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Campo diver teaches English on the side

By Vera Kochan



Campo Men's Varsity Diving Team senior Daniel Zabronsky Photo Vera Kochan

With the lack of competition due to COVID restrictions, Moraga's Campolindo High School senior, Daniel Zabronsky, has been channeling his energy into teaching English to students in Colombia, South America.

Zabronsky first began his serious foray into the world of water sports in the eighth grade (after years of recreational swimming with his friends), when he began competitive swimming at Sherman Swim School in Lafayette and the Moraga Country Club. "After a while I thought that swimming was boring. I used to do flips on my trampoline, and after seeing the divers at Sherman I decided to try it. I liked to do the diving flips, and I spun fast and did good jumps." After lots of hard work, Zabronsky was moved up to the club's competitive team.

As a freshman at Campo, Zabronsky became a member of the Men's Varsity Diving Team, specializing in the 1-meter and 3-meter springboard along with the 5-, 7- and 10-meter platform. He recently received a personal best score of 413.5 points for the 1-meter. Social distancing mandates have cut into his typical training schedule and all high school competitions, but Zabronsky manages to get approximately two days a week, "on and off," of workouts in at Sherman or Acalanes High School.

Like many graduating seniors who are currently studying online, Zabronsky's hopes of being recruited to a college team have faded due to a hiatus of certain types of sports. "Almost no one wants divers and very few are even recruiting swimmers. I'm hoping that wherever I go, I can make it as a walk-on." Looking to major in finance, his 4.35 weighted GPA (calculated after adding extra points for honors or Advanced Placement courses), has already gotten him accepted to Boston College. He's keeping his options open while waiting to hear from other East Coast institutions. "My dad is from New York."

Zabronsky is fluent in Spanish, thanks to his parents, Andrew and Angelika, who have been taking the family for visits to his mom's native Colombia every summer since he was a toddler. "We would stay on my grandparents' ranch near Medellin every summer, and I used to play with a lot of the kids in the area."

While English grammar is taught in the schools there, conversational English is not. Zabronsky's mother decided to rectify that for the local kids about four years ago. "My mom likes helping people, and she wanted to help them out, too. She wanted them to be the first in their families to get a good education." To that end, his parents purchased laptops and arranged for internet service.

The generosity didn't end there. Zabronsky has himself become an English tutor to the friends, ages 12 to 19, that he once played with as a child. There are no books or tests. The lessons are via Zoom, and he teaches conversational English to at least one friend a week for an hour, in addition to helping them with homework from their school's English classes. "It's to help them with a better future," he explained.

Zabronsky's eighth-grade sister, Isabel, did her share of "tutoring" by speaking in English during visits to Colombia. He's hoping she will take over for him when he heads off to college.

One of the Zabronsky family's success stories is 19-year-old Julian. "He's fluent in English and he wants to go into accounting. He's very driven, and he's already in college. His family is so poor - they work in the fields," stated Zabronsky, who is very proud to have been a part of Julian's dreams of a better life.

Reach the reporter at: vera@lamorindaweekly.com

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