

**SOMERSET ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE FLORIDA GIRLS TRACK & FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 25, 2024) — In its 39th year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Aleesa Samuel** of **Somerset Academy** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Florida Girls Track & Field Player of the Year**. Samuel is the first Gatorade Florida Girls Track & Field Player of the Year to be chosen from Somerset Academy.

The award, which celebrates the nation’s top high school athletes for excellence on the field, in the classroom and in the community, distinguishes Samuel as Florida’s best high school girls track & field athlete. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport, touting an all-star group of alumni that includes Sanya Richards-Ross (2001-02, St. Thomas Aquinas High School, Fla), Sydney McLaughlin (2016-17, 2015-16 & 2014-15, Union Catholic High School, N.J.) and Angelina Napoleon (2022-23, Allegany-Limestone Central School, N.Y.).

Bypassing the state meet to focus on the national scene, the 5-foot-4 junior hurdler earned All-America honors this past season by way of a fourth-place finish in the 100-meter hurdles at Nike Outdoor Nationals. Samuel rocketed to the state record in that event at the early season Bob Hayes Invitational—her winning time of 13.12 seconds ranked No. 1 in the nation among prep girls this spring and No. 11 in prep history. She also won the event at the Texas Relays and the Brooks PR Invitational in addition to taking home FHSAA Class 3A District 15 titles in the 100 dash and 100 hurdles.

Samuel has volunteered locally preparing meals to feed the homeless during the annual Thanksgiving holiday. She also has donated her time mentoring and tutoring youth athletes at The Grind House training facility. “After a tremendous start to her season, Aleesa Samuel’s ability to overcome a midseason injury and refocus by season’s end not only netted her a major meet title on the national stage, it set the groundwork for further growth,” said Rich Gonzalez, editor of PrepCalTrack.com. “Only a half-dozen hurdlers in prep history have broken 13 seconds in the 100. Given her sheer power over the barriers and elite speed, it’s only a matter of time before she busts down that door.”

Samuel has maintained a 3.12 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior 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.

Samuel joins recent Gatorade Florida Girls Track & Field Players of the Year Aadaejah Hodge (2022-23, Montverde Academy) and Alyssa Jones (2021-22, 2020-21, & 2019-20, Miami Southridge Senior High School), among the state’s list of former award winners.

As part of Gatorade’s commitment to breaking down barriers in sport, every Player of the Year also receives a grant to donate to a social impact partner. To date, the Gatorade Player of the Year program has provided more than \$4.9 million in grants to winners across more than 1,900 organizations.

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 X(Twitter) at x.com/Gatorade.