



New Mexico Activities Association Student-Athlete Spotlight

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Questa's Gallegos Overcomes the Obstacles

By Tyler Dunkel, Sports Information Director at the NMAA

At only 5'10", senior Antonio Gallegos stands above every one of his Questa basketball teammates. Despite being the tallest player for the Wildcats, Gallegos has faced and continues to face some much taller challenges off the court.

Ever since Gallegos was a young boy he was always playing sports, which has led him to have a very successful high school career in both football and basketball. This past football season, Gallegos was named a first team All-District and All-State honoree as a tight end for the Wildcats, while also earning a spot in the North/South All-Star game. Gallegos caught 19 passes for 346 yards and seven touchdowns on the year, helping his team to the class 2A semi-finals.

Jumping right from football to basketball, Gallegos wasted no time establishing himself as one of the best rebounders in class 2A by averaging seven boards a game. Unfortunately a sudden illness forced him to be sidelined for several weeks.

"I got really sick. I couldn't even eat it hurt so badly. I was initially told to sit out a month but I was released after missing four games," Gallegos said.

Gallegos underwent several tests, saw several physicians and even made a few visits to the emergency room before doctors finally figured out what was wrong. Doctors pinpointed the problem as having a bruised esophagus, which wasn't allowing him to eat or drink much of anything.

"Early in the year, Antonio really got sick, which forced him to miss some games for us," head basketball coach Larry King said. "He was hospitalized a few times and they finally figured out that it had something to do with his esophagus. It was really bad and the doctors couldn't figure out what was wrong with him at first."

Gallegos said all he wanted to do was get back on the court with his team, "I don't like sitting in the bleachers watching my team; I wanted to play. I missed being out on the court and competing with my teammates."

Questa's Athletic Director and head football coach Jesus Maes said that you could tell Gallegos had a hard



time not being on the court. “You could tell Antonio hated sitting out watching his teammates participate in the games. That wasn’t for any selfish reasons, it was because he’s about his team. It’s hard to sit on the sidelines.”

On top of his injury, Gallegos was also juggling his school work and a home life that was very demanding of his time. Taking care of his ill grandfather, his dad, (who is a disabled veteran) and a little brother was weighing heavily on Gallegos. He never saw his situation as a burden, just as part of life.

“Our family has always been close,” Gallegos said. “I always try to take care of my brother and really work hard for my family.”

Coach King added, “Through this entire season, Antonio’s had a lot on his plate, including his home life and being sick. But through it all he has really handled each obstacle in stride and always kept a positive outlook, no matter what was in front of him. I think Antonio has to deal with problems that most of us don’t have to deal with and he handles it really well. His family situation is tough but Antonio seems to keep it together pretty well.”

“He has a lot on his plate,” Maes said. “He’s the man of the household with his dad being a disabled veteran and his grandpa being sick. He is always making sure that his family is taken care of. He’s always helping.”

Gallegos has made it back on the court within the last few weeks after being cleared by doctors. Coach King says he was welcomed with open arms. “Without a doubt, Antonio is one of our leaders on this team and just one of two seniors on the roster. Our other players are excited about having him back on the court. Antonio is not a quitter. He is one of the toughest kids I know and really the heart of our basketball team. Antonio has that never quit attitude that I think propels him to be a good leader and a good ball player.”

Gallegos hopes to continue his education after graduation this spring. He would welcome the opportunity to play football at the next level but is also thinking about serving in the military.