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**DRACUT HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE MASSACHUSETTS GIRLS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 19, 2013) — In its 28<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Karina Shepard of Dracut High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Massachusetts Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Shepard is the first Gatorade Massachusetts Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Dracut 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 Shepard as Massachusetts'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, Shepard 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-10 junior won the 800-meter run with a time of 2:09.29 at the All-State meet this season. Shepard also anchored the third-place 4x800-meter relay quartet that crossed the line in 9:25.51. At the Division II East championships, Shepard took first in the 800-meter run in 2:11.33 and anchored the winning 4x800-meter relay squad that broke the tape in 9:35.00. Her second-place 800-meter run time of 2:08.05 at the New England championships ranked No. 9 among U.S. prep competitors in 2013 at the time of her selection.

Shepard has maintained a 4.53 weighted GPA in the classroom. A member of the National Honor Society, she has volunteered locally on behalf of her church, the BayState Marathon and as a youth track instructor.

"Karina's understanding of what it takes to achieve a high level of success is what distinguishes her from the competition," said Dracut head coach Erik Taber. "Two years ago, she would have never believed that she could have achieved what she has. She has worked incredibly hard to work her way from the bottom of a varsity lineup to All-State champion in just two years. After all of her success, she still believes she is capable of more."

Shepard 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.

Shepard joins recent Gatorade Massachusetts Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Carla Forbes (2011-12, Newton North High School), Nadia Eke (2010-11, Holy Name Central Catholic High School), Deanna Latham (2009-10, Triton Regional), Emily Jones (2008-09 & 2007-08 The Bromfield School), and Arantxa King (2006-2007, Medford) 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](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

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