

NIWOT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE COLORADO GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (January 22, 2024) — In its 39<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Addison Ritzenhein of Niwot High School is the 2023-24 Gatorade Colorado Girls Cross Country Player of the Year. Ritzenhein is the second Gatorade Colorado Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Niwot High School.

The award, which celebrates the nation’s top high school athletes for excellence on the field, in the classroom and in the community, distinguishes Ritzenhein as Colorado’s best high school girls cross country player. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport, touting an all-star group of alumni that includes Irene Riggs (2022-23, 2021-22 & 2020-21, Morgantown High School, Morgantown, W. Va.), Katelyn Tuohy (2019-20, 2018-19 & 2017-18, North Rockland High School, Thiels, N.Y.) and Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Preparatory Catholic High School, San Luis Obispo, Calif.)

The 5-foot-3 sophomore won her first national title this past season, breaking the tape at the Nike Cross Nationals Final with a time of 17:10.40 and leading the Cougars to a runner-up finish as a team. Ritzenhein also won the Class 4A state crown in a state class-record time of 17:08.2, crossing the line 29.8 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and pacing her squad to the team title. The daughter of two-time Gatorade Michigan Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year (1999-01) and three-time Olympian Dathan Ritzenhein, she clocked a personal-best 16:44.9 for 5K and ranked No. 1 in the national MileSplit 50 for 2023.

A member of the Niwot High School Leadership Academy and a Student Aide at her school, Ritzenhein is also a member of her school’s choir. She has volunteered locally on behalf of REAL Training youth running club and in the concessions booth for NHS boosters. “Addy Ritzenhein raced smarter and achieved more than any prep girl in the country last fall,” said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. “She beat the best national race field of the year and led her team to the podium. She also exhibited poise beyond her years by erasing a considerable mid-race deficit to reel in the co-favorites over the final mile at the NXN Final.”

Ritzenhein has maintained a 4.33 weighted GPA in the classroom. She will begin her junior 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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Ritzenhein joins recent Gatorade Colorado Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Brooke Wilson (2022-23, Valor Christian High School), and Riley Stewart (2021-22, 2020-21, & 2019-20, Cherry Creek High School), among the state’s list of former award winners.

As part of Gatorade’s commitment to breaking down barriers in sport, every Player of the Year also receives a grant to donate to a social impact partner. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners’ grants have totaled more than \$4.9 million across more than 1,600 organizations.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit [playeroftheyear.gatorade.com](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY), Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://instagram.com/Gatorade) and Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade).

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