



SUN SPORTS

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(SUN Filefoto)
Española Valley High School football coach Santiago Archuleta addresses the team after a loss.

Losing Streak Hits Seven

Nav. Prep (5-2) 42
España (0-7) 8

By Ari Levin
SUN Sports Writer

The winless streak continued for the Española Valley Sundevils (0-7) with another blowout loss when they were steamrolled by Navajo Prep (5-2) on Oct. 8, 42-8.

Senior running back Luis Cuevas lost a fumble on the second play of the game, and the Eagles scored soon afterward.

After that initial score, the Sundevils responded with an 80-yard touchdown run by Toure Tsosie on a sweep to the right, and took an 8-6 lead. They would not score the rest of the game.

Navajo Prep was able to easily answer, though, and racked up points through the rest of the game.

The defense continued to struggle, Española fell behind 30-8 at the half, and gave up additional touchdowns in the third and fourth quarters.

España goes into district play this week, with their first game coming on the road Friday against Taos (3-4).

See more in this week's Rio Arriba Sports Roundup on Page B3

Sheriff's Report Details Alleged 'Pantsing' in Pojoaque Locker Room

By Ari Levin
SUN Sports Writer

Four Pojoaque Valley High School football players jumped on another football player, threw him to the floor, and pulled his shorts down, the player told investigators according to a report from the Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office.

He said that other players believe it was "horseplay" but "they took it too far" on the alleged Sept. 9 incident, and said that five or six students had their shorts pulled down. Other players interviewed

mostly described similar incidents of "pantsing" but many indicated that they felt it was more similar to "horseplay" than any form of assault.

Sheriff's Deputy Roy Arndt conducted the investigation, which was completed and reviewed Sept. 29. The Sheriff's Office redacted all names in the report released to the Rio Grande SUN.

Five football players are continuing to fight in court a school suspension, which were originally to take place Sept. 15 to Sept. 28, given after the Pojoaque School

District received an anonymous report alleging hazing in the football locker room. It is unclear how many different students were suspended by the District or implicated in the report. The original Sept. 13 police report had four suspects listed, with one 15-year-old and three 17-year-olds.

One player told investigators that one of the players involved in the "pantsing" grabbed his genitals while he was wearing shorts and underwear, and the player hit his hand away.

Another time, a teammate (the redacted name appears to match in length from the other alleged incident) allegedly reached under his shorts and attempted to pull down his underwear, which ripped his underwear.

"You need to cut your crap out," the player replied, and told investigators that he later changed into jeans. According to the report, he said that he had not seen any sexual assault, and none of the incidents he witnessed occurred without

See 'Students' on page B4

Bobcats Give up Big Early Lead

Cuba (3-3) 45
McCurdy (2-5) 26



(SUNfoto by Ari Levin)
McCurdy Charter School senior Marcos Gasca (1) breaks through on a first-quarter run. Gasca went down with a shoulder or neck injury early in the game and did not return, leaving his freshman replacement to command the offense. Gasca's absence was also felt on defense as the team's starting free safety, with Cuba able to exploit the weakness in the secondary.

By Ari Levin
SUN Sports Writer

At some point in the fourth quarter, after falling behind at home, McCurdy Charter School football coach Robert Nevarez turned to me on the sideline, and caught my eye.

"Well, you've just watched us completely run out of gas," he said.

That just about sums up what happened in the game, a non-district loss to Cuba (3-3) where McCurdy (2-5) went from leading by 18 in the second quarter to allowing 37 unanswered points to lose 45-26.

It seemed like, despite the early score margin, once the Rams landed a punch, the Bobcats lacked the ability to hit back while they stumbled into the ropes through the second half.

Nevarez said that the team's smaller roster - in addition to losing multiple starting linemen to flu and COVID-19, and then injuries through the game, cost them as the game progressed. They play multiple eighth graders, and have almost all starters playing both offense and defense. As injuries pile up, those starters cannot even get off the field for a play sometimes. And both their starting quarterback and running back, who also play key roles on defense, left due to injuries.

"We played tough in the first half, like we've done all year," Nevarez said after the game. "And then we just ran out of people."

Through the first quarter, McCurdy looked like the far stronger (and more physical) team. They were, quite simply, bullies at the line of scrimmage.

