

ONTARIO CHRISTIAN SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE CALIFORNIA 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 Kaleena Smith of Ontario Christian School is the 2025-26 Gatorade California 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 Smith as California’s best high school girls basketball player, and she’s also been selected as a finalist for the distinguished Gatorade National Girls Basketball Player of the Year award to be announced later this month. Smith 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).

At the time of her selection, the 5-foot-5 junior point guard had led the Knights to a 32-2 record and a berth in the Open Division State Tournament semifinals. Smith averaged 32.1 points, 7.0 assists, 4.6 steals and 3.6 rebounds through 34 games while shooting 54.0 percent from the floor and 89.8 from the free throw line, totaling 1,059 points. The state’s returning Gatorade Player of the Year, Smith also led Ontario Christian School to the Southern Section Open Division Tournament championship game. A Naismith Award finalist for a second straight year, she’s ranked as the nation’s No. 1 recruit in the Class of 2027 by ESPN, 247Sports and PrepGirlsHoops.

Smith has volunteered locally with the Salvation Army and as a youth basketball coach. She has also completed an internship with the Creative Artists Agency and has participated in a youth Bible study group. “Kaleena is 100 percent the best player I’ve seen play live at the high school level,” said Josh Lozano, head coach of Fairmont Preparatory School. “I’ve been coaching elite boys and girls for 10 years and she’s different. Her game management is the best I’ve seen. She can control the tempo, the pace and her offense.”

Smith has maintained a 3.45 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.

###