

PILGRIM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE RHODE ISLAND GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (January 16, 2025) — In its 40th year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Keaney Bayha** of **Pilgrim High School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade Rhode Island Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Bayha is the first Gatorade Rhode Island **Girls Cross Country** Player of the Year to be chosen from Pilgrim High School.

Gatorade Player of the Year is the top honor in high school sports, celebrating the nation’s best high school athletes for their success on the field, in the classroom and in the community. The award distinguishes Bayha as Rhode Island's best high school girls cross country athlete and she joins an impressive group of alumni that spans CEOs, coaches and star athletes such as Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Preparatory Catholic High School, Ca.), Katelyn Tuohy (2017-18, 2018-19 & 2019-20, North Rockland High School, N.Y.) and Addison Ritzenhein (2023-24, Niwot High School, Co.).

The 5-foot-4 senior won the Class A state meet this past season with a time of 18:23.56, breaking the tape more than 27 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor and leading the Patriots to fifth place as a team. Bayha also won the All-State meet with a time of 18:23.56. She went on to take 15th at Foot Locker Northeast Regional, earning Third Team All-Region honors and 27th at the NXN Northeast Regional. She is a two-time First Team All-State selection.

A talented swimmer and field hockey player, Bayha has donated her time locally as a moderator of roundtable debates during her school district’s school committee elections in 2024. She has also served as Pilgrim’s class president and as a civic student liaison to Rhode Island’s secretary of state. “As cross country runners, the ultimate goal is to peak at the state meet in early November—Keaney exemplified this,” said Kelly Raso, head coach at La Salle Academy. “She showed consistent improvement throughout the season and delivered an exceptional performance on state meet day, where she was virtually unchallenged. This progression and her dominance at the most important race of the season make her, in my opinion, the best choice for this award.”

Bayha has maintained a 4.51 weighted GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to run at the University of Rhode Island this fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states across 12 different high school sports - football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, boys and girls soccer, baseball, softball, and boys and girls track & field - and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. 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 state winners in each sport.

Bayha joins recent Gatorade Rhode Island Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Rory Sullivan (2023-24, Saint Raphael Academy), Caroline Cummings (2022-23, La Salle Academy) and Reese Fahys (2021-22 & 2020-21, East Greenwich High School), among the state’s list of former award winners.

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 \$5.6 million in grants to winners across more than 2,000 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.