

Contact: Adam Woullard (312-729-3627)

**FREE STATE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE KANSAS GIRLS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 19, 2013) — In its 28th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Alexa Harmon-Thomas of Free State High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Kansas Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Harmon-Thomas is the first Gatorade Kansas Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Free State 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 Harmon-Thomas as Kansas'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, Harmon-Thomas 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-11 junior won three individual Class 6A state championships this spring and led the Firebirds to the state championship as a team. Harmon-Thomas captured the 100-meter high hurdles with a time of 14.11 seconds, the 300-meter intermediate hurdles in 42.70 and leapt 19 feet, 5 inches to earn gold in the long jump. She also finished second in the high jump at the state meet and won the heptathlon at the Great Southwest Classic with 5,158 points, which ranked as the nation's No. 2 performance among prep competitors in 2013 at the time of her selection.

Harmon-Thomas has maintained an A average in the classroom. She has volunteered locally on behalf of youth track programs and her church's vacation Bible school.

"Alexa is an exceptional athlete and I've watched her become an outstanding teammate too," said Lawrence Free State head coach Steve Heffernan. "She is possibly the best athlete our school has ever had, but she handles her accomplishments with humility and grace."

Harmon-Thomas will begin her senior 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 the Gatorade high school sports leadership team in partnership with [USA TODAY High School Sports](#), 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.

Harmon-Thomas joins recent Gatorade Kansas Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Alli Cash (2011-12, Shawnee Mission West High School), Megan Smith (2010-11, Olathe South High School), Kearsten Peoples (2009-10, Ottawa), Heather Bergmann (2008-09, Concordia), and Roxi Grizzle (2007-08 & 2006-2007, Tonganoxie), 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 www.gatorade.com/poy.

###