See 'Freshman' on page B2

Lady Devils Volleyball Hits a Slump

Taos (6-5) 25-26-25
España (8-9) 23-24-19



(SUNfoto by Ari Levin)
España Valley High School senior Roxane DeLeon digs out a shot during España's loss to Taos on Oct. 7. The defense and passing have struggled for the Sundevils during their current losing streak, now up to six matches.

By Ari Levin
SUN Sports Writer

It has been a rough stretch recently for Española volleyball.

To start district play, the Lady Sundevils are 0-2 after falling Oct. 7 in straight sets to Taos (6-5) at 25-23, 26-24, 25-19.

With the loss, the Sundevils lost five straight matches after an 8-3 start to the season, with their most recent win coming Sept. 21 against Santa Fe Prep. (Update after Saturday match.) It was Española's first loss to Taos since at least 2007, as far back as MaxPreps has history tracked (the Sundevils had been 14-0 in the years since.)

Sophomore Mercedes Gonzales said the team was nervous headed into district matches, and has struggled with their communication.

Team coach Nicole Romero said the team struggled passing as well during the match.

"We served better than we have in a long time, but we couldn't pass," Romero said. "Our passing has fallen apart. When we can't pass, our hitters are really picky about needing certain sets. And it's hard to set on the run. They have a lot of mental problems going on right now, and we need to overcome this and try to figure it out."

Two days before, they had lost in straight sets to Los Alamos (25-14, 25-10, 25-21) to open district play.

See 'España' on page B3

Pojoaque Seeks First District Win

By Ari Levin
SUN Sports Writer

The 2020-21 football season was all forms of crazy. Not the least of which, there was no official district schedule.

España Valley, with barely a full team, lost 50-0 at Moriarty in a game that featured snow in mid-March after barely any practice at all. Pojoaque Valley beat Española on the road 50-0 a few weeks later after months of wondering if there would be any season at all. And Taos finished the strongest of the group at 3-1 with a 34-0 stomping of Moriarty on a Thursday in April. In short, not much felt like the traditional Friday Night Lights, but the play-

ers were certainly happy for those games.

This week, an official district schedule will commence for the first time in two years, when the district was combined with teams from further south (grants was the district champion) while Moriarty played in an eastern district. The four teams will play each other in the next four weeks while looking for a district crown, and the competition looks to be fierce.

Pojoaque Valley (4-2)

First, the elephant in the room: five Elks players are fighting a

See 'Students' on page B4



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Football

Freshman Leads Offense after Gasca's First-Quarter Injury

Continued from B1

Cuba's first two drives went straight backward. First, with a interception when the quarterback was fading far too deep and it fell into the hands of a defensive lineman. Then they went three yards backward again and punted from their own 10-yard line.

The Bobcats, meanwhile, seemingly had no problem moving the ball. But their first two drives both ended with a fumble in Cuba territory. And on the second, quarterback Marcos Gasca came up injured holding his shoulder (Nevarez said he believes it to be a pinched nerve in his neck) and did not return to the game. Freshman Jeremaya Roybal took over under center for the rest of the game.

"Jeremaya did a great job," Nevarez said. "He is not as quick as Gasca, but he can definitely throw. And our passing game was there. He is the quarterback of the future. Gasca's a senior, he'll be gone next year. Jeremaya will step in, and we're going to build around him. I think he's a great quarterback, and he's got a lot of talent."

On their third drive, McCurdy finally held on to the ball, and at that point it was all they needed to get into the end zone, with Lucas Martinez punching in a one-yard run.

"I knew we could move the ball," Nevarez said. "We scored a lot of points up front. We made some mistakes, and even with those mistakes we were still winning."

McCurdy fumbled again on their next drive, and these fumbles would come to hurt them later on (in total, they would lose

Jeremaya Roybal
McCurdy Bobcats

2-5, 44 yds.
34 rush yds.

five in the game). A bigger first-half lead would have been easier to keep, of course, and may even have discouraged the Rams before they could start their comeback effort.

McCurdy did score once more at the start of the second quarter after forcing a turnover on downs, traversing 48 yards in six plays capped in a one-yard run from Casey Nevarez.

