

**WOODS CROSS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE
NAMED GATORADE UTAH VOLLEYBALL PLAYER OF
THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 9, 2026) — In its 41st year celebrating the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Avery Poulton of Woods Cross High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Utah 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 Poulton as Utah'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 outside hitter led the Wildcats (30-1) to the Class 5A state title this past season, recording 411 kills, 268 digs and 68 blocks. Poulton compiled a .429 hitting percentage and averaged 4.4 terminations per set, adding 40 service aces as well. Ranked as the state's No. 1 recruit in her class by PrepDig, she will graduate as a 3-time First Team All-State selection. She concluded her prep career with 1,327 kills, 946 digs and a .352 hitting percentage.

Poulton has volunteered locally assembling food pantry packs for her school's Teen Center and creating handmade blankets for a hospital. She has also donated her time at the Bountiful Food Pantry, where she helped organize and distribute goods to those in need. "Avery is amazing," said Sarah Chism, head coach at Bountiful High School. "I've seen her from afar, alone at the gym at 5 am before school working out. In terms of efficiency and impact on her team's success, I think she was without comparison. Not just hitting, but blocking, defense and serve-receive."

Poulton has maintained a 3.84 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to play volleyball at the University of Kansas 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 or follow us on social media on Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade, Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY and X (Twitter) at x.com/Gatorade.

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