

WAYZATA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MINNESOTA 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 Maddie Gullickson of Wayzata High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Minnesota 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 Gullickson as Minnesota'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-8 senior earned First Team All-American honors and both premier national championship meets this past season, taking seventh at the Nike Cross Nationals and leading the Trojans to the national team title. Gullickson also finished sixth at the national Brooks XC Championships and finished No. 7 in the country in the final MileSplit50 rankings. She broke the tape at the Class 3A state meet to anchor Wayzata High School's team championship and her win at the NXN Heartland Regional Championship came in a personal-best 16:49.5.

Gullickson is pursuing her CNA certificate and has performed two, full-day clinical rotations at a memory care facility. She has volunteered locally on behalf of a Unified Arts class serving physically and intellectually challenged students and she's donated her time to the Rising Stars running camp for elementary schoolers. "Maddie Gullickson clocked a season-best four weeks in a row last fall, culminating in her PR at Nike Heartland. A month later, she led her team to the national championship at Nike Cross Nationals. Along the way, she won a state title and helped the Midwest team take the national Brooks XC Championships crown. She did more than enough to be the Gatorade Player of the Year."

Gullickson has maintained a weighted 3.98 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to run at North Carolina State University 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.

###