

**MADISON CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI 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 Tanner Nichols of Madison Central High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Mississippi 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 Nichols as Mississippi’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-3, 180-pound senior forward led the Jaguars to a 21-0-2 record and the Class 7A state championship this past season. Nichols scored 20 goals and passed for nine assists including one tally in Madison Central’s 2-0 win over Biloxi High in the state final. A First Team All-State selection, he concluded his prep soccer career with 33 goals and 16 assists.

A member of his school’s chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Nichols has volunteered locally as a youth soccer coach and counselor. He has also donated his time to multiple community service initiatives through his church congregation. “Tanner is a vocal on-field leader and works as hard as anyone offensively and defensively to create chances for his team,” said Phil Buffington, head coach of Jackson Academy. “I coach him in club play as well and he pretty much never comes off the field for me on that team.”

Nichols has maintained an A average in the classroom. He has signed a written letter of athletic aid to play soccer at Meridian Community College 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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