

**NEW MEXICO
ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATION**



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NMAA RECOGNIZES SPIRIT OF SPORT RECIPIENT

Albuquerque, N.M. – Laila Charley, a senior at Navajo Prep School, has been selected as the recipient of the 2021 New Mexico Activities Association Spirit of Sport Award. The NMAA Spirit of Sport Award was created by the Association to recognize those individuals who exemplify the ideals of the spirit of sport that represent the core mission of education-based athletics.

“I’m just happy to be alive right now,” said Navajo Prep senior Laila Charley.

Charley, a starting basketball player since she arrived at Navajo Prep, was involved in a near-fatal ATV accident on July 15, 2020. Laila fractured bones in her head and suffered a traumatic brain injury. Emergency surgery was required to stop the bleeding. Doctors didn’t think she would make it. “A nurse or a doctor, I’m not sure who she was, told us, ‘I’m going to be straight with you, I’ve seen this a few times, your daughter’s not going to make it,’” recalled Laila’s father Michael. “We just kept praying and praying, we need a miracle.”

Laila spent over two and a half months in the hospital and underwent multiple surgeries and procedures. She went weeks without even speaking, but Laila continued to fight. Just surviving her near fatal accident wasn’t enough for Laila, she was determined to get back out and compete.

Laila had to learn how to walk and talk all over. In addition to even just the basic skills, Laila began running and shooting baskets. “Her dad would wrap a towel around her waist to hold her up and she would stand close to the basket and just start shooting,” said Navajo Prep basketball coach Rainy Crisp. “Once you saw that, it was amazing. At that time, you knew she was going to do what she could to play again.”

Laila has been cleared to play basketball in the winter and now runs cross-country at Navajo Prep. “During my sophomore year, I did try out for cross-country, and I would say I was the last runner for varsity,” said Laila. “Now I’m like the top runner here at Prep for varsity girls and they said that’s like a huge inspiration and accomplishment that I’m showing to everyone.”

“She battled and she fought and she had a goal and she never doubted herself,” said Rainy Crisp. “It’s great to see her come this far when a lot of people didn’t think she would.”

A video and story recognizing this amazing student-athlete can be accessed from the NMAA website at the below link:

https://youtu.be/ZoMotg_UdLw

The 2021 New Mexico Activities Association Spirit of Sport Award was presented to Laila and her family at the NMAA/NMADA Fall Leadership Conference Lunch Banquet on Monday. Laila was given a special plaque to commemorate her selection. She will now be nominated for the National High School Spirit of Sport Award that is given out by the NFHS each year.

For more information pertaining to this release, please contact Dusty Young, NMAA Associate Director at (505) 977-5385 or dusty@nmact.org.