But Cuba finally found the holes in McCurdy's defense later into the second quarter, and their drive was extended by a fourth-down offside before a touchdown pass. With Gasca out as the starting safety, the back end of the Bobcat defense had a weakness the Rams would look to exploit.

Robert Nevarez said there was nothing special in Cuba's schemes, they simply found the weaknesses in the defenses, and McCurdy ran out of players to stop them.

"We didn't have the personnel to make the adjustments we wanted to make," he said.

But McCurdy's next drive went according to plan after a strong kickoff return, and it took just three runs from the different players to score, with Martinez taking his second touchdown for an 18-8 lead after all three extra point conversions failed.



(SUNfoto by Ari Levin)

McCurdy Charter School's Joey Fernandez (10) bounces off of a defender's tackle attempt on a run to the 1-yard line. Fernandez was one of seven Bobcats with a rushing attempt.

The defense made a stop, and Roybal hit Dylan Dean on a long pass on his first attempt of the game. Then, Jolen Montoya ran in a 25-yard touchdown, and suddenly it was an 18-point lead and the rout looked to be on. But that did not last long; a long kickoff return gave Cuba great field position, and they scored in two plays at the end of the half.

After halftime, Cuba threw two long passes and scored on a run the next play, and quite suddenly the lead was down to two. McCurdy fumbled on the next drive, then just as quickly let up another touchdown to fall behind.

After their third straight touchdown, Cuba attempted a fake extra point. That one failed,

but later in the game they would attempt a true extra point for the first time in the game, and succeeded. Robert Nevarez would tell the team during a timeout that these decisions showed a lack of respect that they would have to earn back.

Overall, McCurdy lost five fumbles in the game en route to a 19-point loss. After that initial 26-8 lead, Cuba scored 37 unanswered points on five straight touchdowns, scoring on every drive from that point onward excluding the last-minute kneeldown.

"When you have five turnovers, you can't hope to win the game," Robert Nevarez said. "In the first half, we left three touchdowns on the ground. We

should've gone into that locker room leading four touchdowns."

Martinez was the leading rusher on the day with 57 yards after Casey Nevarez left in the second half with a concussion. Seven different Bobcats had rushing attempts, combining for 218 yards on 37 carries. Cuba's offense in total barely outgained McCurdy's (300 yards to 262) - but the turnovers were deadly, and McCurdy gained just 45 yards total in the second half, compared to nearly 200 for Cuba.

The loss drops McCurdy to 2-5 on the season. Their only wins on the year have come against Questa (one in a forfeit win), but games against Santa Fe Indian School (where they simi-

larly went up 14-0 in the first quarter before falling behind) and now Cuba could have been wins, and could have changed that to a 4-3 record.

Remaining 1-1 in district play, McCurdy sits squarely in third place in the district.

"It doesn't show it, and I know a lot of people say, 'That's same old McCurdy football,'" Robert Nevarez said. "But it really isn't. We're coming out, and we're competing to the very end. And I have coaches telling me that we're playing better than what they expected."

Nevarez is excited about the team's youth, which only loses Gasca as the lone senior on offense and has more freshmen and sophomores than juniors and seniors this year.

"What these guys have learned about football, nobody will believe this, but our first practices, we were teaching guys what the 1-hole is, versus what the 3-hole is," he said. "We were teaching the very basics of football, how to tackle, how to block, how to run a route."

Next week, the Bobcats will face Escalante (4-3) in a district matchup, a team they have not beaten in seven tries - the last six matchups (though none since 2018) have had an average score of 56-2.

"I really do (think we can compete with Escalante)," Nevarez said. "Our biggest thing that we need to overcome is our guys' heads. We're making too many mental mistakes. I think we can compete with anybody. Anybody up north ... I'm not afraid to put our guys up against them."

Competition Will be Fierce in District 2-4A

Continued from B1

school suspension related to hazing allegations involving "pantsing" in the locker room (see 'Sheriff's Report').

At the original time, they would have knocked those players out for their homecoming game against Thoreau and then the road game against Gallup, both 50-plus-point victories (not to make this in any way primarily a football story.) Instead, those could come back down at any time, and potentially knock team leaders out of district games or even state tournament games. But it is not worth speculating on how that could proceed, so we can only look at what the team has done so far.

