

# New Mexico Activities Association

## Student-Athlete Spotlight



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### Bustos Grew Up in the Gym

By Tyler Dunkel, NMAA Sports Information Director

DJ Bustos, a senior at West Las Vegas grew up in the gym. His mother, Mary and his father, David -both high school coaches -practically raised him in a school gym and to be honest, Bustos never wanted to be anywhere else.

“My mom was a volleyball coach and when I was born in September of 1997, it was already volleyball season. She had me on September 28th and had a volleyball game on September 29th and I was there. So, I guess you can say that sports have been a part of my life a very early age.”

He continued by saying, “Being a coach’s son, you are in the gym day after day, night after night, working on your game and helping others work on their game. Since my mom was a coach, I played volleyball and I learned to love the game a lot.”

Bustos was a huge part of his mother’s teams at West Las Vegas during her time as the Lady Dons’ head coach, helping as the team manager. He helped the team in any way he could by taking care of the equipment or even jumping into drills. Bustos says it was his mother’s idea for him to join the team.

“It was my mom’s idea for me to be the team’s manager but at the same time, I wanted to be a part of the team. She made me practice on my own before I could practice with the team. It was a great time and I had a lot of fun.”

Then in November of 2013, just one day before the start of the State Volleyball Championships, Mary passed away from amyloidosis, a disease in which substances called amyloid proteins build up in any tissue or organ. Bustos, however, continued to be the team’s manager in honor of his mom for the next few years.

“She passed away three years ago, right before the State Volleyball Tournament, but I still helped out. I continued to help the team over the next two seasons but it just wasn’t the same. It was hard not having her there and seeing her on the court. So, this year I decided to just watch from the stands.”

He reflected on some of his best memories of her and, of course, they were on the volleyball court together.

“I remember one year at the state tournament, we won a bracket game where we were down and made a comeback to win. I looked at her and she looked at me and she gave me the biggest smile. I ran up to her and gave her a hug. It was just a great moment to share with her and one I will never forget.”

Some time has passed now and Bustos, although not involved with the volleyball team anymore, has become one of the best basketball players in the state, all the while playing for his dad, David, the Dons’ head boys’ basketball coach.



"I've played basketball since I could walk. When I was in third and fourth grade, my dad (David Bustos) was the coach at Pecos High School and I remember practicing with him and the team. I made it a point to do everything he said because I knew it would make me a better basketball player."

He continued by saying, "Some people say that being a coach's kid, you are favored more but, to be honest, it is totally the opposite. After a game, other kids don't have to go home with their coach but I do and sometimes, especially if we lose, it is not pleasant. Sometimes we are up until late in the night talking about the game but, in the end, I know I'm his son first and he only wants what is best for me. He is my coach but he is my father first."

"When I'm on the basketball court for practice or playing a game, he is my coach but I know that after a game he will give me a hug and tell me he loves me and now he is my dad. I usually don't call him coach on the court, I call him dad because it just doesn't feel right to not call him dad."

The Dons and Bustos have made the state basketball championship game two years in a row, matching up against Hope Christian and falling twice. But Bustos believes winning a state title this year is possible but says it will take a total team effort.

"It is going to take an all-out team effort. When I say that I mean, blood, sweat, tears, whatever it takes to win. We have had our chances in the past but I don't think we have played our best games. In particular, I haven't played very well in those championship games and I know I need to give more."

When Bustos isn't in the gym you can find him in one of two places, studying or at the golf course. That's right the golf course. Bustos is also a member of the West Las Vegas boys' golf team.

"When I'm on the golf course it helps me get away from all of life's stuff, including basketball. It is a hard game. I want to be the best at everything I do, so I'm at the course every day after school hitting golf balls. I missed the state tournament last year but this year I want to make it to State."

Like most student-athletes whose parents are teachers, Bustos says his education has always come first and knows that his future depends not on his performance on the court but in the classroom.

"Academics have always been more important than sports in my family. In fact, my dad told me the other day that I had an 87 in a class and said I need to get that grade up. I've never had anything less than an 'A.' Next semester, I'm taking three AP classes during basketball season but I know my grades come before basketball, so I will really need to take care of business."