

**BLOOMFIELD HILLS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE  
NAMED GATORADE MICHIGAN VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF  
THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 9, 2026) — In its 41<sup>st</sup> year celebrating the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Kayla Nwabueze of Bloomfield Hills High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Michigan Volleyball 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 Nwabueze as Michigan's best high school volleyball player, and she joins an elite legacy that spans professional athletes and coaches to CEOs, such as Kerri Walsh Jennings (1995-96, Archbishop Mitty High School, CA), April Ross (1999-00, Newport Harbor High School, CA) and Campbell Flynn (2024-25, Mercy High School, MI).

The 6-foot-2 senior middle blocker and outside hitter amassed 751 kills and 358 digs this past season, leading the Black Hawks (39-6) to the Division 1 state championship match. Nwabueze also compiled 56 service aces, 48 assists and 43 blocks while posting a .491 kill percentage and a .372 hitting percentage. An American Volleyball Coaches Association Second Team All-American selection, she concluded her prep volleyball career with 2,217 kills, 1,127 digs and 396 blocks.

Nwabueze has volunteered locally as an assistant at a pediatric dental office and as support staff on behalf of multiple community hospitals. She has also created her own beginning volleyball clinic and donated her time as a youth volleyball coach. "Kayla's power is at another level, and her height and athleticism put her in a class above most athletes," said Deena Maher, head coach of South Lyon High School. "Without her, Bloomfield would not have been nearly as successful. You could put Kayla on any team in the state and that team would be incredibly successful."

Nwabueze has maintained a weighted 3.96 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to attend Harvard University, where she will play volleyball, beginning this 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](https://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](https://x.com/Gatorade).

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