

ST. ANTHONY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE ILLINOIS GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (January 21, 2026) — In its 41st year celebrating the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Isabella Keller of St. Anthony High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Illinois Girls Cross Country 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 Keller as Illinois' best high school girls cross country athlete, and she joins an elite legacy that spans professional athletes and coaches to CEOs, such as Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Preparatory Catholic High School, CA), Katelyn Tuohy (2017-18, 2018-19 & 2019-20, North Rockland High School, NY) and Jane Hedengren (2024-25, Timpview High School, UT).

Also the state's 2023-24 Gatorade Player of the Year, the 4-foot-11 junior earned First Team All-American honors by placing fourth at Nike Cross Nationals this past season. Keller clocked a time of 17:02.0 at the event to produce the highest placement and fastest run by an Illinois girl in the event's history. She also won the Nike XC Town Twilight invitational in 16:53.0, the state's fastest 5K time of the season and just 2.3 seconds shy of the meet record set by Gatorade's 2024-25 Best Female Player of the Year Jane Hedengren.

A member of the National Honor Society as well as the Society for Academic Achievement, Keller has volunteered locally on behalf of multiple community service initiatives. She also has donated her time as a lector at Sacred Heart Church and St. Anthony Parish. "Among the biggest headlines on the Midwest scholastic cross country scene this year was the emergence of Isabella Keller into a national-caliber talent," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "Her fourth-place finish at Nike Cross Nationals this year was something I don't think anyone truly saw coming."

Keller has maintained a weighted 4.00 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior year of high school in the 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](https://www.x.com/Gatorade).

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