

AUSTIN PREP STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MASSACHUSETTS 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 Fope Ayo of Austin Prep is the 2025-26 Gatorade Massachusetts 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 Ayo as Massachusetts’ 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 6-foot-5 senior center averaged 22.3 points, 17.3 rebounds and 4.1 blocks this past season, becoming the first player in Austin Prep history to eclipse both 1,000 career points and rebounds. Ayo was the New England Basketball Journal’s 2024-25 Class AA Defensive Player of the Year and a McDonald’s All-American Game nominee this year. She is ranked as the nation’s No. 45 recruit in the Class of 2026 by ESPN.

A member of Austin Prep’s student government and leadership council, Ayo has volunteered locally in association with the Unitas Leadership Academy, a faculty-nominated role in a program that features mentoring, community engagement, and skill development. She also founded Sweet Desserts, an initiative that bakes birthday cakes for incarcerated juveniles. “Fope is certainly an impact player,” said Gregor Mackechnie, head coach at Proctor Academy. “She’s an intimidating defensive presence on the second line of Austin Prep’s zone defense, and has learned to use her body and length effectively to convert scoring opportunities on the blocks. From all of my interactions with her (games over the past four years and observations during AAU practices), I found her to be a high-character young woman.”

Ayo has maintained an A average in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to play basketball at the University of Michigan 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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