

MARTIN LUTHER KING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE CALIFORNIA BOYS TRACK AND FIELD PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (June 26, 2026) — In its 41st year celebrating the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Maximo Zavaleta of Martin Luther King High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade California Boys 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 Zavaleta as California's best high school boys track and field athlete and he joins an elite legacy that spans professional athletes and coaches to CEOs, such as Alan Webb (2000-01, South Lakes High School, Virginia), Kerron Clement (2002-03, Laporte High School, Texas) and Tate Taylor (2024-25, Harlan High School, Texas).

The 6-foot-2, 165-pound senior distance talent won the state title in the 3200-meter run with a time of 8:52.47 this past season, leading the Wolves to second place as a team. Zavaleta also won the 1600 in a personal-best time of 4:02.78, which ranked No. 5 nationally among prep boys competitors this spring. He ran sub-4:10 times in either the 1600 or the mile 12 times this season, which is a state record. He reached the finals in the 3200 at the Arcadia Invitational, where he clocked a personal-best 8:43.21, which ranked No. 10 nationally.

Recognized as a Riverside Sports Hall of Fame Athlete of Distinction this year, Zavaleta has volunteered locally as a coach and mentor for middle school athletes. He has also donated his time as one of the first mentors for his school's Unified Sports Program, which pairs youth athletes with intellectually challenged peers in celebration of sport. "Mirroring his soft-spoken personality, Zavaleta quietly went about business yet forged an indelible impression," said Rich Gonzalez, editor of PrepCalTrack.com. "His racing durability and consistency throughout his senior year was truly at a level we'd never seen before."

Zavaleta has maintained a 4.38 weighted GPA in the classroom. He has signed a written letter of athletic aid to compete on scholarship at UCLA 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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