

ALBERTVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE ALABAMA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (March 13, 2026) — In its 41st year celebrating the nation’s best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Lani Smallwood of Albertville High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Alabama Girls Basketball 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 Smallwood as Alabama’s best high school girls basketball player, and she joins an elite legacy that spans professional athletes and coaches to CEOs, such as Candace Parker (2002-03 & 2003-04, Naperville Central High School, IL) Paige Bueckers (2020-21, Hopkins High School, MN) and Aaliyah Chavez (2024-25, Monterey High School, TX).

The 5-foot-9 senior guard averaged 25.3 points and 8.1 rebounds per game this past season, leading the Aggies (29-4) to the Class 7A state quarterfinals. Smallwood also averaged 3.6 assists and 3.5 steals while sinking 105 shots from 3-point range. The 2025 Class 7A Player of the Year, she concluded her prep basketball career with 3,111 points and 1,094 rebounds.

A member of her local chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Smallwood has volunteered locally as a youth basketball coach. She has also donated her time to multiple community service initiatives through her church youth group. “Lani is the engine that drives her team,” said Sara Price, head coach of Mountain Brook High School. “She’s been doing everything at a high level—scoring, rebounding, defending and creating for her teammates.”

Smallwood has maintained a 3.96 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to play basketball at Mississippi 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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