

New Mexico Activities Association Student-Athlete Spotlight



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Romero, the Next Grand Master

By Tyler Dunkel, NMAA Sports Information Director

Jonah Romero, an eighth-grader at Albuquerque Academy, has played chess since he was eight years old, starting on his elementary school team. Over the last few years, Romero has sharpened his chess skills, making the Chargers' chess team for the 2016-17 school year.

"In third grade I joined my elementary chess club. From there I just continued to play almost every day. The more I played chess the more I loved it and that has led me to where I am today. My parents helped me a little bit to learn the game but I mainly studied on my own, playing on the internet against other people or the computer. I also read a lot of books on how to play."

Romero also loves math and says that passion has helped him with his chess game as well.

"My love for math has really helped me with my chess game. In chess, you have a lot of mental math, so you have to calculate several moves ahead."

In just his first year on the Albuquerque Academy chess team, Romero helped the Chargers take home second place at the 2017 State Chess Contest. Although it was a good accomplishment for the Chargers, Romero says he won't be satisfied until they bring home the blue trophy.

"My first year on the high school team has been a great experience. Playing with older kids has helped my game tremendously. I've also made new friends which is always a good feeling. Most people don't usually think an eighth-grader could make the high school team but it was really cool to play for the high school and to be challenged."

He continued by saying, "It was a nice to take home a trophy this year. Obviously, our goal was to place first but we all played well and did our best so taking second place is something to be proud of. However, I think our ultimate goal is to be state champions and next year we will be ready to take the blue trophy home to Albuquerque Academy. I think if we prepare a little more and take more time on our moves, we can take state next year."

In the chess world, Romero is considered an expert but hopes to soon be classified as a Grand Master chess player, the equivalent of a professional.

"Ultimately, I want to be a grand master in chess. Right now, I'm considered an expert and I'm probably two good tournaments away from achieving that goal. To get where I am today has taken a lot of hard work, but, with anything, if you work hard you can achieve your goals."

He also enjoys playing the guitar and says that playing the gui-



tar helps him to relax and to get away from the busy life of a teenager.

“I’ve been playing guitar for three years. I don’t play as intensely as I do chess but it is just another fun hobby for me. When I play the guitar, it is like a getaway activity.”

Being just an eighth-grader, Romero is unsure where he will attend college in a few years but says he will pursue a degree in math and science.

“After high school I want to pursue a science and math degree but I’m not too sure where I would like to attend right now. I hope to be in the engineering field.”