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**COGINCHAUG REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE CONNECTICUT GIRLS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 23, 2016) — In its 31st year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Jessica Drop of Coginchaug Regional High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Connecticut Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Drop is the first Gatorade Connecticut Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Coginchaug Regional 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 Drop as Connecticut'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, Drop 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 senior won the 1600-meter run with a time of 4:48.29 at the State Open championship meet this past spring, while also finishing second in the 3200-meter run. Drop won the New England championship in the 3200 with a time of 10:17.54 and also swept the 1600 and 3200 at the Class S state meet. She finished fourth in the two-mile at the New Balance Nationals Outdoor.

Drop has maintained a 3.96 GPA in the classroom. A mentor for special needs students in her school, she has volunteered locally on behalf of youth running programs.

"Jessica is a very driven individual," said Coginchaug coach Lavinia Vigue. "She has developed the skill of racing over the last four years, and with it the drive for success and commitment to her team."

Drop has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in track and field on scholarship at the University of Georgia 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.

Drop joins recent Gatorade Connecticut Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Danae Rivers (2014-15 & 2013-14, Wilbur Cross High School), Claire Howlett (2012-13, Westhill High School), Precious Holmes (2011-12 & 2010-11, Hillhouse High School), Lindsay Crevoiserat (2009-10, Glastonbury High School), Meg Ryan (2008-09, Fairfield Warde High School), Anna Shields (2007-08, Lewis Mills High School), and Shaniqua Burgess (2006-07, Hillhouse High 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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