

**MANDAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE
NORTH DAKOTA GIRLS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 18, 2026) — In its 41st year celebrating the nation’s best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Sarah Helderop of Mandan High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade North Dakota Girls 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 Helderop as North Dakota’s best high school girls soccer player, and she joins an elite legacy that spans professional athletes and coaches to CEOs, such as Mallory Swanson (2014-15, Mountain Vista High School, Colorado), Riley Jackson (2021-22, Blessed Trinity Catholic High School, Georgia) and Addison Halpern (2024-25, Rutgers Preparatory School, New Jersey).

The state’s returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-4 senior midfielder scored 33 goals and passed for 11 assists this past season, leading the Braves (17-1-1) to the Class A state championship game. Helderop is a four-time First Team All-State selection and the state’s 2026 Senior Athlete of the Year. She concluded her prep soccer career with 108 goals and 26 assists.

A member of her school’s chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Helderop has volunteered locally with HOSA, a student organization focused on empowering future health professionals, and as a youth soccer coach. “Sarah is more than just a great goal-scorer,” said Tom Marcis, head coach of Legacy High School. “She makes everyone around her better. Her leadership on the field helped lift the Braves from being a good team to a great one.”

Helderop has maintained an unweighted 4.09 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to play soccer on scholarship at Northern State University (S.D.) 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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