

**MARDELA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MARYLAND SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE
YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 5, 2026) — In its 41st year celebrating the nation’s best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Ava Twilley of Mardela High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Maryland 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 Twilley as Maryland’s 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).

The 5-foot-10 senior right-handed pitcher led the Warriors to a 26-0 record – a single-season state record for victories – and a second straight Class 1A state championship this past season. Twilley compiled a 17-0 record in the circle with a 0.29 ERA and 208 strikeouts, allowing just 17 hits in 96 innings. A four-time Bayside South Player of the Year, she fired a one-hitter and hit a home run in Mardela’s 11-0 win over Boonsboro High School in the state final. She also produced a .639 batting average with five home runs, 35 RBI and a .709 on-base percentage.

Twilley has volunteered locally with Santa’s Angels, which provides Christmas experiences to children and families in need. She has also donated her time as part of community beautification projects and with the Special Olympics. “Ava was dominant a year ago on their way to a state championship and she’s risen to an even higher level this spring,” said Scott Kurtz, head coach of Decatur High School. “Ava is the best two-way player I’ve seen in my 12 years as a parent and coach.”

Twilley has maintained a weighted 4.56 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to play softball at Mississippi State University 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.

###