Awards Presented to the Best and Brightest Varsity Athletes

August 2020

SOUVENIR EDITION

2020 All Valley SPORTS AWARDS

AWARD PRESENTATIONS

TO THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST VARSITY ATHLETES
By: Henry Miller

Former New York Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter said “there may be people that have more talent than you, but there’s no excuse for anyone to work harder than you do.”

On the following pages, there are amazingly talented, hard working young athletes who are considered the best, the athletes of the year, in their respective sport in South Texas. Missing from these pages, however, are athletes that that had their seasons swept out from under them due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While they are not here, they are as talented and they worked as excruciatingly hard. We appreciate your skills, your determination and how you have responded during these days that have changed how we do just about everything. We also sympathize with you, especially if your season, your high school career, unexpectedly ended. Still, there’s no doubt, you have learned how to be better.

Sports is more than just about winning and losing a game. It’s about teamwork, about dedication and devotion, about motivation and working toward a common goal. It is about being better, every day. It is a microcosm for life itself. The memories will last so much longer than the wins or losses.

To all the athletes who had a great season, enjoy the memories, build upon the traits that you have developed during the years with parents’ encouragement, coaches’ guidance and teammates’ shoulders to lean on in both good and difficult times.

Athletes, you have a community that supports you. Lone Star National Bank jumped at the opportunity to congratulate each of you for your accomplishments during the past school year. As you peruse these pages, note all the other establishments that also say “thank you.” We thank you and them.

You didn’t reach the mountain top overnight. You started the long journey more than likely years ago. Your talent led you to begin that climb, that journey. Talent alone, however, is not enough and you didn’t rest on your laurels. Your hard work and perseverance pushed you to the top.

But the mountain you have conquered is just the beginning. Use that talent, that hard work, and all that you have learned from sports to continue conquering, to always climb higher and to be the best that you can be.

Thank you for a memorable season.

Congratulations to all the Athletic programs in the Rio Grande Valley!

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Williams Macias did not run in many meets during the 2019 cross country season. When he did though, he won. Macias, a junior, ran in the Meet of Champions where he held off other top runners from Mercedes, Edinburg Vela, Edcouch-Elsa and PSJA North, among other top Valley runners to win one of the most prestigious meets in South Texas. Macias went on to set a personal record time of 15 minutes, 27.5 seconds to win the District 31-5A championship by more than 30 seconds ahead of his nearest competitor. Macias advanced to state, where he finished 55th out of 130 runners. However, his personal best time would have placed him 16th and will help prepare him for his senior season.

The 2019 District 32-6A individual champion, Abrego had been aiming to hit a sub-16:00 5K since he helped guide the Eagles to their second straight district title with a time of 16:03.6 ... He earned his first trip to state by running a 16:22.27 at the Region IV. He accomplished his goal with a personal-best 15:56.47 that put him in 77th place in Class 6A at the UIL state meet. ... “(Abrego is) just a sophomore,” Hanna coach Olya Teran said after the state meet. “He’s going to work harder and get better. He recorded five top-10 finishes in 2019, including a personal-best 9:29.1 2-mile time to place seventh at the Lockhart Hippensteel Invitational. His 16:02.0 5K helped him win the silver medal at the Mercedes Invitational and a 16:18.9 5K at the Brownsville ISD invitational helped him take the bronze.
Congratulations
Tige Johnson
San Perlita High School
2019 All Valley Sports Boys Basketball Player of the Year
2020 All Valley Sports Lower Valley Boys Basketball Player of the Year

- 2019 BASKETBALL REGIONAL TEAM QUALIFIER
- 2020 32-2A MVP
- 2019 32-2A OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR
- 2018 32-2A DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR
- 2X RGVBCA M.V.P.
- 2018 RGVBCA DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR
- 2018 VALLEY MORNING STAR DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR
- 2020 RGVBCA SENIOR ALL STAR
- 2X VALLEY MORNING STAR M.V.P.
- 2020 CREAM OF THE CROP STX OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR
- 2X TABC ALL REGION/ALL STATE TEAM
- 2X VIPER SHOWCASE TEAM
- 3X REGIONAL TRACK QUALIFIER

San Perlita ISD
It's just better out here!
Upper Valley Girls Cross Country Athlete of the Year

Amity Ebarb
Junior
Weslaco High School

Presented by RGV Sports.com

It only seems like Amity Ebarb has been winning every cross country race she enters for the past decade. It actually has only been a couple years, but either way she has still been winning just about every meet she enters. And she has one more year to go.

