

**WILLISTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH DAKOTA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 24, 2022) — In its 37th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Eleni Lovgren** of **Williston High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade North Dakota Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Lovgren is the first Gatorade North Dakota Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Williston 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 Lovgren as North Dakota's best high school girls cross country player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Player of the Year award to be announced in February, Lovgren joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Lukas Verzbicas (2010-11 & 2009-10, Carl Sandburg High School, Orland Park, Ill.), Megan Goethals (2009-10, Rochester High School, Rochester Hills, Mich.), Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Preparatory Catholic High School, San Luis Obispo, Calif.) and Chris Derrick (2007-08, Neuqua Valley High School, Naperville, Ill.).

The 5-foot-5 senior raced to the Class A individual state championship this past season with a time of 18:27.1. Lovgren broke the tape at the Becki Wells Invitational, the RM Stoudt Invitational, the Anderson/Stavn Invitational and the Custer County Invitational, while placing second at the Western Dakota Association championships.

A devoted member of her church community, Lovgren has volunteered locally on behalf of the Salvation Army, Feed My Starving Children, a Vacation Bible School and a community clean-up initiative. "Eleni can be set apart and above for numerous reasons," said Williston High School coach Chase Gregory. "Her passion for the sport is matched by no one, and she has helped build a program starting with five girls into a team of close to 40."

Lovgren has maintained a 4.10 GPA in the classroom. She remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Lovgren joins recent Gatorade North Dakota Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Meghan Ford (2020-21, 2019-20, & 2018-19, Jamestown High School) and Kelby Rinas (2017-18, Mandan High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Gatorade has a long-standing history of serving athlete communities and understands how sports instill valuable lifelong skills on and off the field. Through Gatorade's "Play it Forward" platform, Lovgren has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national organization of their choosing that helps young athletes realize the benefits of playing sports. Lovgren is also eligible to submit a short 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 \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 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 or follow us on social media on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.