



New Mexico Activities Association Student Spotlight

Michel's Journey Back from Injury

By Andreas Steinmetz, NMAA Intern

If you were to endure an injury while competing in athletics, would you call it quits or work to get back into the game? Allen Michel, a senior at Moriarty High School, chose to push through the challenges in order to get back to his successful three sport varsity high school career.

As a junior in the fall of 2015, Allen suffered a torn ACL in his left knee during preseason football. "During preseason football we were playing 7-on-7 and I went to turn and catch the ball and that is when it happened. At first I thought it was just a sprained knee, so I kept playing on it. I rushed against Miyamura the first game and could only take the pain for about four plays. When I had an MRI done later that next week, the ACL was completely torn off the bone."

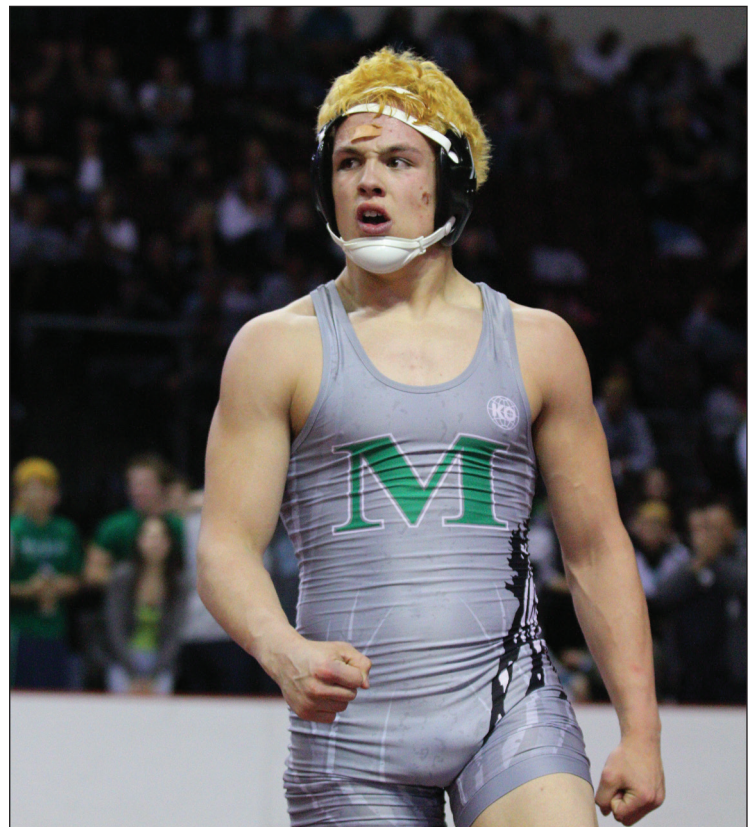
Michel was only starting his junior year of high school when his injury happened, but he already had experienced great success in varsity sports as well as off the field. As a sophomore, Michel won a state wrestling title in class 4A 160 pound weight division, was a varsity running back and linebacker in football, and was a varsity sprint participant in track, all while maintaining a 4.0 GPA in the classroom.

Naturally, at first thought, news of a serious injury for a competitive athlete might be overwhelming. "I just started crying. We got a first opinion without an MRI and the doctor said that because the way the knee was moving that it looked like I had torn my ACL. I couldn't believe it and I didn't want to believe it. So we went for the MRI and it confirmed that it was torn. I was devastated."

Going through the surgery and recovery, Michel understood the importance of being part of his team and took on different roles even if he wasn't able to compete alongside them. "I was really having a hard time with not being able to compete with my teammates. I think the one thing that helped me get through it all was staying with the team. I was at every practice, meeting and game, home or away. I just wanted to stay connected. So I became almost like a team manager, helping with equipment and uniforms or helping the coaches and being the upbeat sideline guy."

Being a young man dealing with a severe injury, Michel had to get into a different routine when it came to his long recovery and the physical therapy. "It wasn't tough on me as far as the strength aspect. I had to learn how to balance myself again. I went to physical therapy two times a week. It is different for high school athletes to come back from this type of injury, compared to college or pro athletes. In college or the pros, you have all day every day to work on healing your body with physical therapy. Where I had a longer time table because of the time I could devote to it."

Because of this long time table for recovery, Michel went through a difficult time of being sidelined for nearly 12 months. When doctors allowed for Michel to get back to activity, he had to get comfortable with his surgically repaired knee. "I really wasn't at full strength until that next year when football two-a-days rolled around. I was cleared to play but my knee still felt weak. At first I was very careful with it but as the season went on I could feel it getting stron-



ger. By halfway through the season my knee felt great.”

Michel credits his return to athletics by thanking Moriarty’s off-season programs. “I think the off-season strength and conditioning program might be the single most important part of the football program. If you come into a season not prepared both mentally, and especially physically, you have a much better chance.”

When talking about the 2015 football season, Michel saw the positives in the program compared to the last time that he had taken the field. “We hadn’t played as a single unit over the last few years like we did this year. During the off-season we got physically strong and that has never happened since I’ve been here and I think it really showed up on the field.” Moriarty football finished the 2015 campaign with a record of 9-3, with an exit in the second round of the 5A NMAA state football tournament. Michel finished the season with team bests in rushing yards (1,590), touchdowns (19) and all-purpose yards (1,673) in 10 games.

“This experience has taught me never give up and believe in yourself. Trust yourself to be able to fight through and comeback because you can.” Michel has found the positive in his injury and hopes to be an encourager for those that may go through similar injuries. “Never stop. Never be satisfied with being hurt. Work hard and continue to push through the pain both mentally and physically.”

When it comes to getting back on to the wrestling mat, where he has seen the most success, Michel is biting at the bit to get back to his most familiar sport. “Wrestling was my main sport before getting to high school and I have enjoyed every minute. I took fifth at state my freshman year and that gave me the experience I needed to win the state title in my weight division my sophomore season.”

As Michel entered the 2016 New Mexico National Guard State Wrestling Championships, he held a record of 31-1 and was the favorite in the class 5A 170 lbs. weight class. Blowing through the first three rounds, Michel made quick work and had three pins in a total time of :87 seconds. The final match was not much of a competition either as Michel took the state title, winning by a major decision of 11-1.

With all of the success that Michel continues to experience in athletics, he understands he will be more successful with the effort that is given on his academics. “My grades are important. I credit my parents with making my education the most important priority.”

Upon completing his high school requirements, Michel will be sitting out of athletics and focusing on a college career at the University of New Mexico, where he plans on getting a political science degree in order to become a lawyer in the future.