

New Mexico Activities Association Student-Athlete Spotlight



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Tapia Focused on No. 5

By Tyler Dunkel, NMAA Sports Information Director

Capital High School's Jose Tapia is in an elite class, as one of a handful of wrestlers in New Mexico High School history to have won four individual state titles. In 2017, at the New Mexico National Guard State Wrestling Championships, on February 17-18, Tapia will go for the coveted fifth.

Although he is one of the best wrestlers to come from New Mexico, Tapia wasn't a huge fan of the sport at an early age.

"I started wrestling at the age of four when my dad introduced me to the sport. At first, I didn't really like wrestling. I remember going to the mat for the match and just crying because I didn't want to be there but my dad would tell the referee to blow the whistle, so I had to start wrestling or I could get hurt. As time went on, I started enjoying wrestling more and more and now it's a passion."

It wasn't until he started traveling to out-of-town tournaments as a third grader that Tapia realized he may have a chance to be a successful wrestler.

"In third grade, I started to travel out-of-state for tournaments and that is when I realized I was pretty good. I was wrestling guys I knew were good wrestlers and I realized that I could keep up and even beat some of them I decided to rededicate myself to the sport. From there I never looked back."

Tapia would be the first to tell you that he may not have been that much better than his opponents on the mat; he was willing to put in the time and outwork others to achieve his dream.

In 2013, as an eighth grader, Tapia won his first state title at 106 pounds. He then captured the state title in the 113-pound weight division in 2014 and 2015. At the 2016 state championships, Tapia blew through the competition at 126 pounds, pinning his opponent in under two minutes in the first period. The win marked his fourth state title and cemented his name in the record books as one of the best.

"To be a four-time state champion in the state of New Mexico means that all the hard work I put in has paid off so far. It's really just about hard work."

He continued by saying, "To win my first state title back in 2013 was a sense of pride and relief at the same time because I was so young. I remember the year before I thought that if I could win a state title as an eighth grader that I had a pretty good chance of winning five straight. So far it has worked out and I'm going to give it everything I have this year to place my name on the list of five-time state champions."

This year, Tapia will try to become just the seventh wrestler in



New Mexico to win a fifth state title, wrestling at 138 pounds.

“To win a fifth title would be a great accomplishment and, like I said I still have a lot of work to do this season, but I’m going to continue to work hard and give it everything I have. It would mean that I was one of the best wrestlers to come out of New Mexico and that is a great honor.”

He also says that adding a team championship to his resume would be something great to bring back to Capital, a school he is proud to represent every time he steps onto the mat.

“I really consider wrestling an individual sport but to win a team state championship would be great as well to cap off my high school career. Capital is a great school and sometimes people have a different view about Capital but, to me, it has been a great place to go to school. I’m proud to represent Capital every time I step onto the mat.”

Regardless of the outcome this winter, Tapia hopes to get the opportunity to wrestle at the collegiate level.

“I hope to get a chance to wrestle at the next level. Right now I have one serious offer but hopefully, my hard work will pay off in the end like it always has and I get a chance to compete.”

Tapia carries a 3.4 GPA and says his education has always come before wrestling. He also said it has taken a lot of sacrifices over the years to make sure his grades are good but it has been worth every one.

“Education has to come first. In wrestling, you can only go so far unless you are an Olympic athlete. Then, you can make money at it. In the end, my education will be what carries me into the future.”

He continued by saying, “It takes a lot of sacrifices. Instead of going out with my friends or girlfriend I have to stay home and make sure all my school work is complete, I have to help my mom around the house. But in the end, I know it will be worth the sacrifices I have made.”