

**COLTS NECK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW JERSEY GIRLS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (July 2, 2021) — In its 36th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Lilly Shapiro of Colts Neck High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade New Jersey Girls Track & Field Player of the Year**. Shapiro is the first Gatorade New Jersey Girls Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Colts Neck 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 field, distinguishes Shapiro as New Jersey's best high school girls track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Track & Field Player of the Year award to be announced in July, Shapiro joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, 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 junior set a state record in the 1600-meter run this past season with a time of 4:40.15, which ranked as the nation's No. 2 performance among 2021 prep competitors. Shapiro broke the tape in the 800 at the state Meet of Champions in 2:13.05 and took second in the 1600. She also won both the 800 and 1600 while leading the Cougars to the Group 3 state championship, anchoring the winning 4x400 and 4x800 relay quartets for good measure.

Shapiro has volunteered locally on behalf of a food bank and youth soccer programs. "Lilly leaves no stone unturned in doing everything she can do to get better," said Colts Neck coach Jim Schlentz. "Her work effort is unrivaled, she is unflappable in a race and she hates to lose, but she's not afraid to."

Shapiro has maintained a 4.36 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior year of high school 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 works with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Shapiro joins recent Gatorade New Jersey Girls Track & Field Players of the Year Victoria Vanriale (2019-20, 2018-19, & 2017-18, Governor Livingston High School), and Sydney McLaughlin (2016-17, Union Catholic Regional High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Shapiro has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Shapiro is also eligible to submit a 30-second video explaining why the organization they chose is deserving of one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants, which will be announced throughout the year. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$2.7 million across 1,117 organizations.

Since the program's inception in 1985, Gatorade Player of the Year award recipients have won hundreds of professional and college championships, and many have also turned into pillars in their communities, becoming coaches, business owners and educators.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit playeroftheyear.gatorade.com, on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

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