

**MCNAIRY CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE TENNESSEE SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 5, 2026) — In its 41<sup>st</sup> year celebrating the nation’s best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Bailee Shelton of McNairy Central High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Tennessee 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 Shelton as Tennessee’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-9 senior right-handed pitcher and infielder compiled an 18-2 record in the circle with a 0.74 ERA and five saves this past season, leading the Bobcats (34-8-2) to the Class 3A state championship game. The 2025 Class 3A West Tennessee Miss Softball winner, Shelton struck out 261 batters while allowing just 66 hits in 150.2 innings. The three-time First Team All-State selection also batted .632 with 27 doubles, 41 runs scored and 55 RBI, producing a .919 slugging percentage.

The president of the McNairy Central High School National Honor Society, Shelton is a member of the Future Business leaders of America and the Mu Alpha Theta math honors society. She has volunteered locally as a youth softball and basketball coach and has also donated her time to multiple community service initiatives through her church youth group. “Bailee is a generational talent,” said Mason Taylor, head coach of Lexington High School. “In the circle, she has a command and control of a softball game that is rare. She puts every ounce into every pitch.”

Shelton has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to play softball at the University of Tennessee 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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