

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

CHICAGO (January 23, 2023) — In its 38th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Ali Bainbridge** of **Lincoln High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Bainbridge is the first Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Lincoln 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 Bainbridge as South 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 January, Bainbridge joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners, including Natalie Cook (2021-22, Flower Mound High School, Flower Mound, Texas), Katelyn Tuohy (2019-20, North Rockland High School, Thiels, N.Y.), Megan Goethals (2009-10, Rochester High School, Rochester Hills, Mich.) and Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Preparatory Catholic High School, San Luis Obispo, Calif.).

Also the state's 2019-20 Gatorade Player of the Year as a student at Lennox High, the 5-foot-3 senior raced to the Class AA individual state championship this past season with a time of 17:26.09, leading the Patriots to third place as a team. Bainbridge also won the Nike Heartland Preview, the Augustana Twilight Meet and the Clyde Cotton Invitational in addition to finishing fourth in the Gold Race at the prestigious Roy Griak Invitational. She took sixth at the Nike Heartland Regional Championships and missed becoming an All-American at Nike Cross Nationals by one place, finishing three seconds behind the final honoree.

A member of the National Honor Society as well as the school's Spanish Club, Latin Club and Patriot Pride Committee, Bainbridge has served as part of the student council and as a teacher's assistant in her religion class. She has also volunteered locally on behalf of Feeding South Dakota, the Serve and Learn Student Association and Best Buddies, a program that creates opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She is a member of her church youth group as well and donates her time to the church's nursery caregiving program. "Ali Bainbridge celebrated her first state cross country championship and did so in impressive fashion by running the top time across all classifications at Broadland Creek Golf Course," said Erik Boal, an editor for DyeStat.com. "She also advanced to Nike Cross Nationals in Oregon and just missed out on earning All-America recognition with a 22nd-place performance."

Bainbridge has maintained a 3.97 weighted GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at the University of Nebraska 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.

Two-time winner Bainbridge joins recent Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Alea Hardie (2021-22, O'Gorman High School), Katie Castelli (2020-21, O'Gorman High School), and Ellie Abraham (2018-19, Brookings High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Being a Gatorade Player of the Year means paying it forward for the next generation. Through Gatorade's Play it Forward initiative, every Player of the Year receives a grant to give to one of Gatorade's social impact partners, supporting Gatorade's ambition to fuel the future of sport. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 organizations.

For nearly 40 years, Gatorade has honored high school athletes at the top of their game as teammates, supporting their communities and achieving academic success. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes and community leaders, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport.

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.

###