For the second straight year, Ebarb has been named the top runner in the Upper Valley. She started the season with a bang, winning the first four events of the season. She followed that by winning the annual Meet of Champions and the District 31-6A crown. Ebarb advanced to the state championship meet by taking sixth place in the UIL Region 4 XC Championship and finished a great season with a 65th place finish at state.

Lower Valley Girls Cross Country Athlete of the Year

Marina Villanueva
Junior
La Feria High School

Presented by RGV Sports.com

Villanueva ran a personal-best 12:38.24 in the 3,200 meter Class 4A girls race and finished in 36th place in her third straight trip to the state meet, an improvement of nearly 12 seconds from her sophomore state performance. … At the regional meet, she ran a season-best in the 2-mile event with a time of 12:17.3. She was the District 32-4A champion, and guided the Lionettes to the team title with a 2-mile time of 12:20.9. … Villanueva finished in the top 10 in five of her races, winning the Falfurrias Invitational with a personal-best 5K mark of 20:31.3. … “I’ve been blessed to have several injury-free seasons,” Villanueva said after the state meet. “I just want to get better every year. That way I can surprise myself each year and set more goals for myself.”
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Lexi Gonzalez’s year statistically was phenomenal and, because of her play leading McHi to a 46-3 record, she earned The Monitor’s All-Area Volleyball Player of the Year award. Gonzalez was the only athlete in the Rio Grande Valley to be named to a Texas Girls Coaches Association All-State team, garnering the accolade for Class 6A. She ended her high school career with a school-record 1,670 kills while setting another program record with 662 kills in a single season. She also registered 43 aces, 38 blocks, 369 digs and 275 serve receptions, as McHi won the District 30-6A title and advanced to the Class 6A “Sweet 16.”

“I wanted this year to be the best year I had and this team made my year so easy,” said Gonzalez, also named a Class 6A All-Stater for girls soccer. “Everyone this year wanted to play and everyone wanted to win. We would get so pumped up to play and that had a lot to do with our success. We were like family,” Gonzalez verbally committed to play volleyball at Oregon St., but decided to follow the soccer route and signed with nationally ranked University of Arkansas.

The 5-9 outside hitter/all-around player had 725 kills, 540 digs, 41 aces and 36 blocks during her senior season. ... Voted District 32-6A MVP and was the most important player during South’s playoff run in back-to-back seasons as a junior and a senior. Lady Hawks went two rounds in the playoffs this past season. ... Was named The Valley Morning Star’s All-STAR Volleyball Most Valuable Player for a second straight year. ... “She is determined, that would be the first word I would use to describe her,” Harlingen South coach Anissa Lucio said. “She is a competitor and when she torn her ACL (during her sophomore year), to see her struggle and go through that and to see her comeback was amazing. She never looked back, she didn’t think of her injury she just wanted to get better each day and she did that.”
Congratulations to all Athletic programs of Edinburg CISD
Eddie Lee Marburger

Junior
Sharyland Pioneer High School

Presented by RGV Sports.com

During his junior campaign, Sharyland Pioneer quarterback Eddie Lee Marburger throw his way into the Rio Grande Valley record books as he became the RGV’s single-season leader in touchdown passes with 58. He helped lead the Diamondbacks to an 11-2 overall record, the District 16-5A DII championship, and captured the first two postseason wins in Pioneer history as Marburger led his team into the third round of the Class 5A playoffs. Marburger finished the year with 4,505 passing yards for an average of 346.5 yards per game, a 66.1 completion percentage, 58 touchdown throws and just five interceptions. On the ground, Marburger eclipsed the century mark with 1,009 rushing yards and 17 more scores. His 4,505 passing yards ranked second in Texas and ninth in the nation, while his 58 touchdown throws was the top mark in the state. Marburger recently committed to continue his football and academic career at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Dorian Hernandez

