

**Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3656)**

**ASSUMPTION HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE IOWA GIRLS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 22, 2017) — In its 32<sup>nd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Joy Ripslinger of Assumption High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Iowa Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Ripslinger is the first Gatorade Iowa Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Assumption 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 Ripslinger as Iowa'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, Ripslinger 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-4 senior distance runner became the first female athlete in the state to capture individual state titles in the 400-, 800-, 1500-, and 3000-meter events in a single season, leading the Knights to an unprecedented fifth consecutive Class 3A state championship as a team this spring. Ripslinger won the 400 with a time of 56.29 seconds, the 800 in 2:09.39, the 1500 in 4:39 and broke the tape in the 3000 in 9:55.37. She also won individual titles in the 800 and the 1500 at the Drake Relays, giving her seven career victories at the meet. Her time of 4:31.91 in the 1500 at Drake ranked as the nation's No. 17 performance by a prep competitor in 2017 at the time of her selection. She concluded her prep career with 16 individual state titles.

A member of the National Honor Society and the vice president of her school's student council, Ripslinger has volunteered locally on behalf of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, the Key Club and the River Bend Foodbank. "I have been coaching for 37 years and I have never seen a girl with the depth of ability that Joy Ripslinger has," said Marty Thomae, head coach at Benton High. "She is the first athlete ever to win the 400, 800, 1500, and the 3000 at the same state meet. We may never have an individual in the state of Iowa who can do that again."

Ripslinger has maintained a 3.81 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at the University of Arkansas 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.

Ripslinger joins recent Gatorade Iowa Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Kiana Phelps (2015-16, Kingsley-Pierson High School), Stephanie Jenks (2014-15 & 2012-13, Linn-Mar High School), Jalynn Roberts-Lewis (2013-14, Roosevelt High School), Rebekah Topham (2011-12, Griswold High School), Shelby Houlihan (2010-11, East High School), Hannah Willms (2009-10, Dike-New Hartford High School), Whitney Westrum (2008-09, Waukee High School), Betsy Flood (2007-08, Dowling Catholic High School), and Katie Flood (2006-07, Dowling Catholic High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Joy 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](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

###