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**NORTH ALLEGHENY SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE PENNSYLVANIA BOYS 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 Ayden Owens of North Allegheny Senior High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Pennsylvania Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Owens is the first Gatorade Pennsylvania Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from North Allegheny Senior 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 Owens as Pennsylvania's best high school boys track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year award to be announced in June, Owens 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, 195-pound senior won the 110-meter high hurdles with a meet record time of 13.69 seconds at the Class AAA state meet this past season, leading the Tigers to the state championship as a team. Owens also broke the tape in the 300-meter intermediate hurdles in 36.68 and took second in the long jump with a leap of 23-3.25. Owens won the 110 hurdles at the Brooks PR Invitational, and his state-championship time in that event ranked as the nation's No. 4 performance among prep competitors in 2018 at the time of his selection.

A member of his school's Multicultural Student Union, Owens has raised funds to benefit pediatric cancer research and has volunteered locally on behalf of youth track camps. "Talent level alone would have been sufficient to take Ayden very far in our sport, but he wasn't satisfied with just being very good," said North Allegheny coach John Neff. "His dedication, focus and drive are unparalleled."

Owens has maintained an A average in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in track and field on scholarship at the University of Southern California 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.

Owens joins recent Gatorade Pennsylvania Boys Track & Field Athletes of the Year Jordan Geist (2016-17 & 2015-16, Knoch High School), John Lewis (2014-15, Cheltenham High School), Max Adams (2013-14, Hempfield Area Senior High School), Jon Yohman (2012-13, Wilmington Area High School), Billy Stanley (2011-12, South Park High School), Eric Futch (2010-11, Penn Wood High School), Tom Mallon (2009-10, Central Bucks High School South), Justin Shirk (2008-09 & 2007-08, Central Dauphin High School), and Reggie Carter (2006-07, Bensalem High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Owens 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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