

Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3656)

**ZACHARY HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE LOUISIANA 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 Janie O'Connor of Zachary High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Louisiana Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. O'Connor is the first Gatorade Louisiana Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Zachary 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 O'Connor as Louisiana'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, O'Connor 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-8 junior won three individual events and anchored a winning relay quartet at the Class 5A state meet this past season, leading the Broncos to the state championship as a team. O'Connor won the 100-meter dash in 11.69 seconds, captured the 200-meter dash in 23.82 and broke the tape in the 400-meter dash in a state-record 53.73. She also ran a leg on for the state title winning 4x200 relay squad.

O'Connor has maintained a B average in the classroom. She has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics, youth track programs and community clean-up initiatives.

"Janie is the difference maker," said Zachary coach Chris Carrier. "She has five school records herself, and she's been on five school record-holding relays. She makes everybody on our team better and she does everything that is asked of her."

O'Connor 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.

O'Connor joins recent Gatorade Louisiana Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Hannah Jackson (2014-15, Sulphur High School), Mikiah Brisco (2013-14 & 2012-13, Baton Rouge Magnet High School), Marcquita Stalbert (2011-12, McDonogh 35 College Preparatory High School), Morgann LeLeux (2010-11, Catholic High School), Merritt Van Meter (2009-10, Metairie Park Country Day School), Kim Francis (2008-09, Nortide High School), and Rachel Laurent (2007-08, 2006-07 & 2005-06, Vanderbilt Catholic 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.

###