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**MOUNT VERNON HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEW YORK BOYS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 19, 2015) — In its 30th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Rai Benjamin of Mount Vernon High School as its 2014-15 Gatorade New York Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Benjamin is the first Gatorade New York Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Mount Vernon 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 Benjamin as New York'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, Benjamin 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-3, 172-pound senior broke the 38-year-old state record in the 400-meter intermediate hurdles with a time of 50.45 seconds this spring. Benjamin, who also holds the indoor state records in the 200 and 300-meter dashes, was first at the Loucks Games in both the 400-meter dash and the 400 hurdles, broke the tape in the 200 at the Arcadia Invitational and finished second in the 400 hurdles at the Penn Relays. Benjamin's state-record time in the 400 hurdles ranked as the nation's No. 1 performance among prep competitors in 2015 at the time of his selection, while his season-best time of 46.19 in the 400 ranked No. 4. He also won the 400 at the New Balance Nationals Indoor this past winter, and anchored the 800-meter sprint medley relay team to first place at last summer's New Balance Nationals Outdoor.

Benjamin has maintained a B average in the classroom. A devoted member of his church community, he has volunteered as a student advocate and as a motivational speaker in area elementary schools.

"Rai has a great work ethic that has yielded very good results," said Mt. Vernon coach Marcus Green. "Despite all his achievements, he's remained humble and always willing to help anyone in any way he can. He's been a pleasure to coach."

Benjamin has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in track and field on scholarship at UCLA 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.

Benjamin joins recent Gatorade New York Boys Track & Field Athletes of the Year Benjamin Bonhurst (2013-14, Smithtown High School West), J.J. Stallworth (2012-13, Connetquot High School), Nick Ryan (2011-12, Fayetteville-Manlius High School), Chad Noelle (2010-11, Greene Central High School), Mike Quercia (2009-10, Marcellus Senior), Will Cole (2008-09, Hamburg), Kyle Merber (2007-08, Half Hollow Hills West), and Walter Henning (2006-07, St. Anthony's) 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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