

CUMBERLAND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE RHODE ISLAND 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 Cecelia Ludwig of Cumberland High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Rhode Island 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 Ludwig as Rhode Island'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 sophomore won the Open state meet this past season with a time of 18:17.27, breaking the tape 27.7 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Clippers to a fourth-place finish as a team. Ludwig was the state's top finisher at both the New England Cross Country Championships, where she took fifth, and at the Nike Cross Northeast Regional Championships, where she crossed the line in 13th to earn Second Team All-Region honors. She also was runner-up at the Class A state meet.

A member of the Cumberland High School student council, Ludwig has volunteered locally at McCourt Middle School and as a youth running coach. She has also donated her time to multiple community service initiatives through the Lafayette Lodge, Freemasonry gathering place. "CeCe Ludwig is the definition of a fierce competitor," said Kerrie Carpenter, head coach of Cumberland High School. "She trains and races with heart, grit and a relentless drive to be better."

Ludwig has maintained a 3.62 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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