

BRANDON VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA 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 Mikah Peters of Brandon Valley High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade South Dakota 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 Peters as South Dakota'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 6-foot, 135-pound senior won the Division AA state meet this past season with a time of 14:54.09, breaking the tape 7.94 seconds ahead of his next-closest competitor and leading the Lynx to a third place finish as a team. Peters also earned Second Team All-American honors by placing 20th at the Brooks Cross Country Championships in 15:56.4. He concluded the season as the nation's No. 25 competitor in the MileSplit50 rankings.

A peer leader within his school's chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Peters is a member of the Brandon Valley High School student council and has volunteered locally with Best Buddies and the Special Olympics. "Mikah was the clear No. 1 runner in South Dakota this season," said Luke Jelen, head coach of Lincoln High School. "He's a very confident runner and has clearly put in the work to be great."

Peters has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom and ranks No. 1 in his class. He's signed a written letter of athletic aid to run at Iowa State 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](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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