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**NORTHEAST HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE FLORIDA BOYS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 24, 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 Damion Thomas of Northeast High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Florida Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Thomas is the first Gatorade Florida Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Northeast 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 Thomas as Florida'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, Thomas 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-2, 170-pound junior won the 110-meter high hurdles with a time of 13.84 seconds at the Class 3A state meet this past season, leading the Hurricanes to second place as a team. Thomas also won the 110 hurdles at the Flo Golden South Invitational, the Region 4 championships, the Carifta Games, the Louie Bing Classic and the national Jamaica Junior Championships. His season-best time of 13.42 in the 110 hurdles ranked as the nation's No. 2 performance among prep competitors in 2016 at the time of his selection.

Thomas has maintained a B average in the classroom. A member of his school's student government, he has served as a math and science tutor and has volunteered locally on behalf of youth track programs.

"Damion's work ethic is second to none," said Northeast coach Kevin Hanson. "Obstacles are used as motivation. The tougher the situation gets, the more his performances rise to a higher echelon. He believes in hard work and is always eager to do more at practice than what is required."

Thomas will begin his 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.

Thomas joins recent Gatorade Florida Boys Track & Field Athletes of the Year Samson Moore (2014-15, Gaither High School), Kendal Williams (2013-14, Stanton College Preparatory School), Trayvon Bromell (2012-13, Gibbs High School), Arman Hall (2011-12, St. Thomas Aquinas High School), Armando del Valle (2010-11, Columbus High School), Cody Riggs (2009-10, St. Thomas Aquinas High School), Neamen Wise (2008-09, Lake Brantley High School), Jeff Demps (2007-08, South Lake High School), and Deonte Thompson (2006-07, Glades Central 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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