

**MORGANTOWN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA 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 **Irene Riggs of Morgantown High School** as its **2020-21 Gatorade West Virginia Girls Track & Field Player of the Year**. Riggs is the first Gatorade West Virginia Girls Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Morgantown 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 Riggs as West Virginia'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, Riggs 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.).

Also the state's 2020-21 Gatorade Girls Cross Country Player of the Year, the 5-foot-7 sophomore swept the 800-, 1,600- and 3,200-meter run events at the Class AAA state meet this past season, leading the Mohigans to a second-place finish as a team. At the time of her selection, Riggs was No. 1 in the state in all three disciplines and her personal-best 3200 time of 10:24.60 ranked No. 42 nationally among 2021 prep competitors in the event.

The vice president of her class at Morgantown High, Riggs has volunteered locally as part of fundraising campaigns to benefit the WVU Medicine Children's Hospital, and she has donated her time as a youth swimming coach. "Irene was truly dominant in all of her events that I saw her run this season," said Ed Frohnappel, head coach of University High.

Riggs has maintained an A average 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 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.

Riggs joins recent Gatorade West Virginia Girls Track & Field Players of the Year Tori Starcher (2019-20, 2018-19, & 2017-18, Ripley High School), and McKenna Smith (2016-17, Bridgeport High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Riggs has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Riggs 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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