

## **SHENENDEHOWA CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE NEW YORK 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 Leyla Bhusri of Shenendehowa Central High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade New York 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 Bhusri as New York'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 New York State Federation Championships this past season with a time of 17:40.4, breaking the tape 7.4 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Plainsmen to the team title. Bhusri also won the NYSPHSAA Class A state title, propelling her team to another crown. She crossed the line in 33rd at the Nike Cross Nationals in December to cap her prep distance career.

An award-winner for Chemistry Academic Excellence and in the National Latin Exam, Bhusri has volunteered locally with Legacy Ladies by mentoring disenfranchised girls. She also has donated her time to the Center for Vascular Awareness, a nonprofit that educates the general public regarding vascular medicine. "Leyla Bhusri was a boss when it came to consistency, either breaking the tape or finishing second in every race leading up to nationals," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "She's going to be a factor in the ACC pretty quickly beginning this fall."

Bhusri has maintained an A average in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to run at the University of Notre Dame 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](http://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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