

ATHENS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE OHIO 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 Sophia Szolosi of Athens High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Ohio 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 Szolosi as Ohio'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-3 senior won the Brooks XC Midwest Championships this past season and went on to take fourth at Brooks nationals, earning First Team All-American honors. Szolosi also broke the tape at the Division 2 state meet with a time of 17:02.5, leading the Bulldogs to the team title. Her win at the Division 2 Region 6 meet came in a personal-best 16:43.6.

The vice president of her school's Key Club for four years, Szolosi helped establish a schoolwide recycling program. Also a member of the STEM club, she's conducted multiple research projects that have earned her a rating of Superior at the State Science Fair. She has volunteered locally on behalf of the Athens Athletic Club (AAC), a nonprofit designed to empower and encourage running amongst youth in Southeastern Ohio. "I'm not sure how a counter-argument can be made against Sophia Szolosi for Gatorade Player of the Year," said Mark Dwyer of MileSplit Heartland. "She was a state and regional champion and posted a top-five finish at nationals. Her PR at 5K is the second-fastest in state history."

Szolosi has maintained a weighted 4.81 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to run at Duke 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, Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY and X(Twitter) at x.com/Gatorade.

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