

NORTHSHORE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE LOUISIANA 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 Grace Keene of Northshore High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Louisiana 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 Keene as Louisiana'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-4 sophomore won the LHSAA Division 1 state meet this past season with a personal-best time of 17:21.7, breaking the tape 20.6 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Panthers to a sixth place team finish. A winner in six of her nine races last fall, Keene was the runner-up in her remaining three meets. She capped her campaign by earning All-American status with her win in the age 15-18 Division at the AAU Cross Country Nationals.

Also a practiced guitar player and violinist, Keene has volunteered locally on behalf of food drives in association with St. Luke's Church. She also has donated her time to both the SPCA and PetSmart in an effort to help homeless dogs be adopted. "Pushing her season deeper into the calendar than all of her in-state peers, Grace Keene was at her best throughout the postseason," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "It's exciting to think about what the next two distance seasons have in store for her."

Keene has maintained a weighted 4.44 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her junior year of high school 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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