

# New Mexico Activities Association Student-Athlete Spotlight

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## Fernandez continues the Family's Horseman Tradition

By Tyler Dunkel, NMAA Sports Information Director

Jocelyn Fernandez does it all at St. Michael's High School, from soccer to basketball to softball to track and field. But, this fall, the Horseman senior gained notoriety for playing football.

In a male-dominated sport, Fernandez wasn't just standing on the sidelines in full pads; she was a contributor, playing wide receiver and the team's backup field goal kicker. She said it was a memorable season, one she will never forget.

"This football season was one to remember. When I started the season at wide receiver, I didn't expect my dad to throw the ball my way. Towards the middle of the season, I started getting the ball a lot. Honestly, I thought I could run and catch the ball just as good as anyone. The extra points and the touchdown this year were once in a lifetime opportunities and I'm glad I was able to fulfill those dreams."

She continued by saying, "To have success in a male-dominated sport was really special because I'm setting the example for younger girls and girls my age that, regardless of if you are female, you can have success in football. Being a role model in that way is very special to me as well."

In fact, on October 13 in a game against the Pojoaque Elks, Fernandez became just the second female to score a touchdown in New Mexico high school history.

"We were on the 6-yard line and my dad turned to me and said, 'Should we do it?' and I said 'Do what?' He said, 'Run the play to you' and I said, 'Yes.' So, he called the play. Once the ball was snapped I was really nervous but I had a feeling I was going to score. After I caught the ball I just ran as fast as I could into the end zone. After I scored, I felt relieved because I wanted to score all season and I had been short a few times before. It was the best feeling."

Later in the season, she went 7-for-7 on extra point attempts against Santa Fe Indian School, filling in for her brother Joey, the team's starting placekicker.

"My brother, Joey, was the first string kicker this past season but was hurt during our game with Santa Fe Indian School. I had kicked extra points before but was never the go-to kicker before we played the Braves. It was a special game and to make seven PAT's was incredible."

Fernandez said the best part about playing football this season was playing for her father, Joey Fernandez, the Horseman's head football coach.

"Standing on the sidelines next to my dad, he always asked if I can do it and for him to have that trust in me to make the play



was an honor. If he didn't think I could make the plays he wouldn't put me in the game. He knows, along with all my teammates, that I have the ability to make those plays and help the team."

She continued, "I can't really describe the feeling of playing for my dad. He has been my track coach since I was an eighth-grader but before that he was my softball and basketball coach. He has coached me in everything I've done and now that I'm in my final year, it's sad because he will never be my coach again but he has turned me into the successful person I am today and I can't thank him enough for that."

The Fernandez family has a long history at St. Michael's, as Jocelyn's grandfather and father both attended and played for the Horsemen, a tradition she has been proud to continue.

"To play and compete for St. Michael's, especially now that I played football, I know I would never have received this opportunity at another school. To play for my dad, who was a Horseman and follow in my grandfather's footsteps as well has made this a great experience. I'll always be proud to be a Horseman."

With all the attention surrounding Fernandez this fall in regards to playing football, one might have missed that she was also a member of the St. Michael's girls' soccer team, helping the Lady Horseman to the semifinals of the state soccer championships. Fernandez said it took some balancing between football and soccer but it was great to be part of both teams at the same time.

"I started going to football practice for an hour and then heading to soccer for an hour but then halfway through the season, I switched and went to soccer practice first. Three hours of practice every day was exhausting on my body but it was something I was willing to do. I missed a lot of soccer games because of football practice and it was hard for me and my teammates but when the district and state tournaments rolled around I was there for every game to try and help my team."

She continued by saying, "At first, my soccer teammates thought I was just picking football over them but I had to prove to them that I was committed to soccer just as much as I was committed to football."

Fernandez's involvement in sports doesn't leave time for much else in her life but education is still a top priority, as she maintains a 3.0 GPA.

"At times it is very stressful, with the lack of sleep, especially in the spring when I'm playing softball and running track. I stay up late most nights, trying to finish my homework but I get it done because that is what my parents expect out of me. School comes first."

Her favorite sport is basketball and hopes that his skills on the hardwood this season will lead to an opportunity at the collegiate level.

"I want to go to college and study sports medicine but I hope to earn a basketball scholarship. Basketball is my favorite sport."