

Miyamura grappler raising funds for Australia trip

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 06 May 2016 03:36



Annual wrestling tourney gets participants from all over

Despite a challenging season as a wrestler for Miyamura High School, Bennie Baca was chosen to go to Australia to participate in that country's Down Under Sports Wrestling Tournament. Besides the United States, the annual tournament consists of wrestlers from as far away as New Zealand, Hawaii and American Samoa.

The tournament takes place from July 10 through July 18 and Baca said he wants to concentrate on fundraising in the interim since Miyamura High School is not connected to the trip.

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"I'm excited about going, in spite of the fact that I had a not all-that-good wrestling record the past year," Baca, 17, said. "I've never been out of the country before. I'm very excited."

Baca, who has wrestled at Miyamura the past three years, said he won about five wrestling matches in 2015 as a member of the Patriots team. Baca made it to state last year, but was eliminated in second round competition.

He said that he was asked to participate by a stroke of luck. A college recruiter happened to be at one of his wrestling matches and told the 113 pounder that his style was "aggressive and smart." Baca, who ran track his freshman year for the Patriots, said he's interested in going to college at Arizona State University in Tempe.

Baca's father, Lennie, said plans are already underway for father and son to begin selling items like T-Shirts and just, generally, any kind of wrestling paraphernalia that the two can move.

"I'm very excited for my son," Lennie Baca said. "Right now we're going to make the focus fundraising so we can get there next year."

Bennie Baca said he doesn't yet know who he'll be facing on the mat upon arrival. But he said he plans to stay in tip-top shape in order to put the best foot forward toward a win.

Ken Starkovich, wrestling coach at Miyamura, said the team did well the past year. Starkovich, who said he'll retire from the school soon, coached Baca for two years at Miyamura. He said he wishes Baca the best in the Land of Down Under, saying, "not every kid from Gallup always has the chance to get out of Gallup for such a far away trip."

Lennie Baca said interested donors can call him at (505) 593-1496.

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