

**CORNING-PAINTED POST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW YORK SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 9, 2022) — In its 37th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Atalyia Rijo** of **Corning-Painted Post High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade New York Softball Player of the Year**. Rijo is the first Gatorade New York Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Corning-Painted Post 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 Rijo as New York's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award to be announced in June, Rijo joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Cat Osterman (2000-01, Cy Spring High School, Texas), Kelsey Stewart (2009-10, Arkansas City High School, Kan.), Carley Hoover (2012-13, D.W. Daniel High School, S.C.), Jenna Lilley (2012-13, Hoover High School, Ohio), Morgan Zerkle (2012-13, Cabell Midland High School, W. Va.), and Rachel Garcia (2014-15, Highland High School, Calif.).

The 5-foot-7 senior shortstop led the Hawks (18-2) to the Section IV Class AA postseason final this past season. Rijo batted .585 with five triples, seven home runs, 21 RBI and 43 runs scored, amassing an OPS of 1.860. A three-time First Team All-State honoree, she was selected for the PGF Futures All-American Game and was invited to play for the Dominican Republic National Team. She's ranked as the nation's No. 8 prospect in the Class of 2022 by Extra Inning Softball.

Rijo is a member of her school's Student Council and has volunteered locally on behalf of a food bank and elementary school reading initiatives. "I have never seen a player, boy or girl, with the skill set of Atalyia Rijo," said Gordon Begent, head coach at Ithaca High School. "She has a cannon for an arm and I can't tell you how many times I've watched her make a play that I thought was impossible. She also has one of the most impressive offensive games in the country. She has speed, good hand-eye control and hits for both average and power."

Rijo has maintained an A average in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at the University of Arkansas 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.

Rijo joins recent Gatorade New York Softball Players of the Year Shannon Becker (2020-21 & 2019-20, Mahopac High School), Makenzie Stiles (2018-19, Deposit High School), and Calista Phippen (2017-18, Ichabod Crane 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, Rijo 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. Rijo 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.

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