Senior
La Feria High School

Presented by RGV Sports.com

In just nine games, the quarterback made a strong case to retain his 2018 All-STAR MVP title, completing 71 percent of his passes and throwing for 14 touchdowns and 1,626 yards. He also rushed for 662 yards on 103 attempts and 16 touchdowns to lead the Lions to a 12-1 season and 4-0 mark in District 16-4A Division I and a district title. … La Feria reached the second round of the playoffs before bowing out to state quarterfinalist Liberty Hill. … Was the unanimous District 16-4A Division I most valuable player, Texas Sports Writers Association Class 4A honorable mention all-state QB and on East roster for the Rio Grande Valley Coaches Association all-star football game. … “His senior year, he was the captain and he was the guy that had the most experience,” La Feria coach Oscar Salinas said. “He had to change from being a very quiet person to being more of a vocal and positive, helping role. He became like a coach on the field instead of just making plays. The one thing about Dorian, we just never had any problems with him with his attitude or things like that. We were very fortunate to have a kid that liked to be out there and never had problems with him. The kids looked up to him, and he was one of the hardest workers there.”
We are proud of our Mission CISD student athletes! Your excellence in the classroom and in your sport is award worthy!
Valeria Garcia

Senior
McAllen Memorial High School

Presented by RGV Sports.com

After a serious ankle injury in the season opener, McAllen Memorial’s Valeria Garcia came roaring back to lead the Mustangs in points, rebounds and steals per game. She averaged 15.5 points, 10.4 rebounds, 3.6 assists, an amazing 6.5 steals per game and 1.2 blocks per contest. She also tallied 10 double-doubles and two triple doubles during the season. She was named the District 30-6A MVP and the Class 6A Valley Player of the Year by the RGV Coaches Association after leading Memorial to a perfect record in district play and its fourth consecutive district championship. But, for Garcia, those weren’t the numbers that mattered, at least not at first. A recruiting exception unique to the Ivy League as a DI conference, student-athletes must gain admittance to the school through academic merit alone before a coach can grant them a spot on the team. Rather than receiving an outright offer, Garcia first earned an acceptance letter from Cornell’s SC Johnson School of Business.

Avery Hinojosa

Sophomore
Harlingen High School

Presented by RGV Sports.com

Hinojosa was the Valley Morning Star’s 2019-20 All-STAR Most Valuable Player and District 32-6A Offensive MVP. She led the Lady Cardinals with 10.6 points per game, shooting 41 percent from the field on the season. She was Harlingen High’s best three-point shooter by volume, making 34 percent of her attempts from behind the arc, or 47 of 139 shots. Hinojosa also hauled in 112 rebounds and dished out 53 assists. She was one of six Lady Cardinals to record at least 40 assists, and her versatility had a ripple effect on the team’s offense. Hinojosa also stepped up her game defensively, registering 102 steals on the year. In a win over Laredo LBJ on Dec. 6, 2019, Hinojosa dropped 21 points, seven rebounds and three assists. She scored 15 points and added five rebounds and an assist to lead her team to victory against Edinburg Vela. Also, Hinojosa was the leading scorer — with 14 points and four rebounds — in Harlingen High’s 45-36 win over rival Harlingen South on Jan. 21. “Next year, the expectations are going to be that (Hinojosa) is not going to be hesitant at the beginning of the year,” Harlingen High coach Ashley Moncivaz said. “She’s going to start strong and finish even better.”
Sharyland Pioneer guard Derek Luna proved to be one of the state’s most prolific scorers as he led the Diamondbacks to new heights during the 2019-20 season. Luna, who transferred to Pioneer for his senior season after moving down from the Dallas area, quickly turned into the Diamondbacks’ No. 1 scoring option and primary ball-handler as the versatile 6-foot-3 guard averaged 17.9 points per game to go with 3.4 assists. His play and quick-trigger lifted Pioneer to a 28-8 overall record and the District 31-5A championship with a 14-0 record. But Luna saved his best for when the lights were at their brightest — in the playoffs. In the first round against Mercedes, he scored 26 points. In the second round in a grudge match from the 2018-19 season against Corpus Christi Miller, 28 points. And against Corpus Christi Veterans, 27 points. But in the fourth round at the Class 5A Region IV Tournament, Luna exploded against San Antonio Harlan for 40 points with an incredible display of three-point shooting and finishing inside the paint.

