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**COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEW JERSEY 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 Olivia Baker of Columbia High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade New Jersey Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Baker is the second Gatorade New Jersey Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Columbia 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 Baker as New Jersey'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, Baker 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 junior won three individual state titles at the Meet of Champions this season. Baker won the 100-meter dash with a time of 12.05 seconds, 200-meter dash in 23.95 and 400-meter dash in 53.84 in addition to anchoring the 4x400-meter relay quartet that broke the tape in 3:46.86. At the Group IV championships, Baker earned gold in the 100-meter dash (11.64), the 200-meter dash (24.15), the 400-meter dash (54.16) and 800-meter run (2:12.33), leading the Cougars to the team title. She also won the 400-meter dash at the Meet of Champions in 2011 and 2012.

Baker has maintained a 4.57 weighted GPA in the classroom. Also a tennis standout and violist in her school's chamber orchestra, she has volunteered locally on behalf of the Community FoodBank of New Jersey, God's Love We Deliver and the Jack and Jill of America foundation.

"On the track, Olivia Baker is truly impressive," said Robert O'Dell, head coach of rival Nutley High. "Winning four gold medals at the New Jersey Meet of Champions speaks for itself, but that comes as part of a career dominating the competition. That she still has one more year to go must be intimidating for her opponents."

Baker 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.

Baker joins recent Gatorade New Jersey Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Ajeé Wilson (2011-12 & 2009-10, Neptune High School), Myasia Jacobs (2010-11, Paramus Catholic High School), Jillian Smith (2008-09, Southern Regional), Melanie Thompson (2007-08, Voorhees), and Danielle Tauro (2006-2007, Southern Regional) 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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