

**MORGANTOWN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (January 23, 2023) — In its 38<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Irene Riggs** of **Morgantown High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade West Virginia Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Riggs is the second Gatorade West Virginia Girls Cross Country 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 cross country player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Player of the Year award to be announced in January, Riggs 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.).

A three-time Gatorade Player of the Year in cross country, the 5-foot-8 senior won the Nike Cross Nationals title this past season with a time of 16:40.9, the second-fastest girls 5K performance in history at Oregon's Glendoveer Golf Course. That followed Riggs' Group AAA individual state championship, which sparked the Mohigans to a state title as a team. She also broke the tape at the Nike Southeast Regional in North Carolina with a time of 16:02.1, eclipsing the WakeMed course record by 20 seconds and producing the second-fastest 5K clocking by a prep girls in U.S. history. She also triumphed at the Red, White and Blue Classic during her unbeaten campaign.

The Vice President of the student body at Morgantown High School, Riggs has served as social media coordinator for Mohigan Idol, a Monongalia County talent competition that fundraises for WVU Children's Hospital. Also a student council representative at Morgantown High School, she has donated her time as a youth coach for Club Mountaineer Aquatics and as part of the Strawberry 5K fundraiser supporting her high school. "Riggs, a three-time state champion, became the first athlete from West Virginia ever to win a national cross country title and she did so in remarkable fashion, overcoming cold, windy conditions at Nike Cross Nationals to produce the No. 2 all-time mark of 16:40.9 at Glendoveer Golf Course in Oregon," said Erik Boal, an editor for DyeStat.com. "She also ran the second-fastest high school girls 5K cross country race in history with her 16:02.1 effort at the Nike Southeast Regional to eclipse by 20 seconds the 2019 WakeMed course record, held by three-time Gatorade National Player of the Year Katelyn Tuohy."

Riggs maintains a 4.22 unweighted GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at Stanford University 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.

Three-time winner Riggs joins recent Gatorade West Virginia Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Lea Hatcher (2019-20, Morgantown High School) and Madison Trippett (2018-19, Parkersburg 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY), Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://instagram.com/Gatorade) and Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade).

###