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**WESTLAKE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE GEORGIA GIRLS 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 Kennedy Simon of Westlake High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Georgia Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Simon is the first Gatorade Georgia Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Westlake 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 Simon as Georgia'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, Simon 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-5 junior won three individual titles at the Class 7A meet this past season, leading the Lions to the state team title. Simon broke the tape in the 200-meter dash with a wind-aided time of 24.66 seconds and won the 400 dash in 52.94, which ranked as the nation's No.8 time among prep competitors in 2017 at the time of her selection. The teen won her third state title in the long jump with a leap of 18 feet, 11.75 inches, and earned 4th place in the 400 at this month's prestigious Brooks PR Invitational.

A member of the Desire to Inspire Mentoring Group, Simon has donated her time to the Special Olympics. She also serves with the HOSA international student organization carrying out its two-fold mission to promote career opportunities in the health care industry and to enhance the delivery of quality health care to all. "Already one of the most versatile performers in the nation, Simon not only expanded that range this year by switching from the hurdles to the 800, but she also remained one of the country's most complete sprinters," said Erik Boal, editor for Dyestat.com. "Simon also remained a consistent contributor in the long jump and she's a big reason why Westlake enjoyed impressive success at the state meet."

Simon has maintained a 92.1 average in the classroom and 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 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.

Simon joins recent Gatorade Georgia Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Cassandra Hall (2015-16, 2014-15 & 2013-14, Warner Robins High School), Kendell Williams (2012-13, 2011-12, 2010-11 & 2009-10, Kell High School), Chalonda Goodman (2008-09 & 2007-08, Newnan High School), and Brittany Long (2006-07, Therrell High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Kennedy 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.

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