



New Mexico Activities Association Student Spotlight

Capital High senior Augie Larranaga, a 6-foot bundle of versatility who will take his track and field talents to Adams State

By Arnie Leshin

To Augie Larranaga, track and field was, at first, an afterthought, listing it below his preferences to football and basketball.

But it meant more to him than baseball, which he played in Little League, but traded in for track and field when he was in 6th grade.

Now, flash forward to this bundle of versatility's senior year. As the starting quarterback on the Capital High football team, he led the Jaguars to the state 5A playoffs, losing by a point at Roswell Goddard.

As the starting guard-forward on the basketball team, he helped pave the way to the district championship and to the state finals where they lost to district rival Española Valley.

This leaves him with track and field. No doubt disappointed at not coming away with state titles on the gridiron and on the basketball court, he has already won state in the spring in previous seasons and is on his way to perhaps another title or two, maybe three.

And it's track and field in which he will compete at national Division II level with powerhouse Adams State, where he recently signed to take his skills to Alamosa, Colorado.

"The more I competed, the more I really liked track and field," he said, "and I'm real happy I get to run at Adams State."

Not only that, but he will have company, as his girlfriend from Capital, Alexandria Vasquez, is also heading to Adams State to major in psychology, while he will be majoring in business management.

To backtrack to his freshman season, Larranaga's first with the Capital football team under long-time head coach Bill Moon.

"We lost eight games by at least 50 points," Moon said, "and most with the running clock ending games early. We won one game but it didn't bother Augie. He was just happy to play, never flinched, never thought of dropping out."

His sophomore year, Larranaga was the starting quarterback, named the team captain, and the improvement showed if you can call winning three games an upgrade. The team won five games his junior season and seven this past campaign.

Not only that, but through these dismal years of District 2-5A, all of its district champions would get pounced in the opening round of state, most spent watching the running clock speed along. While district winner Española suffered that fate at home in the first round, the Jags came closest of all by taking Goddard to the limit.



“Our problem was making good on only one extra point kick,” Larranaga said, “or we could have won.”

Moon has been coaching football since 1972, taking over at Capital when the school opened in 1988.

“Augie just made everybody better,” he said. “He fit right in, no ego. He had that super, positive attitude, no fear about him. He played with courage and character, and of all the players I’ve coached, he stands out as probably the best athlete.”

On the basketball court, Larranaga came close to winning the school’s second state championship under head coach Ben Gomez. Here, he showed leadership, teamwork, all the key ingredients needed. They defeated Espanola 3-of-5 times and lost a tight final at the UNM Pit.

“He was a starter for the last two years,” Gomez said. “He ranks among the best I’ve ever coached, a terrific team player who did what was needed to get the job done. He’s a freak of an athlete and others just follow him, look up to him.”

This bounces over to the classrooms, where Gomez said he has, “awesome grades.” He added that Larranaga leads by example, sacrificing himself to help others succeed.

Rita Vigil is the head track and field coach. She said he came out for track for the first time as a freshman and did the sprints and the relays. Right from the outset she said she saw a really good athlete.

“That first year, he qualified for state in the 100 and 200, and was disappointed he didn’t place,” she said. “His sophomore year, he medaled in the 4 x 400 relay and qualified in the 200 and 400. Last year, he won state in the 400, a distance he was unsure of at first, and won third in the 200. He skipped the 100 to run anchor for the relay teams.”

Vigil added that he’s a great leader, very positive, very encouraging, and that he’s been team captain the last two years.

“He has the stride, the speed and the kick.” said the coach, “He’s a strong runner and he’s learned to run the 400. He’s qualified now for state in the 100, 200 and 400, but will again skip the 100 to run the relays.”

Larranaga’s mom, Venessa, ran track and field in junior high. His dad, Ramon, finished third at state in the 800 for Santa Fe High. His older brother played football and baseball at Capital and his two older sisters played volleyball and ran cross country for the Jaguars.

“We are very supportive of him,” his mom said, “and proud because he’s so respectable, polite and humble. He was very small when he was young and we nicknamed him Teeny.”

Now he stands 6-feet.

“Augie is very popular in school,” said his dad, “and was the prom king. Before every race, he shakes the hand of everyone else he’s running against. He wanted to run track in college, and when he only received offers in football, he had no problem deciding on Adams State.”

Before becoming so active in athletics, Larranaga did his share of community service. His classroom favorites are history and math. His favorites in professional sports are the Dallas Cowboys, Boston Celtics and Boston Red Sox, and in the college ranks he likes Oklahoma in both football and basketball.

Upon leaving Santa Fe, where he was born and raced, he said, “I will, of course, miss being here; the only time I was away was while on vacation for about a week.”