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**CAHOKIA HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE ILLINOIS BOYS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 20, 2014) — In its 29<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 Ja'Mari Ward of Cahokia High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade Illinois Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Ward is the first Gatorade Illinois Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Cahokia 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 Ward as Illinois's best high school boys track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year award to be announced in June, Ward joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Ryan Hall (1999-01, Big Bear HS, Calif.), Meb Keflezighi (1993-94, San Diego HS, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.) and Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt HS, Ia.).

The 6-foot, 148-pound sophomore leapt 47 feet, 8.75 inches to win the triple jump at the Class 2A state meet this spring, leading the Comanches to the team title. Ward also finished second in the long jump and ran a leg on the winning 4x100-meter relay squad. He also finished first in the long jump at the Great Southwest Classic, while his season-best efforts of 50-6.5 in the triple jump and 24-5.5 in the long jump both ranked among the nation's top ten prep performances in 2014 at the time of his selection.

Ward has maintained a 3.77 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics and youth track programs.

"Ja'Mari is an outstanding young man with the God-given gift to jump," said Cahokia head coach Leroy Millsap. "He never settles for anything but the best, and he always tries to lead others around him."

Ward will begin his 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.

Ward joins recent Gatorade Illinois Boys Track & Field Athletes of the Year Kyle Landon (2012-13, Chester High School), Carl Heinz (2011-12, Oak Park River Forest High School), Zach Ziemek (2010 - 11, Lake Park High School), Logan Pflibsen (2009-10, Streator Township), Dan Block (2008-09, Lake Park), Mat Smoody (2007-08, Palatine), and Evan Jager (2006-2007, Jacobs) 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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