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**FRANKLIN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MARYLAND 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 Nyjari McNeil of Franklin High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Maryland Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. McNeil is the first Gatorade Maryland Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Franklin 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 McNeil as Maryland'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, McNeil 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-7 junior won the 800-meter run with a meet-record time of 2:11.27, and captured the 400-meter dash in 55.08 at the Class 3A state meet this past season. McNeil's season-best time of 2:07.34 in the 800 ranked as the nation's No. 9 performance among prep competitors in 2017 at the time of her selection.

McNeil has volunteered locally on behalf of a group home and a youth track program. "Nyjari is an extremely hard-working and talented runner," said Franklin coach Paul Hannsen. "Two things that are starting to separate her from some of her equally talented peers are her amazing consistency and mental focus. I can count on one hand the number of bad races she has had over three years."

McNeil has maintained a 3.31 GPA in the classroom. She 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.

McNeil joins recent Gatorade Maryland Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Maria Coffin (2015-16, Annapolis High School), Jackie McNulty (2014-15, Oakdale High School), Javonne Antoine (2013-14, Elizabeth Seton High School), Ellie Gonzalez (2012-13, The Catholic High School of Baltimore), Mobolaji Adeokun (2011-12, DuVal High School), Olivia Ekpone (2010-11, 2009-10 & 2007-08, Northwest High School), Lorraine Graham (2008-09, Charles Herbert Flowers High School), and Tasha Stanley (2006-07, Eleanor Roosevelt High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Nyjari 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).

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