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**OLATHE NORTH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE KANSAS GIRLS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 21, 2018) — In its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Dana Baker of Olathe North High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Kansas Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Baker is the first Gatorade Kansas Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Olathe North 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 Baker as Kansas' 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, Baker 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 senior launched the javelin 178 feet, 1 inch—the fourth-best throw in U.S. prep history—to win the title at the USATF Junior Outdoor Championships this past season. Baker also won her third straight Class 6A javelin state championship with a meet-record effort of 168-8, and captured the discus with a throw of 123-7. Her javelin mark at the USATF meet ranked as the nation's No. 1 performance among prep competitors in 2018 at the time of her selection, and the best ever by a Kansas thrower.

Also a volleyball standout and a devoted member of her church community, Baker has served as a peer mentor in her school and has volunteered locally on behalf of youth volleyball and track programs. "Even if Dana wasn't an amazing athlete, she'd still be something special," said Olathe North High coach Levi Huseman. "She is humble, a tireless worker and has a desire to continually do everything better than she's ever done it before."

Baker has maintained a weighted 4.91 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in track and field on scholarship at Duke 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.

Baker joins recent Gatorade Kansas Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Cailie Logue (2016-17, Girard High School), Cailie Logue (2015-16, Girard High School), Keiryn Swenson (2014-15 & 2013-14, Maize High School), Alexa Harmon-Thomas (2012-13, Free State High School), Alli Cash (2011-12, Shawnee Mission West High School), Megan Smith (2010-11, Olathe South High School), Kearsten Peoples (2009-10, Ottawa High School), Heather Bergmann (2008-09, Concordia High School), and Roxi Grizzle (2007-08 & 2006-07, Tonganoxie High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Baker 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](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

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