

DOWLING CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE IOWA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (December 5, 2025) — In its 41st year celebrating the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Ian Middleton of Dowling Catholic High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Iowa 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 Middleton as Iowa's 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 5-foot-8, 215-pound senior running back and defensive lineman rushed for a Class 5A-leading 1,767 yards this past season, scoring 19 touchdowns on the ground and carrying the Maroons (12-1) to the Class 5A state championship. Middleton racked up a 5A state title-game record 34 carries for 206 yards and two touchdowns, finishing with 279 attempts on the season—the next-closest ball carrier in 5A logged 221. He added six catches for 43 yards and a score last fall. On defense in specialty situations, he recorded 2.5 sacks.

Middleton has volunteered on behalf of Meals of the Heartland and Service of Solidarity, which helps families of English language learners. Also a member of the Kairos Des Moines faith-based community, he's participated in the Dowling Catholic High School Christmas Baskets program. "Ian has been the heart and soul of our team, especially the past two seasons," said Dowling Catholic High School coach Aundra Meeks. "He's worked as hard as any player I've coached to ensure that he was prepared both physically and mentally. I've enjoyed coaching and getting to know Ian over the past nine years and will miss his drive and determination as well as his leadership skills. "

Middleton has maintained a 4.02 weighted GPA in the classroom. He remains undecided on a collegiate destination.

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.

###