

## KEARNEY CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE NEBRASKA 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 Hazel Haarberg of Kearney Catholic High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Nebraska 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 Haarberg as Nebraska’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 sprinter won three gold medals at the Class C state meet this past season, leading the Stars to a third straight team state championship. Haarberg set a state record in the 100-meter dash with a time of 11.45 seconds, which ranked No. 17 nationally among prep girls competitors in 2026. She won the 200 as well and ran the anchor leg on Kearney Catholic’s winning 4x100-meter relay quartet. Haarberg also set a state record in the 200 at the District C8 Championships, breaking the tape in 23.54, which ranked No. 37 nationally this spring. The 2025 Lincoln Journal Star Female Athlete of the Year, she was undefeated in the sprints this spring.

Haarberg has volunteered locally as part of multiple community service projects in association with her school, where service hours are part of the curriculum. She has also donated her time as a youth volleyball coach and referee, which led to her employment at the Kearney SportsPlex. “Hazel locks in for her competitions,” said Jonathan Nikkila, head coach of Kearney Catholic High School. “She’s calm, cool and has a determination not just to beat her competition, but to absolutely dominate. I wish I had even a quarter of her killer instinct (on the track).”

Haarberg has maintained a weighted 4.07 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to compete 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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