

**CARTERVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ILLINOIS SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 5, 2026) — In its 41st year celebrating the nation’s best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Caidence Phillips of Carterville High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Illinois Softball 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 Phillips as Illinois’ best high school softball player and she joins an elite legacy that spans professional athletes and coaches to CEOs, such as Cat Osterman (2000-01, Cypress, TX), Alicia Hollowell (2001-02, Fairfield, CA) and Hannah Wells (2024-25, Coahoma, TX).

At the time of her selection, the 5-foot-10 senior right-handed pitcher and third baseman had led the Lions to a 37-1 record and a berth in the Class 2A state semifinals this spring. Phillips compiled a 22-0 mark with a 0.11 ERA in the circle through 38 games, striking out 300 batters while allowing just 29 hits and 17 walks in 131 innings. At the plate, she owned a .343 batting average with five home runs, 16 doubles and 37 RBI entering the final four. The 2025 Southern Illinois co-player of the Year, she won the Class 2A state championship with Carterville in 2024.

A member of the Carterville High School Student Leadership Council, Phillips has volunteered locally as a youth softball coach and has donated her time to multiple community service initiatives through her church. “Caidence is one of the best pitchers I’ve seen as a softball coach,” said Shaun Renth, head coach of Nashville High School. “She has good velo, but her movement and ability to hit her spots is what makes her tough. She makes the margin of error so thin when you play them because you know she’s not going to give a lot up.”

Phillips has maintained a weighted 3.85 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to play softball at the University of Illinois 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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