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Super-Achiever Gets All of It Right.(Final)

Article from: Albuquerque Journal (Albuquerque, NM) | May 8, 2002 | [Copyright](#)

Byline: David Steinberg Journal Staff Writer

* AHS' Erik Hinterbichler has excelled at everything he's tried, from math to writing, cello to sports

Erik Hinterbichler, valedictorian of Albuquerque High School's 2002 graduating class, is the antonym of slacker.

He has a 4.4 grade point average; honors classes bumped him over 4.0.

He's a black belt in karate.

He's written the manuscript for a young-adult fantasy novel for which commercial publishing houses have shown an interest.

He's an accomplished cellist.

And he's a USA Today first team football All-American.

"Erik was just born self-disciplined," said his mother, Joan Hinterbichler, a violist in the New Mexico Symphony Orchestra.

The shy young man's deeds have drawn rave reviews from some who have mentored him along the way.

"In my 20 years of teaching, he's one of the two most brilliant kids I've had," said John Tritica, a teacher in the AHS gifted program.

Erik's favorite subject?

"Probably math," he said. "Because of the problem-solving, and because it's pretty logical and pretty straightforward. I like the organization of it."

Walter Jon Williams, a popular sci-fi author who lives here, helped Erik polish his novel and submit it to a publisher.

"His concentration is formidable," Williams said. "Unlike a lot of creative people, he has no problem with constructive criticism."

His music teacher, David Schepps, said the youth blew him away when he heard Erik perform J.S. Bach's D Minor Suite for Cello in a recent recital.

"It's a big project for a high school kid. It was beautiful," Schepps said.

Erik plays with the Albuquerque Youth Symphony.

For the last three years he was the star kicker on the Albuquerque High varsity football team. Last fall he broke the state record for field goals in a season, making 17 out of 21 attempts.

"He's quite a weapon for us," AHS football coach Ken Barreras has said about the player whom teammates call "The Assassin," among nicknames. "Anytime we get close and don't score a touchdown, we're going to kick it."

Erik's five field goals were the difference in an AHS 22-7 victory over Gallup last fall.

He also set a school record for the longest field goal 55 yards beating the previous record of 46 yards, which his older brother Kurt kicked. Kurt is a junior majoring in physics at Arizona State.

Erik confessed he gets a thrill from playing football and performing in concerts, "but I just don't show it."

Parents Joan and Karl Hinterbichler said they didn't use any prescribed child-rearing

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approach with their boys.

"They do the things they want to do. We support them and have spent time doing those things with them," said their father, the trombone professor at the University of New Mexico.

Erik said his motivation to play the cello and to become a football kicker was spurred by his older brother. Erik took over Kurt's kicking chores on the AHS football team. Music is another story; Kurt plays bass.

Erik said he had to work at the cello and didn't have a natural talent for a musical instrument as his brother had.

"I had to practice it an hour a day seven days a week for a long time," he said.

Learning to kick a football came easier.

"I only did that three days a week in practice," he said. "I don't find learning (an athletic) skill in general is as hard as learning an instrument.

"With an instrument you have to be perfect, precise. For music you have to be right 100 percent. A kicker in the pros can be 70 percent accurate."

Next, Erik is headed to Dartmouth. He got a call from the small New Hampshire college long after the enrollment deadline had passed. The school contacted him after a recent article about him appeared in The New York Times.

Dartmouth "had everything I needed a football team, an orchestra and good academics," he said.

Dartmouth is giving him a chunk of financial aid and wants Erik to be its football team's kicker.

"I think he's capable of kicking past 55 yards," said Steve Wenze, Erik's personal trainer the last two years.

Erik does two hourlong workouts a week with Wenze. This summer Erik will do a special weightlifting program the college asked him to use.

Graduation schedule

Graduations are scheduled for the following high schools at The Pit.

May 13: Sandia, 3:30 p.m.; Rio Grande, 7:30 p.m.

May 14: Albuquerque High, 4:30 p.m.

May 15: West Mesa, 3:30 p.m.

May 16: Cibola, 3:30 p.m.; Manzano, 7:30 p.m.

May 17: Valley, 4:30 p.m.

May 18: Del Norte, 10 a.m.; Eldorado, 2 p.m.; Rio Rancho, 6 p.m.

May 19: La Cueva, 1:30 p.m.; Highland, 6:30 p.m.

The following graduations are scheduled at the University of New Mexico Conference Center:

May 15: Evening School, 5 p.m.; School on Wheels, 7:30 p.m.

May 17: Sierra Alternative, 5:30 p.m.

The following graduations are scheduled at Kiva Auditorium at the Albuquerque Convention Center:

May 17: New Futures, 7:30 p.m.

May 20: Freedom High, 5:30 p.m.

CAPTION(S):

PHOTO BY: KRISTOPHER PARRA/JOURNAL

PHOTO: Color

FAMILY AND MUSIC: Erik Hinterbichler, center, sits with his parents, Joan and Karl Hinterbichler, at their home. Erik, valedictorian, cellist, novelist and stand-out place kicker at Albuquerque High School, is heading to Dartmouth.

PHOTO BY: KRISTOPHER PARRA/JOURNAL

PHOTO: b/w

HEADED FOR DARTMOUTH: Erik Hinterbichler does leg lunges under the supervision of his personal trainer Steve Wenze in front of the Training Sensation. Hinterbichler follows a

workout regimen sent by Dartmouth to prepare him for the football team's fall training.



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