takes to be good, but she respects her competitors. I ran professional track, and I've run against some of the greatest runners of our time, and there is nobody that I've seen that's at the level she's at as a junior in high school. I mean that."

Ekpone will begin her senior 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 ESPN RISE and the Gatorade high school sports leadership team, 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.

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 [playeroftheyear.gatorade.com](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com).

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