



Sam Nimmo of Whittier College and Ian Gilligan of Long Beach State Named CalHOPE Courage Award Winners for November

SACRAMENTO – NOVEMBER 17, 2022 — Two California college student-athletes – **Sam Nimmo**, a senior on the Whittier College women’s lacrosse team, and **Ian Gilligan**, a sophomore on the Long Beach State University men’s golf team – have been selected as the November recipients of the **CalHOPE Courage Award**.

The monthly award honors student-athletes at California colleges and universities who have overcome the stress, anxiety, and mental trauma associated with personal hardships and adversity. It is presented by the College Sports Communicators (formerly CoSIDA), in association with The Associated Press; CalHOPE, a crisis counseling and support resource for communities impacted by public health emergencies, operated by the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS); and the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Mental Well-Being.

At the end of the school year, two of the student-athletes recognized during this year will be selected as annual **CalHOPE Courage Award** winners, and a \$5,000 donation will be made in each of their names toward mental health services at their schools. Previous honorees this fall have included: **Cameron Brink** (basketball, Stanford); **Garrett Jensen** (baseball, San Francisco State); **Lexi Zandonella-Arasa** (soccer, Sonoma State) and **Anysa and Amaya Gray** (soccer, U.C. Berkeley). Stories about all honorees are available at CalHOPECourageAward.com and via social media on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) at [@CalHOPE_Courage](#).

Here’s a look at November’s CalHOPE Courage Award honorees:

Sam Nimmo

In 2018, at age 17, Sam lost her 15-year-old brother, Zachary, to suicide just a year after anxiety and depression overwhelmed him. In response, Sam and her parents, Steve and Mannie, started the Z-Cares Foundation to honor Zachary and help alleviate the scourge of anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders affecting youth. The foundation’s mission is to encourage meaningful conversations about youth mental health while reducing stigma in our communities and providing critical resources.

“The life that my brother lived helping others empowers me every day to spread the message about how important mental health is,” said Sam. “No one should live with the weight of anxiety and depression. I am proud to help break the stigma around mental health and passionate about doing so.”

Sam was intending to major in kinesiology when she arrived at Whittier College from Amador Valley High School, but her experience with Z-Cares has encouraged her to major in psychology and make improving mental health her life’s work. Upon graduation in May 2023, she intends to take a gap year to continue her research experience within cognitive development psychology before pursuing a masters’ degree and then possibly a PhD.

In addition to her full course load and work with the foundation, the native of Pleasanton, California plays attack on the lacrosse field and is once again expected to be an integral player for the Poets. Following a freshman campaign in which she scored one goal in six games and then the cancellation of the 2021 season, she scored 27 goals last spring and recorded eight assists. Both her 27 goals and 49 shots on goal were second-best on the team, while her 35 points ranked third.

Ian Gilligan

When Ian was 15, his life was forever changed when a pain in his shoulder and subsequent skin irritation was diagnosed as an incredibly rare form of lymphoma, making Ian one of only 20 kids worldwide with this type of lymphoma.

A sophomore at Galena High School in Reno, Nevada at the time, Ian spent seven months undergoing chemotherapy. Joined by his parents, he would spend one week at the hospital for treatment, followed by two weeks off, only to return to the hospital to repeat the process. In all, he spent more than 50 days at Renown Children’s Hospital.

“Beyond the fear of possibly never being able to golf again, one of the hardest parts was being alone with my thoughts,” explained Ian. “My only path toward healing was to listen to the doctor, have a positive attitude, and take it day by day. A silver lining of this experience that I have been able to apply toward golf is to not get too high or low and just concentrate on the task at hand. If I can beat cancer, I can certainly overcome a sliced drive or a three-putt.”

Ian was named Big West Freshman of the Year and to the All-Big West First Team in 2021-22 with three Top 10 finishes and five Top 25 showings. His best finish was second place at The Big West Championships. This fall, the sophomore has played even better, capturing consecutive individual titles at the Nick Watney Invitational in Kingsburg and the Mackenzie Invitational in Sonoma. He followed those performances with a strong finish at the inaugural Cal Poly Invitational, leading Long Beach State to a top 10 finish. He was recognized as the Big West Golfer of the Month for September and October and is currently the top ranked Division 1 golfer in the country.

Said Dr. Jim Kooler, Special Consultant for DHCS: “CalHOPE is honored to recognize student-athletes throughout the state who, despite setbacks, have overcome life’s challenges to continue to perform their best as both scholars and athletes. CalHOPE’s purpose is to build community resiliency and help people recover through free outreach, crisis counseling, and support services. We hope that by sharing these stories that student-athletes have experienced, we will all be inspired.”

Sports information directors at all colleges and universities in California are encouraged to nominate deserving intercollegiate student-athletes through April 2023 at CalHOPECourageAward.com. The honorees will be selected by a panel of writers, editors, and sports information directors from College Sports Communicators and The Associated Press. Fans can learn more and engage on social media on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) at [@CalHOPE_Courage](#).

ABOUT CalHOPE

CalHOPE is a multi-level campaign to connect people with vital mental health and wellness resources and information to help them find their way during difficult times. CalHOPE offers critical behavioral health crisis counseling programs and uses a public health approach that is focused on strength-based strategies of building resiliency and connecting people to the supports they need. CalHOPE partners with the California Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Mental Well-Being to promote the CalHOPE Courage Award. CalHOPE resources may be accessed by calling the program’s warm line at (833) 317-HOPE (4673) or by visiting www.calhope.org.

College Sports Communicators: College Sports Communicators is a 3,600-plus member national organization, comprised of the athletic communications, media relations, digital, and creative professionals throughout all levels of collegiate athletics in the United States and Canada. Founded in 1957, the organization is the second oldest management association in intercollegiate athletics. The organization's signature program is the Academic All-America program, honoring thousands of outstanding scholar-athletes annually. To learn more, visit collegesportscommunicators.com.

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