

BISMARCK CENTURY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE NORTH DAKOTA 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 Ruby Ihmels of Bismarck Century High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade North Dakota 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 Ihmels as North Dakota’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-4 junior distance talent won a pair of Class A state titles in the 1600- and 3200-meter runs this past season, leading the Patriots to second place as a team. Ihmels’ 3200 clocking of 10:25.29 set a new meet record and she also anchored Century’s 4x800 relay quartet to a second-place finish at states. The 2025-26 North Dakota Girls Cross Country Gatorade Player of the Year and the state’s returning Gatorade Player of the Year in track and field, Ihmels’ personal-best mark of 9:59.06 in the 3200 at the Arcadia Invitational, where she took second, ranked No. 10 nationally among prep girls competitors this spring, while her season-best 1500-meter time of 4:29.14 ranked No. 17. She clocked a 4:49.53 mile to finish second at the Oregon Relays this spring—a clocking that ranked No. 81 nationally.

A writer for the Literature Magazine at her school, Ihmels has volunteered locally as a marshal at youth cross country and track meets. “Despite battling injuries all spring, Ihmels still put up two U.S. Top 20 times, won a pair of state titles and shared in a relay silver. That’s hard enough to do when healthy, so hats off,” said Rich Gonzalez, editor of PrepCalTrack.com.

Ihmels has maintained a 4.18 weighted GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior year of high school 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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