The Elks have failed their two big non-district tests, losing 30-19 against Highland and 42-22 to Hope Christian, both at home. In both games, Pojoaque fell behind by multiple scores early (30-7 to Highland, 28-0 to Hope Christian) and rallying in the second half but without enough time to make up ground. But if they can put together a full 48 minutes, they have the talent to compete with anyone in the state.

Throughout the year, coach Pat Mares has said their biggest opponent is themselves. In both losses, Pojoaque has committed at least four turnovers and were hampered by defensive errors and miscommunication.

The Elks are not afraid to go through the air, with Adam Pacheco throwing to a talented receiving corps led by D'sean Martinez. But the offense so far has gone through the ground and Dominic Esquibel - back in Pojoaque after playing most of his middle-school and high-school career in Colorado. Esquibel ranks second in the state in rushing yards (1,246 - over 200 per game) and touchdowns (20).

This Pojoaque team, which has played together for a dozen years after being the very first Pojoaque Crush team, has plenty of talent, and a hot streak could give them the school's very first

district title. A stark turnaround from recent history - their most recent official district win was 8-6 over Santa Fe Indian School in 2017.

Moriarty (3-2)

The Pintos faced a tough schedule to start the year, and answered the task. Their biggest loss was by 14 points in week one to Santa Fe. Their other loss was in overtime to Capital, and they had a game against Miyamura canceled while they battled a COVID-19 outbreak (Moriarty did not play between Sept. 17 and Oct. 8).

Moriarty's offense has gone almost exclusively through their ground game, though sophomore quarterback Amare Gonzales can air it out on rare occasion but has just 14 pass attempts this season. But their run game has had a balanced attack between Gonzales and three other backs, including senior Kenneth Poyer, who leads the team with 361 yards and eight touchdowns.

In Moriarty's signature win, a 7-6 dogfight at Bernalillo, Gon-

zales was 0-for-3 through the air, but Poyer ran for 133 yards on 27 carries and the team's lone score. But remarkably, they held Bernalillo to just 83 total yards, including 2.2 yards per rushing attempt.

But Moriarty is the top-ranked team in the district for a reason, and their grind-it-out style could pose a problem, especially for Pojoaque if the Elks struggle on defense.

Taos (3-4)

Three years removed from a state championship, the Tigers had as slow a start to the season as any, losing their first four games of the season, most embarrassingly a 63-34 rout against Kirtland Central (3-4) in week three where they allowed almost 400 yards to the Broncos' running back.

But a 53-0 win over Shiprock was a get-right game (spoiling the Chieftains' homecoming), and since then the Tigers collected two strong wins: first, 14-7 over Bernalillo with a fourth-quarter rushing touchdown by

quarterback Daemon Ely the difference; then a thrilling 13-12 overtime win against Silver.

The Tigers are led by the 6-foot-7-inch junior Ely, and often go with a pass-first offense as he loves to hook up with fellow junior Fabian Cordova, who has seven touchdowns on the year. Cordova will also run the secondary defensively, along with senior tackle Uriel Chavez.

When Ely struggles, like he did in a game against St. Pius X, it puts a lot of pressure on the defense which can be gashed by the run. But if they hold strong like they have in recent weeks, the offensive firepower should make them the district favorites yet again.

Española Valley (0-7)

The Sundevils looked to have some life in week one, when after falling behind 21-0 in the first half, and trailing by 29 in the third quarter, they came back to make the game close (a 15-point loss) against a bigger school. Six-foot-seven-inch senior Ollie Fell scored five touchdowns, one

on a kick return and four on passes from junior Nate Chacon.

Since then, injuries and youth have hurt the Sundevils and limited coach Santiago Archuleta's potential for creativity as he relies on a simplified playbook. In the six games since, the average margin has been 49-7.

They held close against Santa Fe Indian School (a 10-point loss) but have been dominated by every other opponent.

Much will depend on who is available and at what level for Española, and whether Chacon and Fell will see the field (Chacon appeared to be back in their most recent game after a concussion, but Fell was not.) Senior Luis Cuevas has been a strong runner and linebacker, but he has not had much help on either side.

