

# New Mexico Activities Association

## Student-Athlete Spotlight

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### Wells Tees Up for the Hawks

By Tyler Dunkel, NMAA Sports Information Director

Next on the No. 1 tee, from Volcano Vista High School, senior Ben Wells....

In his final year as a member of the Hawks golf team, Wells looks to make a push to go out on top as a state champion. But, his journey wasn't the prototypical golfer's climb to the top. In fact, baseball was his first passion.

"I started playing golf my freshmen year. Before that, I played baseball as my main sport. Freshman year, I played fall golf and spring baseball. Because golf is a spring sport, I knew I had a choice to make so I picked golf. I started playing in junior tournaments, kept playing with the high school team and, over time, my golf game improved."

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The choice to give up baseball, a sport that he had played almost his entire life was difficult, as Wells explains.

"It was super hard to give up a sport that I had played since I was 9-years-old. I had played a ton on club and other teams. After playing the first season of high school baseball, I had friends and I had a team. While I wasn't forced to make it, the decision came rather quickly and I didn't have much time to think. I am definitely glad I stuck with golf because I don't think baseball would have helped me get this far."

Ask anyone who has tried to transition from a baseball swing to a golf swing and they will tell you that the two swings are similar but much different at the same time. Wells says his golf swing was very choppy at first and that it took time to find his groove.

"Even when I was much younger playing baseball, I would mess around and play a little golf, here and there. For my first few years, golf didn't seem smooth. The swing is so different, and the explosion of baseball is different. But, now it all comes smooth and natural to me."

Wells says that golf has provided him many opportunities along the way, including the possibility of playing collegiately.

"As a freshman who knew nothing about golf, I would never have imagined being a senior where I am today. I've had offers from colleges and that's the kind of stuff I would never have gotten without golf or with baseball either. The most important thing for me is the opportunities I have to further my education and play golf while going to school."

He continued by saying, "I've received official offers from Rocky Mountain College in Montana and Walla Walla University in Washington. I've been in touch with a lot of other coaches and have spoken with New Jersey, Missouri Valley and Illinois. While they haven't made me an offer, it's an opportunity that I wouldn't have without golf."



In the end, Wells decided to attend Utah State University in Logan, Utah, but his golf career will be on hold, at least for two years, as he will embark on a religious mission for two years.

“After graduation I’ll be starting a two year religious mission trip. When I get back, I’ll be attending Utah State. The coach there has told me that if I want to play, he will allow me to walk on and be a member.”

So, how will Wells maintain a high level in his golf game during his two-year mission? He explains, “I made the decision that I was going to go on this trip before college. I knew it would be a sacrifice, but when I get back, I’ll have eight or nine months before golf starts again and I will be dedicating that time to getting my game back.”

Following college, Wells plans to become a commercial airline pilot, something he has dreamed about since he was a young kid.

“Like every kid, from a young age I always wanted to be a pilot. From then to my first time in a plane it just got cooler. The next time I went up with someone, I knew it was for me. Flying is something that I really enjoy learning about. I hope to work for JetBlue someday.”