



New Mexico Activities Association Student-Athlete Spotlight

Setting an Example for Others to Follow

By Tyler Dunkel, Sports Information Director, NMAA

Danny Contreras, a senior at Gadsden High School, has lived life and played sports the only way he knows how; with integrity, fair play, respect for the rules and good sportsmanship. Those characteristics are what help him lead his fellow classmates and the Panthers' football team every day.

"It's helpful to have that leadership mentality not only in sports and on the field, but in life," Contreras said. "If someone is down or just needs a kind word, it's nice to be able to have the social skills to make a difference for someone else."

Contreras continued by saying the values he learned from his parents have also helped him be a confident person. "This mentality and confidence comes from my family. They have always equipped me with qualities that will help me succeed in life. I've always seen my dad helping people when they are asking for work and that has always spoken to me."

Gadsden's head football coach Joe Vasquez says that Contreras exemplifies what a model student-athlete is. "Danny shows a lot of leadership characteristics. He's our team leader and captain. Not only is he good on the football field, he's an excellent student. He has a great rapport with all of the kids. He gets their attention and they follow him."

He continued by saying, "He's well disciplined, has outstanding work ethic and sportsmanship. I've even had reports from officials complementing him on how he handles situations on the field."

Contreras has been a part of the Gadsden community his entire life. His father, Jose is a border patrol agent, working at the DOT Port of Entry, while his mother, Elsa is a second grade teacher. Contreras says that being a part of the Gadsden community is something that is very important to him and his family.

"This community means a lot to my family," he said. "My brother and I were raised here and I see myself coming back to my hometown and giving back."

Coach Vasquez also commented on the Contreras family and their community involvement, "Danny is well liked among the community and fans appreciate and see him as a leader of not only this football team, but of this school, and a future leader in the Gadsden community."

Contreras was a first team All-District selection at the defensive back and wide receiver positions as a junior and a second team defensive back during his sophomore year. He also played baseball for Gadsden as a freshman and sophomore before deciding to focus on football.

This season, Contreras was one of the Panthers' leaders in tackles and interceptions, despite a 2-8 overall record. "Even though we had a bad season, I still gave it 110%. It's my senior year and I want to leave it all out on the field."

His next stop will be New Mexico State University and their Hotel, Restaurant, Tourism and Management department. Carrying a 3.2 GPA, Contreras said that grades are just as im-



portant to him as sports. "Grades are important. My parents are always pushing me to work hard and earn that scholarship for school."

Leaving a lasting impression at Gadsden High School is more important to Contreras than wins or championships and he hopes he will be remembered for much more. "I hope my peers view me as a leader, always with a positive attitude, always motivating my teammates, even when we're losing and someone who never gave up."