

Mickey and Ricky stick together, get skills from athletic family

Written by By Tom Hartsock Sun Correspondent
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The Menapace family has a long history of involvement with athletics in Gallup, starting with the oldest grandson of Rico, the founder of Rico Auto Complex. Howard, their father, coached all three of the boys through their baseball programs in summer leagues.

Oldest son Mickey is the only one to start and finish his early years in school at Cathedral School (now Gallup Catholic), from kindergarten through high school. He played Minor League, Little League and Babe Ruth baseball in the summer months before and during his high school years, and competed in Connie Mack as he aged up. Cathedral did not have a baseball program during his years there.

As a freshman, he was listed as a quarterback on the football team, though he admits he played little that year.

"I was only 5-7, 130 pounds and had to roll out to pass since the linemen were much taller than me," Mickey said.

He also said he was a guard in basketball, but decided it wasn't the sport for him as he wasn't incredibly quick on the court. Mickey always loved summer league baseball and remembers his grandpa Rico in the front row for all of his Little League games.

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“The summer I graduated, he bought me a plane ticket to Santa Clara College in San Francisco and told me to try out for the team there. I made the team but there was no scholarship,” Mickey said.

When Mickey returned he said he played on a Connie Mack team in a tournament at Farmington. During the game a coach from ENMU took notice and offered him a full-ride scholarship for playing baseball.

While Mickey was grateful to have his education paid for, he said he was quick to take the scholarship so he could be closer to his younger brother, Ricky. Mickey explained that Ricky had been in a car accident and was currently undergoing physical therapy in Roswell, which was close to Portales where Mickey would be going to school.

“Ricky was better at baseball than all the rest of us. He was gifted with more ability and was a very good, natural hitter,” he said.

Mickey and Ricky weren't the only athletes in the family either. Their sister Debbie played basketball and softball, first at Cathedral and then Gallup High where she was forced to transfer when the private school closed down before her senior year.

Debbie continued to play AAU fast pitch softball, her main focus, and basketball for the next several years. She remembers being on a Fr. Dunstan-coached team that finished fifth in state and another team, coached by Joe Vargas, which won a big tournament in Durango. In later years, she took up golf and won the City Championship once.

Marty played basketball and baseball during his two years at Gallup High and signed with the NMSU Aggies but blew out a rotator cuff on a throw from third base that ended that venture. Marty also played on the Little League team that won state before losing in the regional to Reno, Nevada, 8-7. He also served two years as the VP of GABC.