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**RUSH-HENRIETTA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW YORK 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 Sammy Watson of Rush-Henrietta Senior High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade New York Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Watson is the first Gatorade New York Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Rush-Henrietta Senior 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 Watson as New York'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, Watson 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-8 senior won a national title in the 800-meter run at the New Balance Nationals Outdoor with a time of 2:05.7 this past season. The state's two-time returning Gatorade Girls Track and Field Athlete of the Year, Watson holds four indoor national records and competed in the 2016 U.S. Olympic Trials. Her season-best time of 2:00.78 in the 800 is ranked as the nation's No. 1 performance among prep competitors in 2017 at the time of her selection and is the third-fastest clocking in U.S. high school history.

A talented musician and a peer mentor in her school, Watson has volunteered locally on behalf of youth track camps and community clean-up initiatives. "Sammy is a very humble girl who is always striving to improve," said Rush-Henrietta coach Mike DeMay. "All she thinks about is going out and getting better and running faster. She deserves everything she's gotten, and there's no limit to what she can do."

Watson has maintained an A average in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at Texas A&M 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.

Three-time winner Watson joins Gatorade New York Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Zola Golden (2013-14, Arlington High School), Sabrina Southerland (2012-13, Benjamin N. Cardozo High School), Mary Cain (2011-12, Bronxville High School), Aisling Cuffe (2010-11, Cornwall Central High School), Melissa Kurzdorfer (2009-10, Lancaster High School), Shelby Greany (2008-09, Suffern High School), Charlene Lipsey (2007-08, Hempstead High School), and Dalilah Muhammad (2006-07, Cardoz High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Sammy 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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