



New Mexico Activities Association Student Spotlight

Gikas Juggles Sports, School and Life

By Tyler Dunkel, NMAA Sports Information Director

Four-sport student-athlete Taylor Gikas of Mountainair High School enjoys being a Mustang but building the girls' athletic program as a state title contender year in and year out is something she hopes to do before the end of her senior year.

Participating in cross country, volleyball, basketball and track and field has kept this Mountainair senior busy during her final year, in the town she has lived in her whole life.

"I've been involved with all four varsity sports for three years, although I did run track my eighth-grade year. I have really enjoyed my time in all four sports. I love the team aspect."

This past November, Gikas helped lead the girls' cross country team to the school's first-ever state title in any girls' sport, while running for her mom, Lisa Gikas, who is the team's head coach.

"It was the first girls' state championship in any sport at Mountainair. I think winning the state title at Mountainair means that our girls' athletic program as a whole will take that next step to becoming state title contenders every year in all sports. Personally, to help bring a state title to Mountainair means the world to me and then to be able to share that alongside my mom was very special."

She continued by saying, "It was great running for my mom. I really appreciate her as a head coach. I really started running cross country in order to prepare for the track season, not thinking that we would have the success we did as a team. It was definitely fun but challenging at the same time. We had some great moments together that I will always treasure."

While leading the cross country team to a state title, Gikas also played volleyball. Gikas and the Mustangs made the quarterfinals of state, falling to Mora 3-1. One may ask how a high school student balances two sports in a season, along with finding time to squeeze in academics? Gikas had a simple explanation.

"I have been really lucky that we have a seventh period that is dedicated to athletics. I usually did my cross country training during that time and then headed to volleyball practice afterward. Physically, it was demanding. I definitely went to bed early just because I was so tired but I enjoyed the challenge and being with my teammates. Because we did win the state cross country championships this past year, it was worth all the time and hard work."

Following the volleyball season, Gikas was selected to the North-South All-Star Game, and hopes that opportunity gives her a chance to play volleyball collegiately.

"When I found out that I was selected to the North-South All-Star Game I was very humbled and excited. It is an honor to represent my school in that event. Volleyball is my favorite sport and hopefully, I get the opportunity to play at the collegiate level."



Following a successful volleyball and cross country season, Gikas immediately jumped into basketball, guiding her team to the first round of the state tournament. As a forward for the Mustangs, Gikas averaged nine points and four boards in 2015-16 as the Mustangs finished with an overall record of 17-11.

With the track and field season in full swing and the state meet just over a month away, Gikas hopes to build on her success from a year ago, where she was a member of the winning 4x400 meter relay team and took second in the 800-meter run. She also competes in the high jump, the 200, the 400 and all the relay teams. This year, Gikas believes her team can make a push towards their first state title in track and field while competing for the female high point athlete of the meet.

“This year, I think we have a strong team that should compete for the state title. Personally, I would love to finish my career as the high point athlete of the meet.”

Gikas was voted by the Mountainair coaches as the Mountainair Female All-Around Athlete two years in a row and could be well on her way to winning her third honor this season. To be eligible for the award, the athlete has to be the team’s most valuable player in at least three sports. Gikas was named MVP in four sports last year.

“I feel very lucky to have won the award two years in a row. I do my best to help the younger athletes develop and be a role model for them on the right way to do things both on the court/field and in the classroom.”

Although competing in four sports, which spreads across all three sports seasons, Gikas still finds time for other activities. She is currently the Vice President of the Student Council and President of the National Honor Society at Mountainair. As President of the NHS, Gikas has organized outings to help at the local food bank and projects like writing letters to our troops overseas.

“It has been very rewarding to have the opportunity to give back to my community and to those who serve our country. To help someone in need, especially in our small town, is great.”

Time has always been the greatest opponent for most high school students that are involved in multiple activities at school and for Gikas this is no exception. She explains her secret to balancing her busy life, “The one thing that high school students who are involved with so many activities need to learn is to figure what sacrifices need to be made in order to best utilize their time. You have to be willing to sacrifice stuff like spending time on your phone or on social media. Time management is huge.”

What’s amazing about Gikas is that despite her busy life and juggling so many things on her plate, her number one priority has always been her studies. She is currently battling it out with one other student at Mountainair to be valedictorian and says her parents instilled a solid academic base early in her life.

“Education is my number one priority. My parents have anyways stressed academics and to put forth my full effort. I think it has helped me to become a well-rounded individual.”

Gikas will graduate in the spring of 2016 and head to college, where she wants to study journalism, with hopes of one day becoming a writer for ESPN.