

SERVICE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE ALASKA BASEBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (June 1, 2026) — In its 41st year celebrating the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Rilen Niclai of Service High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Alaska Baseball 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 Niclai as Alaska's best high school baseball player and he joins an elite legacy that spans professional athletes and coaches to CEOs, such as Clayton Kershaw (2005-06, Highland Park, TX), MacKenzie Gore (2016-17, Whiteville High School, NC) and Seth Hernandez (2024-25, Corona High School, CA).

At the time of his selection, the 6-foot-2, 185-pound junior shortstop and right-handed pitcher had led the Cougars to a 16-2 record entering the Cook Inlet Conference tournament. Niclai batted .581 with six home runs, 23 RBI and 33 runs scored, including a 1.899 OPS. He also compiled a 3-0 record in 15 innings pitched with a 1.40 ERA and a 35-4 strikeout-to-walk ratio. The returning Alaska Gatorade Player of the Year and ranked as the nation's No. 162 prospect in the Class of 2027 by Perfect Game, he set the Cook Inlet Conference single-season home run record this past season and recorded the most strikeouts in a single game (17) since the CIC introduced a pitch clock in 2018.

Niclai has volunteered locally as a youth baseball coach and mentor. "The obvious choice is Rilen, in my opinion," said John Sims, Chugiak High School head coach. "Not only is he dominant on the mound, he's also the one hitter in the league you have to pitch around."

Niclai has maintained a 3.26 GPA in the classroom. He has made a verbal commitment to play baseball on scholarship at Arizona State 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.

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