

Basketball players, wrestlers recognized by school board

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
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While many school basketball tournaments and other spring sporting events were either canceled or played behind closed doors without fans due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the Gallup-McKinley County Schools Board of Education recognized players from those sports during their May 11 meeting.

Ben Chavez, athletic director for GMCS, spoke for the players, none of whom were able to attend the meeting due to the shelter-in-place orders.

Chavez called the efforts of the district's athletes one of many positive developments to come out of GMCS in uncertain times.

"We know how much time the coaches, the students, and even the parents and fans put into these events," he said.

First to be recognized was the Tohatchi Lady Cougars basketball team, which finished state runner up in the New Mexico 3A Girls tournament.

"They were playing in the midst of when the pandemic started and actually had to play the last couple games without any fans," Chavez said. "We know what great supporters our fans are, so who knows what could have happened if fans from Tohatchi and McKinley County were in the stands."

Each member of the team will receive a recognition plaque from the board, Chavez said.

The next athletes recognized were both the boys and girls wrestling teams from Miyamura High School. This was the second year females were able to compete at the state tournaments, but this was the first year the tournaments had placings and rankings, Chavez added.

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From the boys' team:

Drake Guerrero, state champion

Anthony Ward, state runner up

Seanmatthew Garcia, third

Rhys Sellers, fourth

Next, Chavez called the recognition of female wrestlers in the state tournament as a momentous occasion. Especially since the Miyamura High School Girls' wrestling team was the first ever state champion in New Mexico.

The individual placers were:

Yele Aycock, state champion

Shandiin Largo, state runner up

Nancy Rodriguez, state runner up

Lorianna Piestewa, state runner up

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Auriana Lehner, fourth

Hannah Mariano, fifth

Taniel Espinosa, fifth

Both the boys and girls wrestling teams were coached by Pete Sellers.

Chavez and the board said they hope they are able to recognize these students in person soon, as well as prep for the next season.

“Hopefully this strange time we’re in will end soon, and we’ll get right back with gearing up for athletics in McKinley County,” Chavez said.

“Once this madness is over and we’re back to normal, if any of them are available, we’d like to get some of the folks from the team, shake their hands and get a picture with them,” Board Vice President Chris Mortensen said.

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