

Grants athlete selected to play in national football game

Written by By Dominic Aragon Sun Correspondent
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High school football standout to play in All-America Classic

GRANTS — A Grants high school football player will have the opportunity to showcase his talents in a game exclusive to high school seniors.

Student-athlete Bryan Hernandez, a senior at Grants High School, has been invited to play in the Spiral All-America Classic Bowl game in Orlando, Fla. on Jan. 4.

The game, now in its third year, will have scouts from Division I football programs on-hand to see the talent from the student-athletes.

Overall, 110 players are invited to take part in the game.

Hernandez, who found out he was approved on Nov. 10, is the first New Mexican to be invited to play in the game's three-year history.

"The first thing I did was go and tell my mother, especially since she has always been by my

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side, she's always cheered for me — one of my biggest fans," Hernandez told the *Gallup Sun*.

Hernandez said one of the recruiters saw one of his social media posts and told the 17-year-old to apply for the game. He registered and found out a couple weeks later that he had been accepted.

Hernandez plays wide receiver, strong safety and special teams for the Pirates.

"Sleeping on New Mexico is a big thing, and hopefully I can prove that when I go," Hernandez said about underestimating the talent from Grants.

Grants High Pirate football coach Rio Thompson has coached Hernandez since 2017 and calls the 5'8", 137 lb. senior, one of the best kids he's had the opportunity to be around.

"I'm not talking just about being a football player, I'm talking about young men. He does the right thing on-and-off the field, and no matter what he chooses to do in life, he will succeed, I can guarantee that," Thompson told the *Gallup Sun*.

"I believe he could play at the college level, all the way from Division I to wherever he wants to play," Thompson added.

When he hits the gridiron in Florida, Hernandez hopes to learn new skills and make new connections.

Hernandez will have to account for registration fees, airline tickets, his hotel room and food as part of his January trip.

In order to make it happen, Hernandez has been selling World's Finest Chocolate Bars to help

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raise the necessary funds.

Hernandez's part-time employer, Diamond G (True Value store in Grants), has been helping the student-athlete sell the chocolates.

"I'd like to thank my mom, my dad, my nana and tata, my coaches — especially my coaches — and my brother," Hernandez said.

"They've done everything they can, and I wouldn't be here without them."

The game will be live streamed at allamericaclassic.com/tv.

If you'd like to help Bryan and his efforts, he can be reached on Twitter at @showtime020319.

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