But the results so far have not been good. And given the quality of their upcoming competition, it would be surprising if Española picked up a win. Or, frankly, if any of their three games are close.

Week Ahead

Friday, Oct. 15



Española at Taos

0.7	Record	3-4
12.3 ppg	Offense	24.1 ppg
50.1 ppg	Defense	26.7 ppg

Last Meeting
Taos 56, Española Valley 8
(10/11/2019)



Pojoaque at Moriarty

4-2	Record	3-2
43.5 ppg	Offense	27.2 ppg
14.0 ppg	Defense	17.6 ppg

Century

5 x 4.5

Volleyball

Española Coach Wants to Improve Communication

Continued from B1

Romero said she made some adjustments to the rotation and the way the team alternates between setters Joni Martinez and Brandy Gurule, so Roxane DeLeon would be on the receiving end of Martinez's sets and Gurule would set to Daphne Talamantes, as those pairs have a better connection.

DeLeon led the Sundevils against Taos with nine kills in the match, and Martinez had eight assists.

Gonzales and Robyn Garcia as the team's middle blockers combined for three blocks but zero kills.

The home crowd gave their support to the Sundevils, with a heavy and local practice from members of the basketball team doing their best to rally the volleyball players.

"It takes me back to Espanola Valley pride, and we always have the loudest fans and the most fans," Romero said. "It reminds me of the days back when I used to play."

"It really supports us when they do that," Gonzales said.

All three sets were tight throughout. Taos took a 20-14 lead in the first set, but after a timeout the Sundevils came back strong with five straight points, and had a chance trailing 24-23, but fell at the end.

"They go up, and then they go down," Romero said. "It's just a matter of, you see them in the moment. And for those five points they're focused. And then they almost get satisfied with what they just did, and then they get loose again."

The second set was similar, with Espanola taking a lead but then giving up a five-point run. An ace from DeLeon tied the set at 24-24, but then the Tigers took the next two points for the set win.

Both teams stayed close in the third set, and were tied 18-18. But Taos won three straight points, and then four more for a 25-19 win.

For Taos, the win represents their first in a district match since 2017. Their two wins over West Las Vegas that year were their only district victories in program history recorded on MaxPreps until last week.

But this year's Lady Tigers team, with a trio of strong hitters, looks much stronger than one that would be expected to go winless.

The losing streak hit six games on Oct. 9 with a four-set loss at home to Santa Fe Indian School, losing 26-24, 25-23, 17-25, 25-14.

Romero said she does not have an answer for how to fix some of the team's issues. She said she wants to try to make them more comfortable in the team environment. And she is



Volleyball Standings

Games Through Monday

District 2-4A

	W	L	GB
Pojoaque Valley	2	0	--
Los Alamos	1	0	0.5
Taos	1	1	1
Moriarty	0	1	1.5
Espanola Valley	0	2	2

District 5-2A

	W	L	GB
Escalante	2	0	--
Mora	2	0	--
McCurdy	0	0	1
Peñasco	0	1	1.5
Mesa Vista	0	1	1.5
Questa	0	2	2

willing to get creative in the coming days to find a solution.

"Communication is a really, really big problem," she said. "I might even bring out some kid games. Like telephone. Just something to get them to communicate to each other."

Hutton

2 x 6

RIO ARRIBA SPORTS ROUNDUP

Dulce 54, Alamo Navajo 18

The Hawks (2-5) won for the second straight week by putting up over 400 yards of offense in a crushing victory over Alamo Navajo (0-6).

Quarterback Kai Cassador threw for 192 yards and four touchdowns, while Chris Cassador ran for 196 yards and three touchdowns of his own. Ivan Harrison, Santiago Largo and James Johnson (two) caught touchdown passes.

Their home game next week against Menaul (4-2) will be crucial to determine if they can sneak into the state tournament.

Volleyball: Pojoaque 3, Moriarty 0

The Elkettes (11-6) stomped into a 2-0 start in district play, first with a 3-1 victory over Taos (6-5) and then on Oct. 7 with a 25-13, 25-15, 32-30 sweep of Moriarty (10-6).

All six of Pojoaque's losses have been to top-tier teams, many in larger schools, and they appear to be the early district favorite.

They play next on Thursday (10/14) against a struggling Espanola team (8-9) as they look to make it three straight wins.

