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**RUSH-HENRIETTA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEW YORK 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 Sammy Watson of Rush-Henrietta Senior High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade New York Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Watson is the first Gatorade New York Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Rush-Henrietta Senior 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 Watson as New York'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, Watson 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-9 junior won the 400-meter dash with a time of 54.34 seconds and the 1500-meter run in 4:22:09 at the state championship meet this past season. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Track and Field Athlete of the Year, Watson also won the 800 at the Brooks PR Invitational in 2:05.95 and captured the 400 at the Prefontaine Classic. Her season-best time of 2:03.06 in the 800 ranked as the nation's No. 1 performance among prep competitors in 2016 at the time of her selection.

Watson has maintained an A-minus average in the classroom. A talented musician and a peer mentor in her school, she has volunteered locally on behalf of youth track camps and community clean-up initiatives.

"Sammy is a special kid and a special athlete," said Rush-Henrietta coach Mike DeMay. "She's always striving to improve, to get faster, get stronger. She never rests on her laurels and she's a great ambassador for the sport."

Watson 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.

Two-time winner Watson joins Gatorade New York Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Zola Golden (2013-14, Arlington High School), Sabrina Southerland (2012-13, Benjamin N. Cardozo High School), Mary Cain (2011-12, Bronxville High School), Aisling Cuffe (2010-11, Cornwall Central High School), Melissa Kurzdorfer (2009-10, Lancaster High School), Shelby Greany (2008-09, Suffern High School), Charlene Lipsey (2007-08, Hempstead High School), and Dalilah Muhammad (2006-07, Cardozo 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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