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

CHICAGO (June 21, 2011) — In its 26<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 2010-11 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, Ia.) and Bianca Knight (2006-07, Ridgeland HS, Miss.).

The 5-foot-7 senior captured three individual state championships this spring and led the Jaguars to the Class 4A state title as a team. The state's two-time Gatorade Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year, Ekpone won the 100-meter dash with a time of 11.85 seconds, the 200-meter dash in 24.67 and the 400-meter dash with a state-record time of 53.15, which ranked as the nation's No. 2 clocking among prep competitors in 2011 at the time of her selection. Also a two-time All-Met Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year as named by *The Washington Post*, Ekpone anchored the winning 4x400-meter relay that finished in a state-record 3:46.22. She concluded her career with 10 individual state championships and a share of three relay state titles. She placed fifth in the 400-meter dash in 53.80 seconds at this month's New Balance Outdoor Nationals.

Ekpone has maintained a 3.46 weighted GPA in the classroom. In addition to serving as a youth track and soccer instructor, she has volunteered locally on behalf of her church, a children's hospital and the Golf 4 Kids Academy. She has also donated her time by making blankets for the homeless.

"I've talked to a lot of reporters, and I want them to know three words that sum up Olivia: Professional, enthusiastic and humble," said Northwest High Head Coach Beth Muehl. "Even at 18 years old, she's just a pro. She's so enthusiastic about track and field, and she's so humble. When it comes to meets, she knows what she needs to do to get it done. She lives and breathes track and field. It's so cool to see that excitement and passion through her eyes."

Ekpone has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in track and field on scholarship at Texas A&M 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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