

**WAGNER COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA 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 Ashlyn Koupal of Wagner Community High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade South Dakota 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 Koupal as South Dakota’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 senior guard/forward had averaged 28 points, 14.2 rebounds, 4.3 blocks and 4.2 assists this past season, leading the Red Raiders (19-2) to the Class A quarterfinals. Koupal shot 63.8 percent from the field, including 46.4 from beyond the arc through 21 games, and hit 88.2 percent of her free throws. She has recorded more than 2,500 points, 1,100 rebounds, 450 assists and 350 blocks in her prep career. Ranked as the nation’s No. 10 recruit in her class by 247Sports, she is a McDonald’s All-American Game selection and made the national Naismith Award Midseason Team as one of only 25 players in the country to do so.

A member of the Lighthouse Church Youth group, Koupal has volunteered on behalf of the Special Olympics, a nursing home in her community, a holiday initiative to feed the needy and in association with the school’s athletic boosters program. She has also coached youth basketball players in addition to officiating at youth tournaments. A member of the school’s band, chorus, student council and activities council, she competes in volleyball and track as well. “Ashlyn Koupal has a well-rounded skill set,” said Brad Poppe, head coach at Avon High School. “Combining athletic ability with her basketball IQ, she impacts the game in many ways. Her consistency and her willingness to do the little things not only elevates her game, but that of her teammates as well. Ashlyn’s toughness and composure in big moments reveals her true competitiveness.”

Koupal has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to play basketball at the University of Nebraska 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](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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