

CUMMINGS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA GIRLS TRACK AND FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (June 25, 2026) — In its 41st year celebrating the nation’s best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced D’Anna Cotton of Cummings High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade North Carolina 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 Cotton as North Carolina’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 jumper won the triple jump title at Nike Outdoor Nationals earlier this month, soaring a personal-best 43 feet, 1 inch to earn All-American honors and finish more than eight inches ahead of her nearest competitor. The leap ranked No. 2 nationally among prep girls competitors this spring. Cotton was also an All-American in the long jump at Nike. At the Class 4A state meet, she leaped a season-best 20-6, which ranked No. 8 nationally and won four individual event titles, leading the Cavaliers to the team championship.

Cotton has volunteered locally helping with Andrews Elementary School Field Day and the Eastlawn Elementary Turkey Trot. She has also donated her time with Ebenezer Church Community Help projects and at local middle school track meets. “Among America’s most durable and explosive talents, D’Anna Cotton keyed her school’s state team title with a sensational quadruple-gold performance,” said Rich Gonzalez, PrepCalTrack editor. “She’s a special talent in the horizontal jumps.”

Cotton has maintained a weighted 3.89 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to compete on scholarship at the University of South Carolina 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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