

TUPELO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MISSISSIPPI BOYS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (February 13, 2026) — In its 41st year celebrating the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Andrew Brown of Tupelo High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Mississippi Boys 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 Brown as Mississippi's best high school boys cross country athlete, and he joins an elite legacy that spans professional athletes and coaches to CEOs, such as Lukas Verzbicas (2009-10 & 2010-11, Carl Sandburg High School, IL) Edward Cheserek (2012-13, Saint Benedict's Preparatory School, NJ) and Charlie Vause (2024-25, Rio Rancho High School, NM).

The 5-foot-9, 146-pound junior broke the tape at the Class 7A State Meet, clocking the fastest all-class time of the day in 15:23.7 and leading the Golden Wave to the team title. The state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, Brown was also Mississippi's fastest competitor at the Jesse Owens Classic, where he took second in the Gold Race, as well as The Southern Showcase, where he took eighth. He won the Tupelo Invitational last fall in a personal-best 15:04.5, which was the state's fastest 5K in 2025.

A member of his school's DECA club, Fellowship of Christian Athletes chapter and the Harrisburg Baptist Church youth group, Brown has volunteered locally on behalf of his church, the Modern Woodmen of American Youth Service Club and the Special Olympics. He's also donated his time to THS Sports Communications. "Andrew Brown was once again the class of Mississippi this past fall, clocking five times under 15:30 at 5K, and he didn't lose to an in-state competitor," said Rich Gonzalez, editor of PrepCalTrack. "From September through November 1, he earned three wins, a second and an eighth-place finish."

Brown has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his 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, Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY and X(Twitter) at x.com/Gatorade.

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