

Miyamura High School student selected to represent New Mexico in Australia

Written by By Boderra Joe Sun Correspondent
Friday, 26 January 2018 09:47



The 30th Annual Down Under Sports competition announced their selection of Miyamura High School junior student Elijah Begay, 16, to represent New Mexico on the 2018 Cross Country Team in Queensland, Australia.

So what is Down Under Sports?

The organization, based in Utah, provides exceptional athletes “with the opportunity to experience the culture, beauty and grandeur of the land down under all within the framework of spirited and intense competition,” according to a press release.

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Begay, of Gallup, said, "It's a real special honor to get invited [by Down Under Sports] and to represent New Mexico."

Growing up, Begay never thought he would be a runner. His father, Emerson Begay, was a basketball coach, and while he ran himself he preferred to teach his son basketball.

"I always thought I would play basketball throughout high school. But I stopped and tried cross country," Begay said. "I never stopped since."

At first, running was just a sport to him. But recently, Begay has found himself turning running into a lifestyle.

"He [Emerson Begay] always used to tell me stories of how he competed in high school in running. It motivated me to try and be like him," Begay said.

In his years as a freshman and sophomore, he heard of other athletes being selected to participate in the Down Under Sports.

"I always thought it would be cool to go," Begay said. "I always talked to my mom if I ever got invited, would she let me go."

Sure enough, his dream came true when he received his letter.

FUTURE GOALS

Begay plans on attending college and hopes to receive a scholarship for running. Undecided of where he would like to attend, he said any college would be great for him.

Begay also plans on becoming a professional runner and hopes one day he can compete in the Olympics to represent the United States.

In preparation for Down Under, track and field will help keep his momentum high. Daily runs will also hone Begay's self-discipline, increasing the mileage and speed of his workouts.

INSPIRATION TRAIN

Begay's parents are Eunice Begay, mother, and Emerson Begay, father. They are originally from Jones Ranch, N.M. and Pinon, Ariz., respectively. Begay is the second youngest out of seven children.

Coming from a big family, Begay's older sister, Dianna George, and their father both played a huge role in Begay's life as a runner. Both have experience as runners and are always there motivating, supporting, and pushing Begay to become a better person and athlete. Not to mention his mother, who is proud of her son and glad he chose to run.

Begay will be leaving the country, and though his mother is nervous about him departing, she would like her son to experience the world. She hopes for Begay to meet new people and to run with other nationalities, and to explore a different part of the world that she might not get to see herself.

George, who ran track and field during her years in high school, said she's very proud of her brother's accomplishments for the past two years he has been running.

"He [Begay] put in a lot of work, especially this past year," George said. "We've talked with him about being serious with his running because it will take him places, so him being able to go to Australia, it will add to his accomplishments of 'I did it.'"

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Begay is certainly blessed with an enormous support system behind him and has definitely set an example for his siblings and the younger generation.

From his parents and sister's experience, they encourage other families to be very supportive with their own children and siblings in whatever they are passionate about.

"We're really proud of him and excited he was selected," Eunice Begay said.

Even though Begay's parents and sister have been his inspiration, there is another person he admires. That person is Steve Prefontaine, a long-distance runner who ran for the University of Oregon and competed in the 1972 Olympics.

"I look up to him because he was an amazing runner," Begay said of his idol.

Begay encourages aspiring runners to keep working hard. Keep putting in the miles. Keep the mind set on getting faster and stronger. And sooner or later, goals will be accomplished.

FUNDRAISE, DONATE

The opportunity to travel is an exciting one — and a rare one.

Begay said the farthest he's been away from home was to San Diego, Calif. He is thrilled to have the opportunity to travel overseas, to try new things and meet new people. If all goes according to plan, Begay will depart for Australia this summer, leaving June 26.

But travel, as much as it is exciting, is also an expensive opportunity.

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Begay's family encourages anyone who can to help donate to his adventure, which would not only represent New Mexico, but Gallup as well.

So far, the main source of funding has come through the generous contributions of family, friends, teammates, and community.

Pizza 9 in Gallup will contribute their sales towards Begay's fundraising on Feb. 7. His parents encourage anyone and everyone to help make it possible for their son to compete in Australia.

OTHER WAYS TO DONATE

Pay online at <https://DownUnderSports.com/payment/CFD1-0075-9B73>

Make check payable to "Down Under Sports" and mail to:

Down Under Sports

PO Box 6010

North Logan, UT 84341

Along with sponsorship letter

Or, pay by phone, by calling (435) 753-4732

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***For more information on donating, contact Dianna George at ☎ (505) 879-4135 or email: [w
olfbabygeorge@hotmail.com](mailto:olfbabygeorge@hotmail.com)***

By Boderra Joe

Sun Correspondent