

# New Mexico Activities Association Student-Athlete Spotlight

Presented by Subway



## Harris' Example Sets the Tone for others to Follow

By Tyler Dunkel, NMAA Sports Information Director

Dayton Harris, a senior at Dexter High School, embraces his leadership role. His involvement in football, basketball and baseball, along with FFA and Honor Society has provided him with the platform to make an impact on future Dexter Demons.

Harris has played sports his entire life and says that his teammates are family to him.

"Growing up, my love for sports started early. I was always watching sports on television, especially football, basketball and baseball. For me, it was about being the best I could be but at the same time I wanted to help others achieve their full potential as well."

He continued by saying, "We are all family and have grown up playing everything together. That includes a lot of students from Hagerman as well. We all played together. To look back and see where we started to where we are now is amazing and exciting."

Although he is a three-sport athlete for the Demons, Harris says that baseball is his favorite, not because he can hit the ball far or pitch well but because it is a mental game.

"Baseball is my favorite sport because it's a mind game. You always have to be thinking about that next play and where you are going with the ball if it comes to you."

Sports have taught Harris much more than how to be a good teammate or how to win. He claims that learning to overcome adversity has been the greatest lesson he has learned while on the playing surface.

"With every sport comes adversity and I have learned to overcome those tough times, which has carried over into real life situations as well. Sports have brought out the leader in me as well. Something is always going to go wrong but you just can't give up. You have to be mentally tough and continue to push through the tough times."

Harris also enjoys setting the example for others to follow, including his younger brother. He hopes that the path he has chosen during his high school career will be an inspiration for younger generations.

"To be a leader all the time, to do the right thing and make the right choices all the time is tough but it is something all of us in leadership roles here at Dexter need to be mindful of. I have a younger brother who is always watching and I know the elementary kids are watching too. It is extremely important to set that good example. Those kids will be in my spot some day and hopefully my example will help set the tone for them."



He has also been involved in the Future Farmers of America (FFA) since he was a seventh grader, following in the footsteps of his older sister. He recalls learning at a young age the responsibility that comes with taking care of animals.

“My sister was involved in FFA when I was a younger. To be a part of FFA, you had to be a seventh grader but our Ag teacher was always around our house working with the animals, so it was like I was a part of FFA before I could officially join. I grew up showing steers and pigs. It takes a lot of work, having to wake up early to feed and groom the animals and then up late to repeat the process was a lot of work but it has been a great experience.”

In the Spring of 2016, Harris was selected to represent the students of not only Dexter High School but the entire state when he was chosen to be a member of the NMAA's Student Leadership Advisory Council. He says it has been a great experience and that it's been refreshing to know the NMAA cares about the students of New Mexico.

“Everyone on the Council is a leader in their schools. Just knowing that we've been selected to be leaders of the state is humbling. We are just looking to improve on things and work alongside the NMAA. The Council and the NMAA both have the same focus and that is to help make the high school experience a great one and to encourage all students to be involved in either a sport or activity at their schools.”

He continued by saying, “I used to think the NMAA was like this scary government in Albuquerque but that is so far from the truth. They really want to know our concerns as students and to hear our ideas. So far, it has been a great experience. I've learned so much about the NMAA and I think the NMAA has learned a lot from this as well.”

Harris carries a 3.8 GPA and says his parents have always pushed him to go beyond his own expectations.

“My parents have always pushed us beyond what we thought we could achieve in school. My dad wasn't the greatest student, so I think that is why he has always pushed so hard for all his kids to do better than he did. Both my parents have helped me realize that my education is really the most important aspect of my life.”

Following graduation in May, Harris will leave for basic training in Georgia with the National Guard, then return to Roswell and attend NMMI and hopes to earn a chemical engineering degree before heading to Texas Tech University.

“The National Guard has plenty of benefits. They are paying for my school and I'll actually be earning a paycheck while going to school. I've had family members in the military. My grandfather was in the Navy and a cousin who trains Marines. It will be an honor to serve my country.”

Regardless of where life takes Harris in the future, his leadership will for certain help guide others down the right path as well.