

**Contact: Adam Woullard (312-729-3627)**

**CLASSICAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE RHODE ISLAND GIRLS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 20, 2012) — In its 27<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Maddy Berkson of Classical High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Rhode Island Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Berkson is the first Gatorade Rhode Island Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Classical 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 Berkson as Rhode Island'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, Berkson 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-4 sophomore set a state record in the 1,500 meters at the All-State meet, leading the Purple to a third-place finish as a team. Berkson won the 1,500 with a time of 4:27.92, a time which ranked No. 13 in the nation by prep competitors in 2012 at the time of her selection. She also ran the anchor leg for Classical's winning 4x400-meter relay team. The Rhode Island Track Coaches Association State MVP, she placed second in the 800-meter run at both the All-State Meet and the New England Outdoor Championships.

Berkson has maintained an unweighted 4.12 GPA in the classroom. She is a member of Classical High's Debate Club and Chess Club.

"The hard thing to remember about Maddy Berkson is that she is still only a sophomore," said Steve Turgeon, head coach of rival Barrington High. "Her state record in the 1500 was probably most impressive. She broke a record that seemed untouchable."

Berkson 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 ESPNHS 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.

Berkson joins recent Gatorade Rhode Island Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Aleide Fernandes (2010-11, Central Falls High School), Molly Reilly (2009-10, South Kingstown), Eryn Wheeler (2008-09, Coventry), and Victoria Flowers (2007-08, Classical) among the state's list of former award winners.

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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