

KOHALA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE HAWAII BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (March 20, 2026) — In its 41st year celebrating the nation’s best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Layden Kauka of Kohala High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Hawaii Boys 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 Kauka as Hawaii’s best high school boys basketball player, and he joins an elite legacy that spans professional athletes and coaches to CEOs, such as Jayson Tatum (2015-16, Chaminade College Preparatory School, MO), Cooper Flagg (2023-24, Montverde Academy, FL) and Cameron Boozer (2022-23 & 2024-25, Christopher Columbus High School, FL).

The 6-foot-1, 162-pound senior guard led the Cowboys to a 25-4 record and a Division II HHSAA state championship this past season. Kauka averaged 26.3 points, 6.9 rebounds, 4.6 assists and 3.1 steals while shooting 51.6 percent from the field, 41 percent from beyond the arc and 87 percent at the line. A three-time state champion, he was the Division II tournament’s Most Outstanding Player honoree.

Kauka has volunteered locally with beach cleanups, an elementary school literacy outreach initiative and on behalf of his church community. “There’s no doubt in my mind that Kauka is worthy of representing Hawaii this year,” said Fred Warner, head coach at Hawai’i Preparatory Academy. “Not only for his career achievements of three state championships and four league titles, but his senior season accomplishments. He does it all as a player. He can score from anywhere, over anyone and defends at an even higher level. Teams actually have to gameplan to double him on offense and go attack away from him on defense. We did and he still scored 42. He’s one of the most humble and hardworking kids I’ve coached against in 30 years.”

Kauka has maintained a 3.0 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a written letter of athletic aid to play basketball at the University of Hawaii-Hilo 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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