



New Mexico Activities Association Student Spotlight

Bustamante Bounces Back from Injury

By Jason Groves

Courtney Bustamante is savoring every minute on the volleyball court, the basketball court and the softball diamond.

Bustamante, a Hatch Valley High School senior, had to make due without athletics last year after suffering serious injuries in a September 2014 car accident.

"I have always loved to play sports and when I lost that ability it was hard to cope with but it has made my senior year even sweeter being back out there with my team again," said Bustamante, who carries a 4.25 grade point average.

The high point of Bustamante's high school athletic career came during her sophomore year when she played setter on Hatch Valley's state championship volleyball team.

"It was the accomplishment of my high school sports career," Bustamante said. "It kind of made the rest of my junior year easier because I had something to hold onto."

But early in her junior season, everything changed.

"As soon as I heard, I drove to the hospital and the whole team did as well," Hatch Valley volleyball coach Kelly Weiler said. "They were all there by the end of the day. She was back in uniform by the end of the season but was never able to play."

Bustamante said her injuries included a broken cheekbone and eye socket around her right eye that required four plates and 30 screws, as well as a punctured lung and two broken bones in her foot.

Bustamante was involved in a two-car accident with a teammate, who suffered a broken finger.

"It was during homecoming week and I was going home from powder puff practice," she said. "It was a really normal day. I was just going home and everything changed."

Bustamante was cleared in December of 2014 and was able to eventually return to the basketball court.

"She slowly came back in January but it took awhile and now she is back to normal," Hatch Valley basketball coach Ben Trujillo said. "They did some major reconstructive surgery in her face."

"From the doctor's standpoint, she didn't come back until she was released but there was a little bit of mental stuff she had to battle through."

Bustamante is a team captain for the Bears' 12-9 basketball team this season and she rarely leaves the court, averaging six points and two assists per game in 28 minutes per game.



“There was a game this season where there was a big girl who was acting like she was posting up but would set a screen on the opposite side and Courtney was the player who was getting caught,” Trujillo said. “At halftime I told her she had to get through that. She just smiled and said, ‘Coach, she is really big.’ You can get on her or yell at her and she will just say, ‘Yes sir.’”

Bustamante played club volleyball with the Diamondback Volleyball Club over the summer.

Weiler said Bustamante returned at her setter position for her senior season.

“She plays all the way around the court as a setter,” Weiler said. “A lot of girls play either the front or the back row but she never leaves the court.”

While she has recovered from her physical injuries, Bustamante has also been recovering emotionally after experiencing serious injuries not common for high school juniors.

“It took a long time but I feel like I have made peace with it,” she said. “I know I won’t forget it, but it’s made me stronger. I have appreciated things more. I couldn’t play volleyball or eat solid food for a couple weeks so it’s easier to let things go.”

Bustamante said she plans to attend New Mexico State University following graduation and study to become a veterinarian.

“It’s important to me and my family to keep a high GPA,” she said. “College is important to me. I missed a solid two months and had to go to the doctor and to El Paso. It was inconsistent but I found a way to stay on top of things.”