

MERCER ISLAND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE WASHINGTON 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 Rodriguez of Mercer Island High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Washington 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 Rodriguez as Washington'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 state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-4 junior won her third straight WIAA Class 3A state meet title this past season with a time of 17:24.0, breaking the tape 27.1 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor in leading the Islanders to their second consecutive team championship. Winner in 8 of her 10 cross-country races, Rodriguez broke the state 5k record by clocking 16:10.0 to win The Mook XC Invite. In September, she competed at the U20 World Mountain and Trail Running Championships in Spain and earned the top American finish in 14th place.

A member of the Latin X Club on campus, Rodriguez has volunteered locally organizing shoe and apparel donation drives for girls in need. She has also donated her time speaking to members of youth running clubs on Mercer Island. "Undertaking a grueling schedule that included international success across the pond, Sophia Rodriguez fashioned an excellent junior campaign," said Rich Gonzalez of PrepCalTrack. "Among the many high watermark performances were a dominant state meet win, a state-record clocking, which broke the record of former Gatorade National Player of the Year Alexa Efraimson, and the top American finish at the World Mountain and Trail Running Championships in Spain. Few Washington runners have enjoyed as much success in a single season."

Rodriguez has maintained a 3.56 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior 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.

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