

**PEARL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE
MISSISSIPPI 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 Braden Pickett of Pearl High School is the 2025-26 Gatorade Mississippi 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 Pickett as Mississippi’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 5-foot-8, 142-pound sophomore sprinter finished second in both the 100- and 200-meter dashes at the New Balance Nationals Outdoor earlier this month, earning All-American honors in both events. Pickett posted personal-bests in both sprints at the Woody Barnett Invitational. His time of 10.21 seconds in the 100 ranked No. 8 nationally among prep boys competitors this spring and his 200 time of 20.66 ranked No. 10 nationally.

An active participant in youth ministry, Pickett has volunteered locally serving the elderly in his community. “Braden Pickett is a sophomore sensation whose prowess out of the starting blocks deservedly began eliciting comparisons to the great Jordan Anthony in terms of all-time Mississippi-and-beyond dash lore,” said Rich Gonzalez, editor for PrepCalTrack.com. “I think this season laid the groundwork for his continued rise in the years to come.”

Pickett has maintained a B average in the classroom. He will begin his junior 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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