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**MCCOMB HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE OHIO 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 Molly Leppelmeier of McComb High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Ohio Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Leppelmeier is the first Gatorade Ohio Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from McComb 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 Leppelmeier as Ohio'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, Leppelmeier 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 6-foot-2 senior won both the shot put and the discus at the Division 3 state meet this past season, hurling the former a meet-record 49 feet, six inches and the launching the discus 159-11. Leppelmeier took bronze in the shot put, discus and hammer throw at the New Balance Nationals Outdoor, and her season-best efforts in both the shot put (50-10.25) and the discus (171-5) ranked among the nation's top five prep performances in 2017 at the time of her selection.

A devoted member of her church youth group, Leppelmeier has volunteered locally on behalf of a homeless shelter, a nursing home, blood-donation drives and a Vacation Bible School. "Molly is a one-of-a-kind athlete," said McComb coach Jennifer Beckman. "She sets the bar high for herself and she pours herself wholeheartedly into everything she does. It's so rare to have a state champion athlete who is also able to graduate as valedictorian of her high school class."

Leppelmeier has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at Purdue University 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.

Leppelmeier joins recent Gatorade Ohio Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Abby Steiner (2015-16, Dublin Coffman High School), Karrington Winters (2014-15, New Albany High School), Allyson Simmons (2013-14, Fairless High School), Katelyn Daniels (2012-13, Olentangy Orange High School), Alyssa McBride (2011-12, Bryan High School), Kaila Barber (2010-11 & 2009-10, Midpark High School), Stephanie Morgan (2008-09 & 2007-08, Barnesville High School), and Emily Pendleton (2006-07, Woodmore High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Molly 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.