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**ROCKFORD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MICHIGAN BOYS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 22, 2017) — In its 32nd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Cole Johnson of Rockford High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Michigan Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Johnson is the third Gatorade Michigan Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Rockford 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 Johnson as Michigan'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, Johnson joins an elite alumni association of state track & field award-winners, including Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt High School, Iowa), Allyson Felix (2002-03, Los Angeles Baptist High School, Calif.), Robert Griffin III (2006-07, Copperas Cove High School, Texas), Grant Fisher (2013-14 & 2014-15, Grand Blanc High School, Mich.) and Candace Hill (2014-15, Rockdale County High School, Ga.).

The 5-foot-9, 120-pound junior won the 1600-meter run with a time of 4:08.6 at the Division 1 state meet this past season, leading the Rams to second place as a team. Johnson also finished second in the 800 and ran the lead leg for the third-place 4x400 relay quartet. He won a national title in the mile by clocking a 4:11.9 at this month's New Balance Nationals Outdoor. He also broke the tape in the 800 at the Midwest Distance Classic in 1:50.72.

Johnson has served as part of multiple service-mission trips with his church and has volunteered locally on behalf of Operation Christmas Child as well as North Kent Community Services. "Cole Johnson is a phenomenal athlete and competitor, the total package," said Rockford coach Andrew Martin. "He's also the type of kid who will sacrifice his own goals for the greater good of his friends, family and team."

Johnson has maintained a weighted 4.24 GPA in the classroom and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade Award's broad criteria. He 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 Player of the Year Selection Committee, 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.

Johnson joins recent Gatorade Michigan Boys Track & Field Athletes of the Year Connor Bandel (2015-16, Oxford High School), Grant Fisher (2014-15 & 2013-14, Grand Blanc High School), Cullen Prena (2012-13, Walled Lake Central High School), Garret Zuk (2011-12, Lakeland High School), Dartis Willis (2010-11, Detroit Country Day School), Omar Kaddurah (2009-10, Grand Blanc High School), Michael Atchoo (2008-09, Troy High School), Tommy Brinn (2007-08, Otsego High School), and Jay Bilsborrow (2006-07, Coldwater High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Cole will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants - one for each sport - will be announced throughout the year.

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.