

New Mexico Activities Association Student-Athlete Spotlight

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Dalton Leads by Example

By Tyler Dunkel, NMAA Sports Information Director

Leaders are a special breed. It takes an individual with certain characteristics and qualities to lead a group, a team or even a school. Lake Arthur's Brandon Dalton is certainly cut from that leadership cloth, a position he has been proud to hold while being a Panther.

"Growing up I was always willing to step up into the leadership role on any team or organization I was a part of. The younger kids look up to me and that is something I don't take lightly. You have to always lead by example with your actions and words."

Dalton believes that is not just about the number of trophies or rings you earn in high school that defines a person, but the impression one leaves on others younger than themselves is what counts the most.

"People think you have to have championships and rings to define how you are remembered but I think it's how you leave your legacy. If you can be the one who sets the tone for future generations that to me is more important to be remembered by than the number of trophies you put in the trophy case."

Dalton has enjoyed much success during his high school career in football, basketball and track. As a member of the Panthers' football team, he helped Lake Arthur capture the 2012 and 2013 6-Man football championship while making the championship game four of the last five years.

This past fall, Dalton guided the Panthers back to the championship game as a senior, falling just short of another blue trophy. In that game, however, he was injured early in the contest and said he wasn't going to let that define his season.

"Early in the game our energy was really low and as soon as I went down with an injury you could tell the energy had left our team and the crowd. I was laying there thinking I didn't want my season to end like that and how much my team needed me. So I told my coach to tape me up and I went back into the game. I'm not sure how effective I was but it helped to pick our heads up and continue to fight. The tone of the game changed. Like I told the team, no one is going to remember you for an excuse. We came up a little short but I was proud of our team's fight."

He continued by saying, "Of all the years I have been playing, that game was one of the best games I had ever been a part of. I've been on both the winning and losing sides of championship games, but this year was an exciting game to be a part of. It was fun to be part of an uphill battle."

When asked if football was his favorite sport, Dalton said he actually enjoys track and field the most, saying that although he enjoys the brotherhood on the football field or basketball



court, he really likes the individuality of track and field.

“I like playing both the team and individual sports. With football and basketball, you are out on the field or the court with your brothers, fighting for every yard or every basket. In track, it really takes an individual effort to succeed and your success is measured by your effort alone. I think that is why track is probably my favorite sport.”

Dalton has overcome injuries on the track as well, having to sit out an entire season because of a hip flexor injury as a sophomore. He returned his junior year, qualifying in five events at state while finding himself standing on the podium.

“I endured some injuries early in my track career that forced me to sit out an entire season, but I was determined to not let that stop me from accomplishing my goals. I went out the next year and qualified in all five of my events and had a great experience. I think that is when I track and field became my favorite sport to compete in.”

So what is next for Dalton? He explained that following graduation he plans to attend college at Texas Tech University in Lubbock.

“I’m looking to go to Texas Tech to major in Kinesiology. I hope to become an athletic trainer. I think my experiences with injuries over the years can help me relate to other students going through similar situations. I can help others with the process because I already been there.”

Dalton is currently ranked at the top of his class with 4.2 GPA and is focused on becoming the first in his family to graduate college.

“Coming from a small town like Lake Arthur, you can go one of two ways. I was always in the shadows of my brothers on the athletic side, so I chose a different path with academics. I pride myself in that. My education is more important than anything. My parents didn’t get a college degree, nor did my brothers, so I want to be the first to earn that college degree.”