

KINDRED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE NORTH DAKOTA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (December 5, 2025) — In its 41st year celebrating the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Brooks Bakko of Kindred High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade North Dakota 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 Bakko as North Dakota'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 6-foot-5, 205-pound junior wideout and safety recorded 41 receptions for 757 yards and a school single-season record 12 touchdowns receiving this past season, leading the Vikings (10-1) to the Class 2A semifinals. Ranked as the nation's No. 130 recruit in his class by On3Rivals, Bakko, a two-time All-State selection on defense, added 70 tackles along with 3.5 tackles for a loss, a school-record-tying seven interceptions and three pass breakups. He also handled punting duties for Kindred in addition to rushing for two scores and passing for another.

Bakko has volunteered locally every summer coaching youth athletes at both a basketball and football camp. He has also donated his time to a community cleanup in association with his church. In addition, Bakko participates in a literacy-outreach initiative by reading to elementary school students and serves the Kindred farming community by performing a wide variety of agricultural tasks. "Seeing those stat lines for Bakko, with him contributing in all three phases, he's got a really good case for Player of the Year," said Nate Wahl, Prep Redzone Lead Scout for The Dakotas. "Accounting for 47 percent of his team's receiving yards is a big number. His overall production is pretty impressive."

Bakko has maintained a 3.39 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his senior year of high school 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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