Johnson was named the Valley Morning Star’s 2019-20 All-STAR Boys Basketball Most Valuable Player for the second year in a row, and he was also the District 32-2A MVP. … The Trojans’ 6-foot-7 star averaged 25.3 points per game, 14.1 rebounds per game, and 4.3 blocks. He played the full 32 minutes in many games throughout his career, diving for loose balls, taking charges and doing anything the team needed. … Johnson had his sights set on getting San Perlita back to the Class 2A regional tournament, but a knee injury suffered during the first quarter of a second-round playoff game against Falls City shut him down for the season. … Trojans coach Nataniel Garza said coaches kept telling him San Perlita would have made it to the state tournament if Johnson was healthy, which he said speaks to the caliber of player the senior is. In the senior’s decorated San Perlita career, he was twice named to the Texas Association of Basketball Coaches’ all-state and all-region teams. He was the 2019 Rio Grande Valley Basketball Coaches Association Sub-5A MVP. … Four-year letterman won 122 career games and three consecutive District 32-2A titles in his career, scoring 2,544 total points, posting 1,494 rebounds and 400 blocks. … During the 2019-20 season, Johnson scored 768 points and collected 448 rebounds. He also had 128 blocks and dished out 102 assists. … Announced his commitment to play for NCAA Division III Concordia University (Texas) in April.
La Joya Juarez-Lincoln senior forward Antonio Torres lit up opposing defenses for an average of 2.2 scores per game as the Huskies star scored 59 goals in 27 appearances this season. Torres was an unstoppable force for the Huskies as he helped Juarez-Lincoln extend its reign over District 30-6A boys soccer by winning the program’s fourth consecutive district title. Torres led the Huskies to a 29-4-1 record overall and a perfect 13-0 district record before their season was cut short due to the novel coronavirus pandemic. In district play, Torres scored an astounding 34 goals in just 12 district matches against top competition in District 30-6A.

The standout attacking midfielder scored 24 goals and added 19 assists this season. … He collected 17 goals and 14 assists in District 32-5A play, and the Cowboys finished second in district play with a 9-5 record and 29 points. Porter went 22-5-1 overall. … He was The Brownsville Herald’s 2020 All-Metro Boys Soccer Most Valuable Player after being the All-Metro newcomer of the year as a freshman and an All-Metro first-team player as a sophomore. … Montes was on 32-5A’s all-district first-team. “Brandon is just a different player (on a higher level),” Porter coach Jose Espitia said of Montes when the All-Metro award was announced. “He’s very skilled, very humble and very coachable. He’s very practical with the ball and has great vision of the field. Brandon is a smart player, and believe it or not, he’s got a burst of speed. We’re very blessed to have him on the team.
Lexi Gonzalez didn’t miss a beat when it came to leadership and being dominant on the court or field. After volleyball was over, Gonzalez led the Bulldogs to a 20-2 record and McHi was one of the favorites to bring back a state title. Because of her performance, Gonzalez was named The Monitor’s All-Area Girls Soccer Player of the Year. Gonzalez, who signed with the nationally ranked University of Arkansas soccer program, allowed just seven goals all season, and was shutting out No. 2 nationally ranked Katy Thompkins before getting hurt and missing a couple minutes of the game When Thompkins scored the only goal of the match. Gonzalez, who was also The Monitor’s All-Area Volleyball Player of the Year, had an electric year in goal for the Bulldogs, who became the first team to advance to the state semifinals during her sophomore season. Gonzalez tallied 16 shutouts during the season (and scored four goals), compared this season’s team to the team that advanced to state two years ago.

