

New Mexico Activities Association Student-Athlete Spotlight

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Hernandez says 'Be involved, Stay Involved'

By Tyler Dunkel, NMAA Sports Information Director

Rio Grande High School senior Gasper Hernandez exemplifies what being involved in interscholastic sports and activities can do for an individual. His involvement in football, basketball and track & field for the Ravens has opened more doors for him than he ever could have imagined.

It started for Hernandez the summer before his freshman year at Rio Grande when he showed up to football workouts just to be around his friends and stay active. He never thought it would materialize into a starting quarterback job.

"I started playing football my freshman year. I had been working out with the team that summer, just going out and running with my friends. I never had any intentions of actually playing. I just wanted to stay in shape. As the season was coming up, the coach asked if I wanted to play and be the freshman team quarterback. That is when my football career started."

He continued by saying, "It was hard at first to pick up a game that most of my teammates had been playing for a few years, especially since I was going to play quarterback. In the end, I didn't really have a choice. I needed to get up to speed quickly. It was a great experience. My sophomore season I moved to wide receiver and have been playing that position ever since."

His participation in football led him to try out for basketball and join the track & field team as well.

"I played two years of basketball for the Ravens. I love the game. It helped me take my mind off of other things in my life and just be a kid, having fun. On the track, I run a few sprint events, the 100 and 200 and then I high jump as well. I wanted to try and get fast for football and it rolled into something more than just preparing for the next football season."

Then in the spring of 2016, Hernandez applied to be an inaugural member of the NMAA's Student Leadership Advisory Council. Hernandez said that he thought it was a great opportunity for him to help give a voice to not only other students at Rio Grande High School but students around the state.

"When I heard the NMAA was forming the Student Leadership Advisory Council, I thought it would be a great opportunity for me to help give students not just at Rio Grande but around the state of New Mexico a voice. I applied and was selected."

He continued by saying, "I believe it has been a success. I think we made a change as a group for the students of New Mexico. I wasn't sure who or what the NMAA was at first. Now I have a better understanding of what the NMAA and their goals for the students of New Mexico. I would encourage other students around the state to try and be involved with SLAC. It has been a great experience all-around."

Hernandez says that being involved at school has helped him



develop into the person he is today and encourages others to get involved as well at their schools.

“My advice to those students thinking about trying out for a sport or getting involved in an activity would be to just try it. Take a chance. Step out of your comfort zone. If you don’t make the team try again the next year or try another sport. The relationships and friendships you will build are more important than anything. You won’t regret it.”

“I also believe that being involved at school will help you with your studies. It will keep you focused. If you don’t have the grades, you can’t participate. Being involved has made me work hard for things, helped me to be more responsible and made me into a man.”

Hernandez has been a member of the National Honor Society for three years and says his mom is the one who instilled in him the importance of education.

“My education has always been number one in my family. My mom has always stressed the importance of education. I know in order to go to college and have a successful career, it starts in the classroom. I plan to attend UNM and study computer science and be a video game developer.”

Outside of school, Hernandez is also involved in Big Brothers/Big Sisters, mentoring a young boy named Isiah. Although the time Hernandez has spent with him has made an impact on Isiah’s life, Isiah has also impacted Hernandez as well.

“My sister told me about Big Brothers/Big Sisters and said I should get involved. I looked into it and now I’m a big brother to a little boy named Isiah. I take him out once a week and helping with his homework or we go to the park. He grew up without a dad so I’m glad I can be that father figure for him.”

“Being involved with Big Brothers/Big Sisters has really shown me how to help others in need and not to take things in your life for granted. Honestly, he has done more for me than he can ever know.”