

## **TAMPA CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE FLORIDA GIRLS TRACK AND FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 25, 2026) — In its 41<sup>st</sup> year celebrating the nation’s best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced J’Nia Simpson of Tampa Catholic High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Florida Girls Track and Field 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 Simpson as Florida’s best high school girls track and field athlete and she joins an elite legacy that spans professional athletes and coaches to CEOs, such as Sanya Richards (2001-02, St. Thomas Aquinas High School, Florida), Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone (2015-16 & 2016-17, Union Catholic Regional High School, New Jersey) and Jane Hedengren (2024-25, Timpview High School, Utah).

The 5-foot-8 senior throws specialist won the Under Armour Nationals title in the discus with a personal-best mark of 170 feet, 9.5 inches this past season, which ranked No. 5 nationally among girls prep competitors this spring. Simpson, a 27-time age-group national champion throughout a prolific club career, also swept the shot put and discus at the FHSAA Class 2A state meet. The 2026 Florida Dairy Farmers Ms. Track & Field, she put the shot a state-record 51-6.5 in May, which ranked No. 5 nationally and No. 35 in prep history.

A former cheerleader who still mentors young cheer athletes, Simpson has volunteered locally coaching para-athletes at the All People’s Life Center. She has also donated her time caring for pets at the local humane society in addition to preparing food for the unhoused. “J’Nia Simpson was the state’s Ms. Track and Field for good reason,” said Rich Gonzalez, editor of PrepCalTrack.com. “She PR’d in the discus this spring and broke her own state record in the shot put. We couldn’t ask much more from an elite thrower.”

Simpson has maintained a 3.08 weighted GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to compete on scholarship at the University of Texas 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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