The attacking midfielder and two-year starter led Porter to its first district championship in girls soccer this season and was named the most valuable player of District 32-5A. … The Cowgirls won the 32-5A title with a 12-2 record and 34 points, and posted an overall record of 26-5-6. … Romero scored 15 goals this past season, with eight in district play despite missing two district games due to injury. … She assisted on 90 percent of the Cowgirls’ goals, Porter coach Abraham Gracia said. … “Denisse is a hard-working player,” Garcia said when the All-metro award was announced. “The thing is that even though she’s only a sophomore, she wants to carry the team on her back. She’s going to do everything she possibly can to help us win. To her, doing everything she can for the team is what she wants to do. If anything, sometimes she puts too much pressure on herself. She has made a huge difference for us. Our girls have come to depend on her being there to help us win.” … Romero was the All-Metro newcomer of the year during her freshman season, when she scored 19 goals.
Congratulations!

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EDINBURG - HARLINGEN
Justin Ochoa shot consistently during the year on the golf course. He also shot low. Those were two big reasons that the McAllen High junior earned the 2020 RGV Golf Coaches Association Boys MVP after concluding a virus-shortened golf season with a Valley-leading 74.64 stroke average for 18 holes. Ochoa, who shot a season-best 4-under-par 68 on the second day to win the La Joya Invitational at Howling Trails, was the only golfer to finish the season with a sub-75 average. There were only three golfers to finish the season with a sub-77 average. On the contrary, Ochoa rarely shot above 77. He came back to the clubhouse 11 times with a 77 or lower score, leaving just three rounds above 77, including one at 78. For golfers, being consistent is among the greatest qualities to develop. Ochoa seems to have a good recipe going for how to accomplish that. “I know golf is a weird game — you can shoot a 65 one day and an 85 the next day so I worked hard at taking one shot at a time,” he said. “I don’t think about what happened on 10 or 13 or if I’m going to be 5 over on 16. I don’t think into the future. It’s work on the task at hand. It’s Ok, though, to shoot high scores now and then, but will you let it affect you?”

Smith posted six top-five finishes in his varsity debut year after success at the JV level the previous season. … Smith had the lowest scoring average on the Cardinals team, edging teammate Nate Newman despite two second-place finishes against him in playoff fashion. … “They feed off each other. They’re both very competitive individuals and neither one of them likes to lose to the other, but they also have a lot of maturity because I’ve never seen them put the other down,” Cardinals coach Chris Milligan said after the COVID-19 pandemic shortened the season. “They always want the other to play their best, but they still hope they come out on top. They bring a very healthy competitive dynamic to our team.” Milligan said course management was the rookie’s biggest strength. “The best part of my game is definitely my short game, my putting, which is one of my favorite parts. Since I don’t hit it far, I hit it straight and I don’t really miss my lines,” Smith said.
Edinburg High’s (Madison) Madi Ozuna dominated the golf course this past season. Because of that, the junior golfer from Edinburg High School earned the 2020 Rio Grande Valley Golf Coaches Association Girls MVP award. Ozuna finished the season with a 75.08 stroke average for 18 holes. That led all high school girls golfers and edged out her nearest competitor, Los Fresnos’ Vanessa Campos, with a 75.86. No other golfer finished within three strokes of Ozuna, highlighting that dominance she showed on the course. After starting the spring season with solid rounds of 72, 74 and 75, Ozuna showed the Valley how high of a ceiling her potential is by blistering the courses with subpar rounds of 67, 66 and 70. The first round came at Tierra Santa in Weslaco while the next two came at her home course in Edinburg, Monte Cristo Golf Club. Her career-best round is a 65, also at Monte Cristo. “I had a great year, even though it was cut off a little by the virus,” said Ozuna, who played golf her freshman year at Centennial High School in Frisco, Texas, before her family relocated to Edinburg. “I still have my senior year and I know I will have a great year next year. I’m just going to keep working hard all year.”

