

## WASHBURN RURAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE KANSAS BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (June 12, 2026) — In its 41<sup>st</sup> year celebrating the nation’s best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Dylan Willingham of Washburn Rural High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Kansas 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 Willingham as Kansas’ 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-2, 180-pound senior forward led the Junior Blues to a 19-1-1 record and the Class 6A state championship this past season. Willingham scored 37 goals and passed for 7 assists, breaking the school’s record for single-season and career goals (67). The only player in history to be a two-time Centennial League Player of the Year, he is the state’s sole 2025-26 United Soccer Coaches All-American in addition to being recognized as the Class 6A Forward of the Year.

Willingham has volunteered locally by helping to organize and oversee a blood-donation drive on campus. He has also donated his time as a tutor for district middle schoolers and as a youth coach at Champions Soccer Camp for the last three summers. “Dylan is probably the most aggressive and determined attacking player I’ve coached against,” said Skylar Rough, head coach of Blue Valley North High School. “No one exemplifies Washburn’s hard-working style of play better than Dylan. Trying to keep him from scoring for 80 or even 100 minutes is nearly impossible. He’s a guy who is going to find his goal (or goals) in any game he plays in no matter the conditions or opponent.”

Willingham has maintained a 4.74 weighted GPA in the classroom. He has signed a written letter of athletic aid to play soccer on scholarship at the University of Nebraska 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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