



BASEBALL'S GRADY EMERSON AND SOCCER'S MADDIE DIMARIA NAMED GATORADE BEST PLAYERS OF THE YEAR

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Former Gatorade Best Players of the Year Jayson Tatum and Allyson Felix Presented Emerson and DiMaria with the Top Honor in High School Sports at the 2026 ESPYS in New York City

Key Takeaways:

- Gatorade named Grady Emerson (baseball) and Maddie DiMaria (soccer) as the 2025-26 Best Male and Best Female Players of the Year, recognizing them as the nation's top high school athletes.
- The awards were presented live at the 2026 ESPY Awards in New York City by former winners Jayson Tatum and Allyson Felix.
- Emerson, a standout shortstop and #2 MLB Draft pick, and DiMaria, a two-time recipient of the national award, were honored for their athletic achievements, academic excellence, and community impact.
- The announcement capped a multi-day Gatorade Player of the Year Awards experience, underscoring the brand's commitment to elevating the next generation of athletes.

NEW YORK, July 15, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- Tonight, Gatorade named Grady Emerson and Maddie DiMaria as the 2025-26 Best Male and Best Female Players of the Year, distinguishing the pair as the best high school athletes in the nation. Emerson receives this recognition on the heels of his second overall selection in the 2026 Major League Baseball Draft earlier this week, while DiMaria is committed to play soccer at the University of North Carolina next spring.



Former Gatorade Best Male and Best Female Players of the Year Jayson Tatum and Allyson Felix presented the honors live on stage at the 2026 ESPY Awards in New York City. For more than 20 years, the Gatorade Best Male and Best Female Player of the Year Award has recognized the two best high school athletes in the nation. With this award, Emerson and DiMaria become part of an elite group of Gatorade Best Player of the Year alumni, which includes stars like Paige Bueckers, Bobby Witt Jr., Morgan Brian, Cooper Flagg, Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone and more.

Emerson, a standout athlete from Fort Worth Christian High School in Texas, has earned recognition for his remarkable abilities as a baseball player and leader, distinguishing himself both competitively and personally. He signed a National Letter of Intent to play baseball at the University of Texas

this fall and was recently selected second overall in the 2026 MLB draft. DiMaria, an esteemed athlete from Cor Jesu Academy in Missouri, is a two-time Gatorade National Girls Soccer Player of the Year recognized for her outstanding achievements in her sport, community and classroom. She will advance her education and athletic career at the University of North Carolina next spring.

"Gatorade Player of the Year celebrates the nation's most outstanding young athletes who embody excellence both on and off the field," said Jennifer Schmit, Sr. Director, Gatorade Brand Marketing. "This year's winners are no exception – they represent the next generation of leaders who will pave the future of sport. We're proud to recognize their incredible accomplishments and support them as they reach the next level in their careers. Grady and Maddie are more than ready to carry this legacy forward and continue inspiring athletes everywhere to pursue greatness."

The Gatorade Best Players of the Year announcement follows an exclusive, multi-day experience in New York City, honoring the twelve Gatorade National Players of the Year across sports. The brand rolled out the red carpet for these top high school athletes – from meeting their favorite professional athletes, to being spotlighted on billboards in Times Square, attending educational and celebratory events, and walking the ESPY Awards red carpet.

This experience serves as a culmination of the Gatorade Player of the Year program, which celebrates and champions student-athletes across the country through opportunities only Gatorade can offer because of its 61-year legacy in sport culture, product superiority and expertise in hydration science, including ongoing support from the [Gatorade Sports Science Institute \(GSSI\)](#) so they can perform and recover at their best.

2025-26 GATORADE BEST PLAYER OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS

Grady Emerson: The 6-foot-2 senior shortstop led the Cardinals to the Texas Association of Private & Parochial Schools Division II state championship this season, with a 33-7-1 record. Emerson batted .508 with 56 RBI and eight home runs with 61 runs scored, contributed on the base paths with 34 stolen bases and posted an OPS of 1.549 and an ISO power percentage of .407. Emerson's lone error in 147 total chances at shortstop netted him with a 99.3 fielding percentage.

Below are additional facts about Emerson:

- Emerson is ranked as the nation's No. 1 prospect in his class by Perfect Game and was the No. 2 overall selection in the 2026 MLB Draft.
- He has volunteered at The North Texas Food Bank and Mission Arlington. He has also donated his time by organizing and leading youth baseball training sessions and defensive coaching camps. In association with his parents' company, Always Family Senior Home Care, he delivers home care services throughout the holiday season.
- Emerson has maintained an A average in the classroom.

Maddie DiMaria: The 5-foot-7 junior led the Chargers to a 25-0 record and the Class 4 state championship this past season, scoring 67 goals and passing for 25 assists, while netting a hat trick as Cor Jesu beat St. Teresa's Academy, 5-0, in the state championship game. She is a two-time Gatorade National Girls Soccer Player of the Year, three-time Gatorade Missouri Girls Soccer Player of the Year and two-time United Soccer Coaches All-American selection.

Below are additional facts about DiMaria:

- DiMaria is ranked as the nation's No. 1 recruit in her class by PrepSoccer and TopDrawerSoccer.
- DiMaria has volunteered on behalf of Christian Action Reaching Everyone, the Special Needs Soccer Association, the St. Louis Foodbank and the Arnold Food Pantry. Additionally, DiMaria is a member of her school's Green Team Club, dedicated to raising environmental awareness, and has served as a Cor Jesu Academy Shadow Guide for prospective students. She also donates her time to Cor Jesu Academy youth basketball and soccer camps.
- DiMaria has maintained a 4.24 weighted GPA in the classroom.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student athletes, visit playeroftheyear.gatorade.com.

About The Gatorade Portfolio

The Gatorade Portfolio, a division of PepsiCo (NASDAQ: PEP), is a connected performance and wellness ecosystem built to fuel all athletes and exercisers. Bringing together Gatorade, Propel, Evolve and Muscle Milk, the Gatorade Portfolio is the most complete offering in the category today, with a broad range of personalized solutions at every stage of the active person's journey. This integrated system of brands is built on Gatorade's 61-year history of studying athletes and is fueling the future of athletic performance and wellness by delivering solutions across hydration, protein, energy and all-day nutrition to fuel consumers, no matter how or why they sweat. For more information and a full list of product offerings, please visit www.gatorade.com.

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