Campos was one of the most dominant players in the Rio Grande Valley. She won all four Valley tournaments in which she competed and shot the most below-par rounds of all local golfers. … Campos signed her letter of intent to compete for Western Carolina University, an NCAA Division I program in Cullowhee, N.C., in March after earning a full-ride scholarship. … Falcons coach Luis Gonzalez said at her signing, “I’m very happy our players are learning from her. She’s a phenomenal player, she’s a great leader and motivator, and at the same time she does not accept defeat. We’re able to play against national caliber teams and play them shot for shot without fear, and Vanessa helps a lot. She has the leadership it takes to approach this game the way you need to.”
Congratulations
To all the Rio Grande Valley high school athletes for a great 2019-2020 sports year. Thank you for including us in your aftergame celebrations!
See you next year!

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-FRANK PUENTE

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Congratulations Dorian Dracen Hernandez
2020 Lower Valley Football Player of the Year

*2019-2020 16-4A Division 1 Football All-District MVP - Unanimous
16-4A Division 1 District Champion
Bi-District Champion
Area Finalist
KVEO 7on7 Athlete of the Week
All-State Football Honorable Mention QB

*2018-2019 16-4A Division 1 Football All-District MVP - Unanimous
Valley Morning Star Football MVP
16-4A Division 1 District Champion
Bi-District Champion
Area Champion
Regional Quarter-finalist

*2017-2018 16-4A Division 1 Football Newcomer of the Year - Unanimous
16-4A Division 1 District Champion
Bi-District Finalist
Upper Valley Boys Swimmer of the Year

Nilton Dos Santos
Junior
McAllen High School

If his name looks familiar, it’s because Nilton Dos Santos was among the top swimmers in multiple categories in South Texas, and was good enough to be named the RGV Swimming Coaches Association Male Swimmer of the Year. And he was just a junior. The McHi swimmer was the District 30-6A swimmer of the meet at districts, winning the 200 free and 100 fly, while also helping his relay teams capture the 400 sprint relay and the 200 medley relay, Dos Santos then took second in the 200 free, first in the 100 fly and 200 medley relay and second in the 400 sprint relay. He finished his impressive season by capturing 12th in the 100 fly finals at the UIL Diving and Swimming State Championship Meet.

Lower Valley Boys Swimmer of the Year

Alvarez, a 2019 state qualifier, defended his District 32-5A title with a score of 361.45. … The diver finished 11th at the state meet in his second competition at the Lee and Joe Jamail Texas Swimming Center in Austin, and he earned the designation of second-team all-state by finishing in the top 16. He entered the state meet seeded 13th. … “I improved on my concentration a lot,” said Alvarez – who finished seventh at state the previous season – after the 2020 state meet. “The best part of state was staying consistent on all my dives and not regretting how I did on any one of them.”
Upper Valley Girls Swimmer of the Year

Sofia Salvo
Senior
McAllen Memorial High School

Presented by RGV Sports.com

Sofia Salvo ended her senior year, and thus her high school swimming career, on a high note, finding the right time to peak as the postseason came around. Salvo won the District 30-6A title in the 100-meter freestyle. She also finished second in the Region VIII-6A Swimming and Diving Championships. Not a one-and-done wonder, Salvo captured fourth in the District 30-6A meet in the 200-meter individual medley and followed that up with an even more impressive second-place in the regional meet, sending her to the UIL Class 6A Swimming and Diving Championships in two events.

