



New Mexico Activities Association Student Spotlight

Esquibel is Proud to Wear the Purple and White

By Kevin Wilson

Joseph Esquibel plays four sports but always makes sure school comes first. He handles the bad times with the same upbeat attitude as the good. He helps people whenever he can and has the trust of his coaches and teammates.

Esquibel is everything you would want in a senior athlete. Luckily for Santa Rosa, he's still just a junior.

The 5-foot-9, 145-pound Esquibel considers himself just like any other kid who grew up in Santa Rosa. His favorite time of year is the summer with all of the nearby lakes and the WIBIT water park.

But every season he gets to don the purple Lions' jersey is a close second.

"People always ask me my favorite sport," Esquibel said, just hours before he laced up to play point guard in Santa Rosa's 79-38 win over Monte del Sol to open the Santa Rosa Tournament. "I just always say the in-season sport is my favorite."

In that case, his favorite sport in the spring is either when he's playing shortstop or running track. In the fall, it's when he's trying to help the Lions continue their football excellence.

Esquibel plays cornerback on defense and tailback in Santa Rosa's misdirection offense now run by head coach Mario Trujillo.

The Lions only run four or five plays, but get steady gains when the defense doesn't commit and 60-yard scores when defenses commit and guess wrong. Option passes are normally thrown by the tailback.

"He's really smart, he makes good decisions," said Trujillo, who has spent 21 years with the Lions, with the last seven as head coach. "We trust him with that position. We can use anyone (to throw the ball), but the tailback position is where it usually (happens)."

"The thing about Joe, he's not the type who's going to bark out the orders. He's going to show his team how to do it and that speaks volumes."

Santa Rosa is much like District 5-3A rivals Tucumcari and Raton. Their communities are just off of the interstate and largely supported by the dollars of those passing through — whether they need a quick bite to eat, a tank of fuel, a place to spend the night or, in worst cases, new tires or emergency vehicle repairs.

But the people who live there, Esquibel said, are the best neighbors you could have. Not that he needed any reminders, but he saw it when he and other Santa Rosa residents helped more than 500 motorists stranded due to Winter Storm Goliath at the end of 2015.

"It's a really tight-knit community," Esquibel said. "Everybody helps out each other. Everybody here supports the



teams really well. Most of them played here, so they know what it's like. It just gives us an extra boost."

He wants to give back to them before he leaves to study medicine in fall 2017, likely at the University of New Mexico. He hopes this is the year he can help the Lions break a 26-year title drought in basketball.

"My ultimate goal is to win the all-sports championship, or the Director's Cup as it's called now," Esquibel said. "It just says (you're) a well-rounded program and (it would mean) that we've accomplished something few people have in Santa Rosa."

Joseph's dad, Joseph M. Esquibel, does triple duty as parent, coach and teacher. The younger Esquibel said his dad treats him like any other player, and with few exceptions, doesn't let the basketball season invade the home setting.

The one lesson Esquibel's parents have imparted is education.

"That's one of their top priorities," he said. "They're both teachers, and my mom (Danielle Esquibel) is a principal (at Santa Rosa Elementary). They push me to strive to do my best."

Esquibel, the president for the junior class, plans to become a general practitioner, and will work for his uncle Patrick Flores' Albuquerque-based chiropractic business when it has office hours in Santa Rosa.