

BOWLING GREEN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE KENTUCKY 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 Byaombe Matendo of Bowling Green High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Kentucky 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 Matendo as Kentucky’s 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-0, 170-pound senior midfielder led the Purples to a 17-2 record and the state final this past season. As a defensive midfielder, Matendo helped protect a backline that recorded 13 shutouts and surrendered only six goals in 19 games. He also chipped in with eight goals and four assists. The Kentucky High School Coaches Association’s Defensive Player of the Year, he is also a 2025-26 United Soccer Coaches All-American.

Matendo is a student ambassador for English language-learner peers and has donated his time mentoring a second grade student who immigrated from Tanzania. He also serves as a tutor for elementary students and as a youth soccer coach. “Byaombe was by far the best (defensive) center midfielder we saw all season,” said Tom Alexander, head coach of South Warren High School. “He’s such a smart player who rarely loses the ball in possession. He’s also always in the correct spots defensively, winning challenges, intercepting passes and then starting so many of their counter attacks. On set pieces, he was dangerous with his timing of runs and size as well.”

Matendo has maintained a 3.89 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a written letter of athletic aid to play soccer on scholarship at Transylvania 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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