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**BLACKSBURG HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE VIRGINIA GIRLS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 24, 2010) — In its 25th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Kathleen Stevens of Blacksburg High School as its 2009-10 Gatorade Virginia Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Stevens is the first Gatorade Virginia Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Blacksburg 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 Stevens as 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, Stevens 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 2009-10 Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, the 5-foot-7 senior swept the 1,600 and the 3,200-meter run at the Class AA state meet this spring, leading the Bruins to their fourth straight team title. A five-time state champion, Stevens ranked in the top 15 nationally in four events among prep competitors at the time of her selection: 2-mile (10:20.74, fourth), 3,200 (10:16.03, fourth), Mile (4:47.36, eighth) and 1,600 (4:49.39, 11th). She was a member of Blacksburg High's Distance Medley Relay team that set a high school record at April's Penn Relays and she ranked No. 1 in the country among prep competitors in the 3,200 meter event during the indoor season.

Stevens has maintained a weighted 4.17 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally at the Humane Society and leads a bible study group at Blacksburg High.

"All season, Kathleen's been running well, and by the end of the season, her kick got better," said Blacksburg head coach James DeMarco. "Kathleen's a gamer. She's got the in-between style. She's a really good miler, but she might be a better 2-miler. I think she hasn't figured out the 2-mile might be her best event. I think she's figuring out that she likes the 2-mile more than she used to."

Stevens has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at the University of Virginia beginning 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.

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