

**NAZARETH ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE ILLINOIS BASEBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 1, 2026) — In its 41<sup>st</sup> year celebrating the nation’s best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Landon Thome of Nazareth Academy is the 2025-26 Gatorade Illinois Baseball 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 Thome as Illinois’ best high school baseball player and he joins an elite legacy that spans professional athletes and coaches to CEOs, such as Clayton Kershaw (2005-06, Highland Park, TX), MacKenzie Gore (2016-17, Whiteville High School, NC) and Seth Hernandez (2024-25, Corona High School, CA).

At the time of his selection, the 6-foot, 185-pound senior shortstop had led the Roadrunners to a 25-9 record entering the Class 3A state tournament. Thome batted .535 with 57 runs scored, 29 RBI, seven home runs, eight triples and a 1.676 OPS. He also went 49-for-50 on stolen base attempts, setting Nazareth’s single-season steals and triples record. The 2026 East Suburban Catholic Conference Offensive Player of the Year, he’s ranked as the nation’s No. 19 prospect in the Class of 2026 by Prep Baseball Report and the No. 56 overall draft prospect by Baseball America.

The son of MLB Hall of Famer Jim Thome, the Roadrunners’ standout has volunteered locally with Feed My Starving Children, a nonprofit that packages and distributes food to people in developing nations. Thome has also served as a tutor for Chicago elementary school students and has donated his time with the Misericordia Home in Chicago. “Landon is a one-man wrecking crew by himself and plays the game the right way,” said Scott Lawler, Benet Academy head coach.

Thome has maintained a 3.71 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a written letter of athletic aid to play baseball at the Florida State University this fall, but is projected as an early-round selection in July’s Major League Baseball First Year Player Draft.

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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