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**HATTIESBURG HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI 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 Zaria Tillman of Hattiesburg High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Mississippi Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Tillman is the third Gatorade Mississippi Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Hattiesburg 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 Tillman as Mississippi'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, Tillman 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 broke the Class 6A state record in the 300-meter intermediate hurdles this spring, winning the state championship with a time of 43.41 seconds. Tillman also finished second in the 100-meter high hurdles in 15.26, while taking fifth in the 100-meter dash and seventh in the 200-meter dash.

Tillman has maintained a 3.90 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally on behalf of the Salvation Army, a convalescent home and tornado relief efforts.

"Zaria is an extremely hard worker and she is very dedicated," said Hattiesburg coach Charles Green. "She's just an outstanding student athlete, and a joy to coach."

Tillman 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 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.

Tillman joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Erika Sisk (2011-12, Oxford High School), Taryn Hartfield (2010-11, Hattiesburg High School), Cory McGee (2009-10, 2008-09, & 2008-09, Pass Christian), and Bianca Knight (2006-2007, Ridgeland) 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.

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