

## **JOPLIN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MISSOURI GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 21, 2026) — In its 41<sup>st</sup> year celebrating the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Ava Doll of Joplin High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Missouri 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 Doll as Missouri'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-2 senior won the Class 5 state championship this past season, marking the first time in history an Eagles' girls competitor captured the title. Doll also took ninth in the El Caliente Race at the prestigious Chile Pepper XC Festival, clocking one of her two sub-18 times of the fall. She broke the tape at November's Class 5 District 2 meet in a personal-best 17:46.01.

A member of the National Honor Society and the National Technical Honor Society, Doll is pursuing her CNA certification and has worked with local nursing home residents daily as part of that process. Also a barista at The Human Bean in Joplin, she has worked as a lifeguard at the Twin Hills Country Club. She has volunteered locally on behalf of Watered Gardens, the Cecil Floyd Craft Show and the Salvation Army. In addition, she has donated her time with Joplin middle schools, as a peer tutor, as a track meet official and as a youth running mentor. "Ava Doll won the first girls cross country individual state title in Joplin High School history last fall and became the first girl from southwest Missouri to win in the largest classification in 31 years," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "She ran the fastest all-class time of the day at states and turned in an impressive showing at the Chile Pepper Cross Country Festival."

Doll has maintained a weighted 4.14 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to run at Missouri 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](https://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://instagram.com/Gatorade), Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY) and X(Twitter) at [x.com/Gatorade](https://x.com/Gatorade).

###