

New Mexico Activities Association Student-Athlete Spotlight

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Sanchez Enjoying her Experience at Menaul

By Tyler Dunkel, NMAA Sports Information Director

Maria Arroyo Sanchez, a sophomore at Menaul High School, is an exchange student from Spain, who is enjoying every experience she can during her time in the United States. She came to Menaul, following in the footsteps of a close family member.

"My brother (Marcos) came to Menaul a few years ago and really enjoyed his time here. So, when it was time for me to make a choice where to go, Menaul was an easy choice. My parents were more familiar with the school and faculty at Menaul so it made them feel more comfortable."

Sanchez said that being in the United States is much different than Spain because of the structure of the school day but she thinks she can get used to the new routine.

"I really like being here. It is much different from Spain because the school day schedule and sports are much different. The time management part of it is much different and I like that."

She continued by saying, "Here in the United States, people are much nicer to each other and they trust one another more even if they don't know the person. In Spain, we are taught at a young age not to speak to people you don't know because they may be dangerous. It seems though that people here are always willing to help each other and that is something I really like."

Sanchez participates in volleyball for the Panthers, a sport she did not play in Spain. Before coming to Menaul her brother told her she needed to get involved in something as soon as she could and although she had never played volleyball before Sanchez felt that she would try something new.

"I had never played volleyball before I came to Menaul. My brother told me I should try new things while I'm here and really take in the whole experience. So, I decided to try playing volleyball and I really enjoy it. I thought it was going to be a boring sport but I was definitely wrong about that."

In Spain, Sanchez played basketball year-round and is looking forward to the upcoming season.

"I played basketball in Spain for about five years before coming to Menaul. In Spain, you play basketball year-round, where here you only play in the winter. I'm excited about the upcoming basketball season. Basketball is a team sport and that is probably my favorite part of the game."

When asked what her future plans were, Sanchez expressed she would like to pursue a profession in science but also mentioned that coaching youth basketball is something she would like to do.

"I want to go to college but I'm not sure yet what I want to



study. I've thought about something with science, like an engineer. I also like drawing and creating things with my hands so I've also thought about being an architect. Really, my dream is to be a basketball coach. I want to teach the younger kids the game and help them learn the life lessons that I have learned from basketball. I know someday my basketball career will end and coaching basketball will be a great way for me to stay involved in the game."

Since coming to New Mexico just two months ago, Sanchez said her English has improved but that it was hard at first. With Spanish being her first language, she said she knew enough to get by but is slowly picking it up day by day.

"I knew basic English when I came to New Mexico but it was hard at first. I have really picked up a lot since being here over the last two months. I speak Spanish, English, German and Chinese."

Although being involved in sports has been a great experience so far for Sanchez, her main priority is school and says that her parents expect her to maintain good grades in order to play sports.

"My grades are really important because my education will allow me to do what I want to do later on in life. My parents have told me that if I don't keep my grades up I won't be able to play sports and I really want to play so I need to stay on top of my studies."

Enjoying the opportunities that life gives you is something more people need to take advantage of and Sanchez plans to do just that while at Menaul High School.