

**NORMAL COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ILLINOIS GIRLS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 30, 2022) — In its 37th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Ali Ince** of **Normal Community High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Illinois Girls Track & Field Player of the Year**. Ince is the first Gatorade Illinois Girls Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Normal Community 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 Ince as Illinois'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, Ince 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 (2014-15 & 2013-14, Grand Blanc High School, Mich.) and Candace Hill (2014-15, Rockdale County High School, Ga.).

The 5-foot-10 sophomore won both the 400-meter dash and the 800-meter run at the Class 3A state meet this past season, breaking the tape in the former with a time of 55.25 seconds and taking the 800 in 2:10.22. Ince also won the 800 at the Brooks PR Invitational in 2:04.14, which ranked as the nation's No. 4 performance among prep girls competitors in 2022. She took second nationally in the same event at the Nike Outdoor Nationals.

A member of her school's Student Council, Ince serves on the yearbook staff and has volunteered locally on behalf of a food bank and youth running programs. "Ali is a national-class runner and a world-class human being," said Normal Community High School distance coach Tom Patten. "She had another outstanding track and field season, but she was also willing to sacrifice in support of her team and teammates."

Ince has maintained a 4.93 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.

Ince joins recent Gatorade Illinois Girls Track & Field Players of the Year Jayden Ulrich (2020-21, East Alton-Wood River High School), and Katelynn Hart (2019-20, 2018-19, & 2017-18, Glenbard West 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, Ince 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. Ince 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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