

Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3656)

**BINGHAM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE UTAH 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 Whitney Rich of Bingham High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Utah Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Rich is the second Gatorade Utah Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Bingham 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 Rich as Utah'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, Rich 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 won the 1,600-meter run and the 3,200 at the Class 5A state meet this past season, leading the Miners to a fifth-place finish as a team. The state's 2016-17 Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Rich won the 1,600 in 4:55.39, 7.04 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor. She broke the tape in the 3,200 by a margin of 12.19 seconds with a time of 10:39.28. Her personal-best time in the 3,200 of 10:34.73 ranked as the nation's No. 76 performance among prep competitors in 2017 at the time of her selection.

A talented pianist, Rich has participated in service-mission trips to Fiji and Cape Verde, and she has volunteered locally as part of multiple community-service initiatives through her church youth group. "Whitney is a one-of-a-kind athlete," said Alisha Paxton, head coach of Bingham High. "It's not just that she's successful or just that she's a hard worker, it's that she lives the sport. She analyzes everything to maximize her performance."

Rich has maintained a 3.75 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at Brigham Young 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.

Rich joins recent Gatorade Utah Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Kaysha Love (2015-16, Herriman High School), Lucy Biles (2014-15, Herriman High School), Sarah Feeny (2013-14, Ogden High School), Brenna Porter (2012-13, Sky View High School), Ashleigh Warner (2011-12, Mountain View High School), Lauren Baxter (2010-11, Timpview High School), Kylie Hirschi (2009-10, Brighton High School), Tiffany Hellstrom (2008-09, Bonneville High School), and Natalie Stewart (2007-08 & 2006-07, Spanish Fork High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Whitney 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.