Escalante 3, Questa 0

See: Athlete of the Week, page B4.

Coronado 3, Jemez Valley 0

The Leopards (3-10) have moved into third place in their seven-team district at 2-1 after getting their second straight win Oct. 9, beating the Warriors (0-12) 25-18, 25-14, 25-18.

Tuesday evening, Coronado faced off with second-place Evangel Christian (8-6) looking for a signature win.

McCurdy Volleyball

The start of district play will have to wait for the Bobcats (1-8). Their Oct. 5 match against Dulce (1-5) was canceled because of an official shortage. Then, a COVID-19 exposure canceled their matches against Mesa Vista (5-7) and Peñasco (6-6).

Soccer: Pojoaque 0, Moriarty 0

Pojoaque (8-6-1) fought to a draw after no scores through two overtime periods on Oct. 7, fighting off 13 shots on goal from the Pintos (7-8-1). Two days prior, they lost 5-0 to Taos (4-8).

Meanwhile, the Elkettes (3-12) lost those two matches 6-0 to Taos (9-4) and 10-0 to Moriarty (6-5-1).

Tennis: Corley Cup

Four Sundevils competed in Albuquerque in the Corley Cup over the weekend and saw some of the top competition they can expect for this year.

In doubles, the pairs of Joaquin Salazar/Adam Gonzales and Joaquin Suazo/Ian Gaytan both lost to their first round opponents.

For the singles draw, Salazar defeated his first-round opponent 6-2, 6-3 but in the next round ran in to his teammate Gaytan, who had a first-round bye, and defeated Salazar 6-4, 6-1. Gaytan lost 6-0, 6-0 in the Round of 16. Suazo had a bye through the first round then lost 6-1, 6-1. Gonzales also had a bye, then lost 6-0, 6-0.

Church

4 x 10

Students Claim "Horseplay" Went Too Far

Continued from B1

clothes.

Another student told investigators that "pantsing" was a regular incident, but it was "just horse-playing around" and not hazing. He said he did not witness anyone falling to the ground. He also said that none of the football coaches observed the incident.

"It got to horseplay, but it got out of hand," another student said.

Another student said in the report that teammates slapped his buttock in the locker room, but he did not feel uncomfortable with that. Another who was indicated as a potential witness said he had only heard rumors and did not observe any inappropriate behavior.

According to the report, District Safety Director Gary Johnson told investigators about alle-

gations of criminal sexual penetration involving water bottles, fingers, markers, pens and broomsticks. But none of the interviews with students mentioned any such incident, and the report indicates that it may have occurred in 2020.

Attorney Jerry Archuleta, who is representing the accused students in court, told investigators that his clients were not responsible for the incidents, and identified someone else who he said "panted" another student in the basketball court, outside where the locker rooms are, and said a volleyball coach (unnamed in the report) witnessed the incident.

Pojoaque volleyball coach Joe Rodriguez said in a phone interview with the SUN Oct. 8 that he had been interviewed by the school, and that he did not witness any incidents. He said if he or anyone on his staff witnessed such an incident they would have

reported it, and he does not tolerate any such behavior.

The report said the alleged incidents "(were) not for the purpose of initiation, condition, precondition to be a member of the Pojoaque High School football team," implying that they were not directly hazing.

Pojoaque football coach Pat Mares declined to comment on the incident in a phone call in late September, and did not stop for an interview after the Oct. 2 home football game. Athletic Director Elvira Crockett declined to comment on the matter.

The Pojoaque School District hired Roxie P. Rawls-De Santiago from Walsh Gallegos, who had represented the District at the September hearings, as legal representation for the court cases, filing their appearance into court Oct. 6. Hearings scheduled between Sept. 21 and 27 were vacated while the investigation

continued.

The two-week suspensions for a group of students were lifted after a Sept. 17 ruling by District Judge Matthew Wilson granted a temporary restraining order for two of the cases until the students could be granted due process.

