

**PLAINFIELD CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE
NAMED GATORADE ILLINOIS BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE
YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 12, 2026) — In its 41st year celebrating the nation’s best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Marshall DeGraff of Plainfield Central High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Illinois Boys Soccer 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 DeGraff as Illinois’ best high school boys soccer player, and he joins an elite legacy that spans professional athletes and coaches to CEOs, such as Alecko Eskandarian (1999-00, Bergen Catholic High School, New Jersey), Cristian Roldan (2012-13, El Rancho High School, California) and Dan Klink (2024-25, Loyola Blakefield, Maryland).

The 6-foot, 175-pound senior goalkeeper led the Wildcats to a 17-7-1 record and the regional final this past season. DeGraff made 128 saves, turning back over five shots per game and recorded 10 shutouts. DeGraff also saved a penalty in his final high school game, a 3-1 loss to West Aurora High School. Ranked as the No. 36 recruit in the Midwest Region by TopDrawerSoccer, he is two-time conference MVP and a 2025 United Soccer Coaches All-American.

DeGraff has volunteered locally with TOPSoccer, an organization that pairs athletes with disabilities with players to share joy and their love of the game. He has also donated his time with Feed My Starving Children and the Northern Illinois Food Pantry. “From the goalkeeper position, I have not seen a player single-handedly change an entire game and season for a team,” said Jacob Lysik, head coach of Plainfield East High School. “Every time we’ve lost to Plainfield Central, it’s been a one score game, basically. This has been down to Marshall’s ability to make big-time saves and lead his team. He’s by far the most special player I’ve coached against in my tenure at Plainfield East.”

DeGraff has maintained a 5.40 weighted GPA in the classroom on a 4.0 scale. He has signed a written letter of athletic aid to play soccer on scholarship at Bowling Green 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.

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