Lower Valley Girls Swimmer of the Year

Jada Ashford
Freshman
Los Fresnos High School

Presented by RGV Sports.com

The 14-year-old guided Los Fresnos to a District 32-6A title, a Region VIII-6A championship and set a pair of pool records with first-place finishes in the 50 freestyle (in 23.26 seconds) and 100 freestyle (with a time of 51.57 seconds) in the process. She was named the girls swimmer of the year at the end of the meet. ... Ashford placed 15th overall in her first state meet in the 50 freestyle with a time of 24.26 seconds and was already looking ahead to next season. "Now that I am done, I can prepare for next year’s state (meet) by going into the meet with a more positive mindset and a higher confidence," Ashford said. "I am definitely going back to the Valley to continue practicing and preparing for next year’s season."
Congratulations

Marina Villanueva

2019:
Individual District Champion/
Team Champion
Regional Qualifier - 6th Place
State Qualifier

2018:
Team District Champion
Regional Qualifier
State Qualifier

2017:
Team District Champion
Regional Qualifier
State Qualifier

2020 Lower Valley Female Athlete of the Year
2019 32-4A Varsity Girls Cross Country District Champion
Emmanuel Duron decided to wrestle as a junior. It was a great decision. His performance at the 220-pound weight class earned him The Monitor’s All-Area Boys Wrestler of the Year award. The junior finished with a 44-8 record, going 4-2 at the state tournament. His two losses at state came to the eventual state champion Rylan Bonds of Prosper High School, and then to the third-place finisher, Fadeleelah Moounshed of Arlington Bowie. Duron finished fifth overall at the state meet, the highest placing boys wrestler from the Rio Grande Valley this year. In the 220-pound bracket there were 14 seniors and just two juniors. Duron defeated the other junior, Johrdan Howard, by a pin in 1:20 to capture fifth. “He should be ranked No. 1 next year when the preseason ranks come out,” his coach, AbeL Saenz said. “He has a great chance to win a state title next year, but it’s not guaranteed.”

Hernandez, a state qualifier at 195 pounds, finished the year with a 19-4 overall record and was fourth at the state meet. He earned first-place finishes at Rio Grande City’s Snakebite Tournament, Weslaco East’s Wildcat Classic and Sharyland Pioneer’s Grapefruit Tournament. … Was the District 16-6A champion in his weight class. … Earned an all-region nod with a fourth-place finish.
Precious Hernandez wanted to quit wrestling just two practices into her freshman year. She’s glad she stayed. Donna High’s Hernandez, a senior, captured the 2020 UIL state championship in the Class 5A, 215-pound girls division. Hernandez became just the third girls wrestler — and first heavyweight — from the Valley to return with a state championship. She was The Monitor’s All-Area Girls Wrestler of the Year. Hernandez ran through the regular season undefeated before falling to Sharyland Pioneer’s Camila Flores in the finals of the district tournament. She met Flores again in the regional tournament, beating Flores by pin. In the state tournament, Hernandez peaked, winning all four matches, three by pins and the other in the semifinals against Northwest’s Autumn Bradley with a 4-1 decision. She ended her high school wrestling career in an All-Region IV matchup against Corpus Christi’s Ray’s Mia Epps-Hicks, winning with a pin in 2 minutes, 17 seconds. Hernandez had faced Epps-Hicks the previous year and pinned the then-sophomore in less than 20 seconds.

The Lady ‘Hounds captain placed third at the state meet in the 165-pound division and was a medalist in all other tournaments her senior year, earning a 27-5 record. … Perez developed into one of San Benito’s most dependable wrestlers, winning consecutive District 16-6A titles and back-to-back regional and state trips her junior and senior seasons. … She typically wrestled in the 165-pound weight class — she was ranked No. 8 in the state this year in that class — but was entered in the 185-pound and 215-pound weight classes throughout the regular season to help the Lady Greyhounds earn points. … Was a national qualifier but did not attend. … Will wrestle for Adrian College at the NCAA Division III level. … “She’s very, very strong-willed and very dedicated. Wrestling is a very demanding sport, for the physical part and also the mental part,” San Benito wrestling coach Crispin Lopez said. “The next level gets a little tougher because there’s more athletes involved and it’s a different brand of wrestling. But if she continues with her dedication and her discipline towards her studies and her athletic endeavors, she should be successful. I’m very proud of her.”
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