

LOYOLA SACRED HEART STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MONTANA 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 Spencer Laird of Loyola Sacred Heart is the 2025-26 Gatorade Montana 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 Laird as Montana’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-3 junior forward had led the Breakers to an 18-2 record and a berth in the Class B state tournament quarterfinals. Laird averaged 28.5 points, 8.4 rebounds, 4.5 steals and shot 61 percent from the floor through 20 games. A two-time First Team All-State selection who led the state in scoring as a sophomore, she’s ranked in the national Elite 150 for the Class of 2027 by Prospects Nation.

A member of her school’s choir, Laird has volunteered locally by organizing a community hygiene drive for a Missoula homeless shelter. An active member of her school’s campus ministry program, she’s also served as an officer in her Future Health Professionals of America chapter. She has also donated her time to the Saint Francis Xavier Catholic Church. “Spencer is a great player,” said Clint Layng, head coach at Jefferson High School. “She’s extremely difficult to match up with because she’s 6-foot-3 and can step out and shoot 3-pointers pretty consistently. When she goes inside, you have to double her because one person isn’t stopping her. She finishes well and has great footwork.”

Laird has maintained an A average in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to receive athletic aid to play basketball at Stanford University beginning in the fall of 2027.

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](https://www.x.com/Gatorade).

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