

**SOUTHEAST POLK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE IOWA GIRLS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 21, 2018) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Sydney Milani of Southeast Polk High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Iowa Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Milani is the first Gatorade Iowa Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Southeast Polk 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 Milani as Iowa'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, Milani 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-5 senior became the first athlete in Iowa State High School Track & Field Championships history to sweep the 100-, 200- and 400-meter dash along with the 800-meter run in leading the Rams to a third-place finish in Class 4A this past season. Milani broke three state records with her gold medal haul, setting a new standard in the 100 (11.49 seconds), the 200 (23.68) and the 400 (52.90). Her 400 clocking ranked No. 7 in the nation among prep competitors this spring at the time of her selection, while her 2:10.38 in the 800 was an all-class best in Iowa in 2018. The shared or outright owner of nine school records, she anchored the 4x400 quartet that won the Drake Relays in a state season-best 3:52.09.

A four-year letter winner in soccer as well, Milani donates her time to the Mentors in Violence Prevention Club and the Care for Children Club. She also volunteers locally as a youth soccer and track coach. "I think Sydney's accomplishments speak for themselves," said Jesse Hunt, head coach of Waukee High. "What she was able to accomplish, setting all-time Iowa marks in the 100, 200, and 400, and approaching it in the 800, she was a joy to watch. She's a special kid, and if there ever was a person I think who'd be deserving of an award like this, it would be her."

Milani has maintained a B average in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at Iowa State 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.

Milani joins recent Gatorade Iowa Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Joy Ripslinger (2016-17, Assumption High School), Kiana Phelps (2015-16, Kingsley-Pierson High School), Stephanie Jenks (2014-15 & 2012-13, Linn-Mar High School), Jalynn Roberts-Lewis (2013-14, Roosevelt High School), Rebekah Topham (2011-12, Griswold High School), Shelby Houlihan (2010-11, East High School), Hannah Willms (2009-10, Dike-New Hartford High School), Whitney Westrum (2008-09, Waukee High School), Betsy Flood (2007-08, Dowling Catholic High School), and Katie Flood (2006-07, Dowling Catholic High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Milani 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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