

PELLA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE IOWA 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 Marissa Ferebee of Pella High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Iowa 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 Ferebee as Iowa's 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).

The 5-foot-6 senior broke the tape at the Class 3A state meet to win her third title, leading the Dutch to their fourth consecutive team crown. The state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, Ferebee was the top Iowan at the Brooks Midwest Regional Championships, where she finished 11th. She took 16th at the NXN Heartland Regional Championships, earning her a Third Team All-Region at both events.

A member of her school's student council and marching band, Ferebee has volunteered locally on behalf of her church as a small group leader and the parish nursery. She has also donated her time as a youth soccer referee and the annual Tulip Time Festival. She has worked as a summer lifeguard and at a long-term care facility. "Marissa Ferebee did more than enough to lead her team to a fourth state title in a row along with her third consecutive individual crown," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "She was the top Iowan girl at the Brooks Midwest XC Championships and earned dual Third Team All-Region honors."

Ferebee has maintained a weighted 4.1 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to run at the University of Arkansas 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](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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