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**WOODLAWN HIGH SCHOOL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE ALABAMA GIRLS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 19, 2014) — In its 29th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Jayla Kirkland of Woodlawn High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade Alabama Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Kirkland is the first Gatorade Alabama Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Woodlawn 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 Kirkland as Alabama'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, Kirkland 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 freshman set a state record of 23.65 seconds in the 200-meter dash and won another pair of Class 6A individual state championships this spring. Kirkland also captured gold in the 100-meter dash with a time of 11.80 seconds and won the 400-meter run in 57.18. She finished third in the 200 and fifth in the 100 at the New Balance Nationals Outdoor championships.

Kirkland has maintained a 3.43 GPA in the classroom. Also a talented musician and a member of the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, she has volunteered locally on behalf of youth summer camps.

"It's exciting and shocking to see how successful Jayla was this year," said Woodlawn head coach Myra Hawkins. "She improved every time she stepped on the track. She's still growing, and I think she's good enough to make the Olympics someday."

Kirkland will begin her sophomore 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.

Kirkland joins recent Gatorade Alabama Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Carmen Carlos (2012-13, McGill-Toolen Catholic High School), Lacey Dent (2011-12, 2010 - 11 & 2009-10, St. Paul's Episcopal School), Neal Tisher (2008-09, St. Paul's Episcopal School), Madeline Morgan (2007-08, Mountain Brook), and Mary Carleton Johnson (2006-2007, St. Paul's Episcopal School) 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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