

LINCOLN-WAY EAST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE ILLINOIS FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (December 5, 2025) — In its 41st year celebrating the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Jonas Williams of Lincoln-Way East High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Illinois Football Player of the Year.

Gatorade Player of the Year is the top honor in high school sports, celebrating the nation's best high school athletes for their excellence in sport, academics and community. The award recognizes Williams as Illinois' best high school football player, and he joins an elite legacy that spans professional athletes and coaches to CEOs, such as Peyton Manning (1993-94, Isidore Newman School, LA), Nick Singleton (2021-22, Governor Mifflin High School, PA) and Keelon Russell (2024-25, Duncanville High School, TX).

The 6-foot-3, 205-pound senior quarterback passed for 2,488 yards and 35 touchdowns this past season, leading the Griffins (9-3) to the Class 8A state tournament quarterfinals. Ranked as the No. 159 recruit in the Class of 2026 by ESPN.com, Williams was a 2024 First Team All-State selection. He concluded his career with state records for both passing yards (11,347) and passing touchdowns (147).

Williams has volunteered locally as a youth football coach and mentor. "Good doesn't adequately describe Jonas' play," said George Czart, head coach of Lockport High School. "Great would be the word to use as you see how he makes all the throws on the field with accuracy and precision. Jonas is a great player, leader and person."

Williams has maintained a weighted 3.69 GPA in the classroom. At the time of his selection, he had made a verbal commitment to receive athletic aid to play football at the University of Southern California next fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one state winner from each of the 50 states and Washington D.C., in 12 different sports: football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, baseball, softball, boys and girls soccer, and boys and girls track & field. In total, 610 high school athletes are honored each year. From the pool of state winners, one national winner is selected in each of the 12 sports. 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 winners in each sport.

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 \$6.4 million in grants to winners across more than 2,200 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 Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://www.instagram.com/Gatorade), Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) and X(Twitter) at x.com/Gatorade.

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