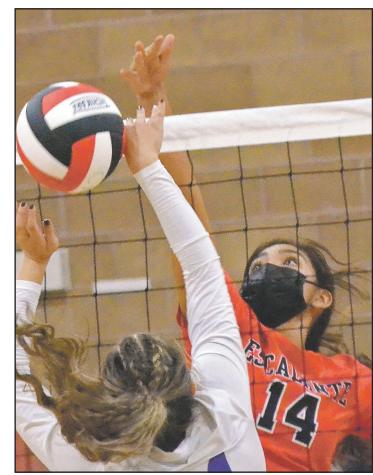
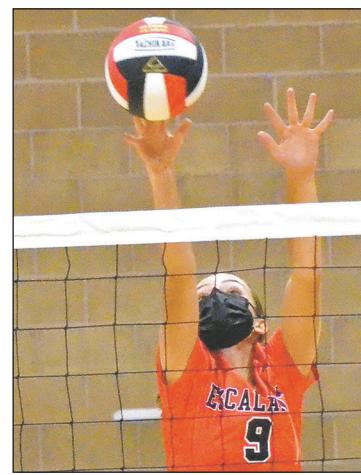
Pojoaque superintendent Sandra Adams said in a phone interview that the attorneys had been discussing the next steps and a potential resolution but no hearings were currently scheduled. The accused students have not had an internal hearing, and Adams said police told the District that they could not talk to those students.

Santa Fe Sheriff's Office spokesman Juan Rios wrote in an email that the case was forwarded to the New Mexico Juvenile Probation Office for review, and they will consult with the District Attorney to determine whether to file charges.

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

REINA TERRAZAS / KALESE TORREZ

ESCALANTE LOBOS VOLLEYBALL



Coach Kathleen Salazar-Valdez said she asked everyone, and nobody could decide on which of the two senior Lobo hitters has been a stronger performer as they have led Escalante to six straight wins.

That combination up front would be the envy of many coaches, and Salazar-Valdez said they will also start hitting from the back row.

Escalante started 2-0 in district play, crushing strong competitors. They won in a sweep over Mesa Vista on Oct. 5, and then two days later they swept Questa 25-10, 25-17, 25-7.

The Lobos, at 12-3 this season, have only lost in New Mexico to higher-classification teams.

Their matchup against Mora, the other 2-0 division team, will come on Saturday on the road (with a rematch to come at home Nov. 4).

After not playing in the 2020-21 season, the Lobos have come back strong under a new head coach, and are looking to get back to where the program was in 2017 when they made the state quarterfinals, and perhaps progress even further.

The next match for Escalante comes on Thursday (10/14) against Peñasco (6-6).

SPORTS ON DECK

Thursday, Oct. 14 Volleyball

Pojoaque

Españaola

The Elkettes (11-6, 2-0) come in hot to the week, while the Sundevils (8-9, 0-2) are the opposite of that while on a six-match losing streak. Seemingly, though, the teams have a similar raw talent level, it just comes down to whether Españaola can solve their mental issues and get back to fundamentals. Both matches went to five sets last year, though with very different teams, but this could be a similar thriller.

Friday, Oct. 15 Football

Menaul

Dulce

The Hawks (2-5) finally found their offense, scoring 96 points in the last two weeks after none in the first five. They have shot up to No. 8 in the MaxPreps 8-man rankings, but that is still two shy of a state tournament berth. They have a chance to keep climbing this weekend, as the Panthers (4-2) rank No. 7 on MaxPreps and just hit fifth in the most recent NMOT Coaches Poll. If Dulce can deliver in front of the home crowd, they might be able to extend their season.

Friday, Oct. 15 Football

Pojoaque

Moriarty

District play starts this week, and the North could have three of the state's top 10 4A teams. The Pintos (3-3) are consistently the top ranked of those teams, and the Elks (4-2) will have to answer their run-heavy style. Friday night looks to be chilly, but with no wind, and that could give Pojoaque an edge with their passing attack. And if Dominic Esquivel can continue his season-long romp, they could be in great shape.

Saturday, Oct. 16 Football

Escalante

McCurdy

Their 2-5 record does not necessarily show it, but the Bobcats have been surprisingly competitive for a team three years removed from their last season, taking big leads against multiple 3A schools. But Escalante (3-3) is looking to capture another district title. McCurdy's best hope is that the Lobos are looking too far forward to next week's game against Estancia, and they could fall into a trap game this week.

NM Gas

3 x 11

Zia

3 x 11