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**ALGOMA HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE WISCONSIN GIRLS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 20, 2012) — In its 27th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Kennedy Blahnik of Algoma High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Wisconsin Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Blahnik is the first Gatorade Wisconsin Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Algoma 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 Blahnik as Wisconsin'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, Blahnik 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-9 sophomore thrower won two individual state championships this spring and led the Wolves to a third-place finish as a team at the Division 3 state meet. Blahnik set a state record in the shot put with an effort of 47 feet, 11 inches and launched the discus 146 feet, three inches. A two-time First Team All-State selection, Blahnik was undefeated in both her signature events in 2012. Her state meet shot distance ranked as the nation's No. 16 throw by a prep competitor at the time of her selection.

Blahnik has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. A devoted member of her church community, she has served as the treasurer and vice president of her graduating class and volunteered locally as a vacation bible camp counselor.

"Kennedy Blahnik is an exceptional track and field athlete in our area," said Duane DuMez, head coach at Kohler High. "The fact that she is throwing this well at such a young age and has already broken state records is a remarkable accomplishment."

Blahnik 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.

Blahnik joins recent Gatorade Wisconsin Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Dezerea Bryant (2009-10 & 2010-11, Bradley Tech.), Brea Tinney (2008-09, Osceola), and Megan Rennhack (2007-08, Dodgeland) 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.

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