

OWASSO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE OKLAHOMA 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 Ava Cornelius of Owasso High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Oklahoma 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 Cornelius as Oklahoma'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-5 senior won the OSSAA Class 6A state meet this past season with a personal-best time of 17:06.7, breaking the tape 66 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Rams to a second-place team finish. Cornelius earned First Team All-Region honors by taking fifth at the NXN South Region Championship. She also finished third in the featured El Caliente race at the Chile Pepper XC Festival.

Cornelius has volunteered locally at Sixth Grade Center by mentoring special needs students. She has also donated her time as part of multiple community service initiatives in association with her leadership class in addition to working the concession stand at football games. "A dominant state meet performance, strong showings at key interstate challenges and going unbeaten against in-state foes makes Ava Cornelius the clear and deserving choice as Oklahoma's best," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack.

Cornelius has maintained a weighted 3.5 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to run at the University of Tulsa 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.

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