

HOWELL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MICHIGAN 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 Lilly Williams of Howell High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Michigan 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 Williams as Michigan’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).

At the time of her selection, the 6-foot-6 senior center had led the Highlanders to a 23-1 record and a berth in the Division 1, Region 4 tournament semifinals. Williams averaged 17.7 points, 11.9 rebounds, 5.8 blocks, 2.0 assists and 2.0 steals through 24 games in her only year of high school basketball, having previously played in a league for homeschooled athletes. A 2026 McDonald’s All-American Game selection, Williams was a two-time National Christian HomeSchool Player of the Year playing for the HEA Firebirds. She’s ranked as the nation’s No. 15 recruit in the Class of 2026 by ESPN.

Williams participated in a service mission to Greece in the summer of 2025. She has volunteered locally as a youth sports camp counselor and she has also donated her time to multiple community service initiatives through her church youth group. “Lilly is the strongest post player I’ve seen in our area in a long time,” said Ryan Ballard, head coach of Plymouth High School. “She is a special talent. There’s a reason she was selected to the McDonald’s All-American Game and is the heavy favorite for Ms. Basketball in the state of Michigan.”

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