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**MORRISTOWN HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEW JERSEY BOYS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 23, 2011) — In its 26th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Nick Vena of Morristown High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade New Jersey Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Vena is the first Gatorade New Jersey Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Morristown 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 Vena as New Jersey's best high school boys track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year award to be announced in June, Vena joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Ryan Hall (1999-01, Big Bear HS, Calif.), Meb Keflezighi (1993-94, San Diego HS, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.) and Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt HS, Ia.).

The 6-foot-5 senior hurled the shot a state-record 75 feet, 10.25 inches at the Meet of Champions this spring, which ranked as the nation's No. 1 performance among prep competitors in 2011 and the seventh-best throw in prep history at the time of his selection. The state's three-time Gatorade Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year, Vena placed first in the shot put, with a meet-record effort of 72 feet, five inches, and captured the discus with a throw of 173 feet, 10 inches at the Group III state meet, leading the Colonials to seventh place as a team. Vena became the only boys' track and field athlete to win the same event at the Meet of Champions for four consecutive years, capturing the individual shot put title in each of his four outdoor seasons. He also won the discus title at the 2009 Meet of Champions as a sophomore. Only one other athlete nationwide—2003 Eagle High (Idaho) graduate Donovan Kilmartin—has won Gatorade State Boys Track and Field Athlete of the Year honors four times in the award program's 26-year history.

Vena has maintained a 3.98 GPA in the classroom. A member of the National Honor Society and his school's peer-mentoring program, he has volunteered on behalf of the Children's Specialized Hospital Foundation at the National Junior Disability Championships as well as the International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation Junior World Games. Vena has also donated his time locally as a youth track and field instructor and in association with a kindergarten literacy-outreach program.

"He is truly remarkable, and he never seems to stop amazing people," said Morristown High head coach Paul Buccino. "He just keeps working and working, and he keeps getting better and better. It's exciting to watch, because he's such a good kid, he works so hard and he has a passion for the sport. It's a great story. On his final high school throw, he resets his own state record with the farthest throw in the country. I was truly amazed. It put an exclamation point on why Nick Vena draws everyone's attention. To me, it was one of the greatest moments in the history of American track and field—and certainly New Jersey. I was just in absolute amazement."

Vena has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in track and field on scholarship at the University of Virginia 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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