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**GRAND FORKS CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH DAKOTA 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 Karly Ackley of Grand Forks Central High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade North Dakota Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Ackley is the fifth Gatorade North Dakota Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Grand Forks Central 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 Ackley as North Dakota'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, Ackley 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 returning Gatorade State Track & Field Athlete of the Year, the 5-foot-11 senior won the 800-meter run, the 1,600-meter run and the 3,200-meter run at the Division A state meet for a second year in a row this past season, leading the Knights to a fifth-place finish as a team. The Gatorade State Cross Country Runner of the Year as a sophomore and as a senior, Ackley smashed the state record in the 1,600 by more than three seconds with a time of 4:53.34 at the Eastern Dakota Conference meet, which ranked as the nation's No. 68 clocking among prep competitors in 2017 at the time of her selection.

A member of the Grand Forks Central National Honor Society, she has volunteered locally as a youth track coach. "Karly is an extremely positive and hard-working individual," said Eric Polries, head coach of Grand Forks Central High. "She takes her sport very seriously but is seen as more than just a great runner."

Ackley has maintained a weighted 4.30 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at Iowa State University beginning 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.

Two-time winner Ackley joins Gatorade North Dakota Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Ashley Rone (2014-15, Red River High School), Brittany Brown Otter (2013-14, Bismarck High School), Amanda Levin (2012-13, West Fargo High School), Morgan Milbrath (2011-12 & 2010-11, Minot High School), and Laura Roesler (2009-10, 2008-09 & 2007-08, Fargo South High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Karly 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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