

PINECREST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA 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 Madeline Dorsch of Pinecrest High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade North Carolina 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 Dorsch as North Carolina'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 NCHSAA Class 8A state meet this past season with a time of 16:56.2 to finish 60.9 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and lead the Patriots to seventh place as a team. Dorsch also took 14th at Nike Cross Nationals to earn Second Team All-American honors and 15th at the Brooks Cross Country Championships to garner Third Team All-American accolades. She clocked a personal-best time of 16:55.3 at the prestigious Great American Cross Country Festival, where she finished fifth.

Dorsch has volunteered locally serving as co-chairperson for the Moore County Special Olympics Spring Games under the auspices of Special Olympics North Carolina, recruiting and training volunteers to set up the facility, administer the track and field events, and clean the facility upon conclusion. She also has donated her time as part of multiple community service initiatives in association with the National Honor Society in addition to donating her time as a coach for youth runners. "The most improved talent nationally as the 2025 season progressed, Madeline Dorsch was arguably the nation's No. 2 sophomore behind double national champion Natasza Dudek of Michigan," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "Considering Dorsch wasn't even among the Top 90 finishers at her two biggest in-state meets last year, her leap to the elite level is nothing short of astounding."

Dorsch has maintained a weighted 4.43 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](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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