

N.M. student-athlete secures victory in national high school football game

Written by Gallupsun Staff
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GRANTS — A Grants High School student-athlete played a crucial role in helping his team win a national football game in Florida earlier this month.

Bryan Hernandez, a senior at Grants High School, helped his team, dubbed the White Team in the All-America Classic, secure a 24-13 victory in Orlando Jan. 2 by catching a late 4th quarter touchdown.

“It was awesome getting to play football again,” Hernandez told the *Gallup Sun*. “It felt like I had a lot on the line, but I feel like it made me work harder.”

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As a slot receiver, Hernandez's stats for the game included two passes for 24 yards and one touchdown.

"Watching the ball come down, I thought 'I've got to catch this one,'" Hernandez said of the touchdown pass.

In its VOL 6 ISSUE 295 on Nov. 20, 2020, the *Sun* reported that Hernandez was the first New Mexican to be selected to play in the All-America Classic football game.

Fundraising efforts from family members and his employer helped make the trip possible.

Hernandez made the trek to the East Coast with his brother Brandon and his fiancé Alyssa, spending several days in the Sunshine State practicing with his team for the big game.

Hernandez, 17, remains the only Land of Enchantment participant in the event's three-year history.

"The game was fast-paced. It felt like what I imagine a college game to be like — not only the competitiveness but the playbooks as well, the playcalling, it was all next level," Hernandez said.

Hernandez said the lesson he learned playing the game was that there is always someone faster and more athletic, but that you still have to give it your all.

Hernandez's performance in the game helped the student-athlete earn an offer to play football at Papago Junior College in Mesa, Ariz.

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It remains unclear at the time of publication if high school New Mexico athletes will be able to participate in sports during the Spring 2021 semester. There was no football season last fall, due to the novel coronavirus.

If the game was Hernandez's final one as a high school athlete, he says he considers it a success. Hernandez offered the following advice for aspiring student-athletes.

"Always believe in yourself. If you've got dreams, shoot for them," Hernandez said.

"Just know that confidence comes with preparation. If you prepare, and if you put in work, you will see results."

By Dominic Aragon
Sun Correspondent