

WESTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE SOUTH CAROLINA 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 Khalia Hartwell of Westside High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade South Carolina 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 Hartwell as South Carolina’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-5 junior center averaged 12.4 points, 8.3 rebounds and 2.2 blocks playing about 16 minutes per game this past season, leading the Rams (27-2) to the state title game. Ranked as the nation’s No. 16 recruit in the Class of 2027 by 247Sports, Hartwell shot 49 percent from the field. She entered the year as a two-time All-State honoree.

A mentor and member of the leadership team for her school’s Beta Club chapter, Hartwell has volunteered locally by helping to organize a school-wide training to support The Lot Project for the homeless. In association with the student council, she donated her time to the “Oh Snap” initiative, which collected, packed and distributed meals to Anderson-area families impacted by Snap benefits delays. Also an invited member of the Anderson 5 Student Impact initiative focused on quality assurance for Anderson schools’ educational outcomes, she was selected for the “Dream Team” helping city and county officials support the community. “Khalia is a dominant player who changes the game at both ends of the court,” said Samantha Camp, head coach at Wren High School. “Being 6-foot-5, she can score with high-level moves down low, but can also handle the ball and shoot from the outside. She has a high IQ and is always able to make the right pass. Khalia is dominant on defense and controls the paint, grabbing rebounds and leading the transition game. She’s unselfish, a great teammate and leader on the court.”

Anderson has maintained a weighted 4.7 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.

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