



New Mexico Activities Association Student-Athlete Spotlight

Mora's Positive Outlook Results in a Positive Outcome

By Tyler Dunkel, Sports Information Director at the NMAA

Deming High School freshman Shane Mora has inspired many people, including his fellow students, teachers, coaches and his community over the last year. Why? Mora, 15, has looked one of the world's deadliest diseases, cancer, in the face and won.

Mora simply wanted to get back to playing football and baseball. He was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma — a form of blood cancer — in early December of 2013.

"When the doctor said I wouldn't be able to play baseball or football for as long as the treatment would take, plus recovery time, I just thought 'what am I going to do,'" Shane said. "I thought well if I have to do this, I pray it goes fast and that I get through it the easiest and quickest way possible. I stayed positive through the whole experience. It would take a good mindset and good attitude to make this easier. I think my attitude really helped me and my family."

That summer, Mora showed his mother, Ann Marie, and his father, Tommy, a pea-size bump under his chin. During a sport physical soon after, his parents were told to keep a close eye on the bump. Shane continued to play his eighth grade football season but by the end of the year the bump had grown to be a bit smaller than a golf ball in size.

"We made an appointment with Dr. (Twila) Sparks in Silver City," Ann Marie said. "She tried antibiotics first, but that did not change anything." Dr. Sparks took the growth off and sent it out for testing. Ann Marie continued, "On the second of December, we were told our son had cancer. I just felt like I was in a fog. I didn't know what to do or what to think."

By Thursday, December 5, the Mora family had an 8 a.m. doctor's appointment in Albuquerque at the University of New Mexico Hospital with Dr. McKinnell. The Mora family soon learned Shane had stage one cancer. By noon that same day, he was in surgery. He stayed in the hospital overnight and was sent home the next day.

Shane, along with his family, made a series of trips to Albuquerque where he endured rounds of chemotherapy. "This whole situation really hit me as to how important it is to live your life to the fullest," Shane said. "I did not know what to think. Life can change very quickly. This has brought me closer to my family and friends. I don't sweat the little stuff. I look at life differently now."

While going through chemotherapy, UNM Children's Hospital connected the Mora family with the Make-A-Wish Foundation. "We got connected to Make-A-Wish through UNM Children's Hospital," Ann Marie said. "They made a referral in March and we met with the wish granters in Las Cruces in April. Shane really wanted to go to a Red Sox game and meet Dustin Pedroia, his favorite player. When the coordinator from Albuquerque contacted the Red Sox organization, they informed us that Dustin was unavailable to meet. So, Shane chose to meet Zander Boegarts."

In late July, the Mora family made a trip to Boston, where Shane's wish was granted on July 28 at a Red Sox game. The



Red Sox gave Shane a special tour of the stadium, fed the family lunch, and let him watch batting practice from the field.

“While we were watching the Red Sox practice, Dustin Pedroia walks over to where they were standing to talk with a father and son,” Ann Marie said. “Shane was so shocked that he was that close to his favorite player. The lady in charge pointed at Shane and over walks Dustin to talk with Shane. I could tell he was the happiest kid on earth at that moment, especially since he was told he wouldn’t be able to meet him. Soon after Zander Boegarts came over and took Shane to sit in the dugout to chat. He had the biggest smile on his face. Zander even took him inside the dugout to get a bottle of water. He didn’t want this whole experience to end. Shane was able to cheer on his team later at the game and experience the Red Sox Nation atmosphere. It was a day he will never forget.”

Despite having a life-long dream fulfilled, Shane really had only one thing on his mind; get back on the field with his teammates. “Getting back to sports, friends and family were what drove me most while fighting cancer,” Shane said. “I was so limited while going through chemo and all the love and support are what got me through. I learned a lot about the mind during my treatments. On the way to the hospital I remember thinking, I can control the way the treatment will go. I would occupy my mind with movies, video games or whatever UNM Hospital supplied me with.”

Shane walked into the football locker room at Deming High School this past August with a new attitude and perspective on the game he loves to play and what it really means to be able to play football. “Putting on the pads and walking back on the field was an unbelievable feeling,” Shane said. “Part of me was crying for joy and I just thought about how crazy that just one year ago I didn’t think I’d ever do this again. I was back doing what I love. I enjoy life a lot more. I hardly look at the downside and I enjoy the little things a lot more. It changed my work ethic, I work a lot harder and it taught me to not take anything for granted.”

Deming head coach Fernando Holguin said, “Shane has inspired not only the coaching staff and his teammates but the Deming community as well.” He continued, “The staff and coaching staff at the high school admire him as much as his fellow students and teammates do. The attitude Shane carried throughout his battle with cancer was that he didn’t want the sympathy; he didn’t want to be treated different. I think his teammates would say he is one of the strongest and most influential people they know.”

Coach Holguin also mentioned Shane’s attitude and how it affected his team. “His attitude with the help of all his family and the faith he has in God got him through everything. The thing about sports with Shane is that it has been a huge part of his life. Even when he thinks he’s been defeated he just keeps fighting for more and digs deep. He refuses to lose. Shane may lose a game, but he’ll come back and he’ll correct it. That’s how he took on cancer. He told himself ‘I’m not going to let it affect me.’ It’s been a blessing to have him on my team and just getting to know him because his optimism is contagious.”