

## **MILLARD WEST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE NEBRASKA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 13, 2026) — In its 41<sup>st</sup> year celebrating the nation’s best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Kylee Paben of Millard West High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Nebraska 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 Paben as Nebraska’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 6-foot-1 senior small forward led the Wildcats to a 21-5 record and the Class A semifinals this past season. Paben averaged 19.3 points, 7.8 rebounds and 2.5 steals per game, including a 30-point effort along with 6 boards and 5 steals in a 63-52 win over Millard North. The leading scorer in Class A this past season as well as the 2025 State Tournament Most Outstanding Player, she’s ranked as the state’s No. 1 recruit in her class by PrepGirlsHoops. She concluded her prep career with 1,176 points and 584 rebounds.

She has spent the last two years volunteering at Special Olympics Nebraska as well as Play It Forward, continuing to unite and inspire through the power of sports. She is also a member of the National Honor society, which recognizes high levels of achievement across academic, service, leadership and character among high school students. “Kylee is the best offensive player in the state,” remarked Cody Trofholz, head coach of Papillion-LaVista High School. “She can score at all 3 levels - from 3, midrange and at the rim. She has to be guarded and worried about anytime she’s on the court. She is tough defensively and can guard multiple positions. She wants to win and competes as hard as anyone we play against. She is a great teammate who makes other players around her better. As an opposing coach, our game plan defensively was focused on her and how we could slow her down. She’s an incredible player.”

Paben has maintained a weighted 3.96 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to play basketball at the University of Minnesota in the 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](http://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://x.com/Gatorade).

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