

# Balancing fatherhood, academics, athletics

## Junior Joel Sandoval finds success at all three

By Elliott Wilson

staff writer

Junior Joel “Junior” Sandoval is a typical 17-year-old kid. He is a varsity athlete and honor roll student. However, on July 25, 2020, Sandoval’s life changed forever. His son, Jayden, was born.

Sandoval’s typical teenage life changed quickly when he found out that he was going to become a father. According to Sandoval, the birth of his son was not only the happiest moment of his life and the best thing to ever happen to him, it also motivated him to better himself as a person.

“Last year, I didn’t care what I was doing. I would just work most of the time. I didn’t care about school,” Sandoval said. “Since the day my son was born I knew I had to step it up. I had to be a good dad, grow up and do better in life.”

Sandoval works many part-time jobs and also manages to maintain his high grades at the same time. According to Sandoval, he doesn’t have a hard time organizing his time, and he is able to do what he needs to do without stress.

“It’s pretty easy to get things done if you order the time. If you have a purpose, you can make time to do it,” Sandoval said. “For me, it’s easy because I don’t have anything else to do after school so I have time to do everything.”

Sandoval signed up for online school for the first nine weeks of the school year, but after that he returned to in-person learning for the rest of the school year. According to Sandoval, online school gave him an opportunity to make more money, but his grades suffered because of it.

“It did help to make more money, but because I went to work all day, I was tired when I came home and procrastinated my school work,” Sandoval said. “My grades were going down, so I decided to come to school in person so I can do my school work and not waste my time. I have plenty of time to go to work and soccer practice after school. I prefer in person school because I don’t procrastinate.”

Sandoval works at small businesses and helps his step-dad with his work. He does all of this on week days and works long shifts on weekends to make money.

“After school, I play soccer then I come home and do school work or go outside and clean the yard. If I’m not at home, I go to work,” Sandoval said. “I wash dishes at City Grocery and paint with my step-dad.”

According to Sandoval, he works hard at being a student and athlete, but that being a father and family will always be the most important thing in his life.

“Family, school, then work,” Sandoval said. “Family is always first, then school because everyone wants an education to get a good job. At work, you have to study to get a good job. I don’t want to work a low wage job that no one wants to be in.”

Sandoval is the starting right striker for the Oxford High School soccer team.

“My dream, and I’m working hard at it, is to be a pro soccer player,” Sandoval said. “I know it could happen, that’s why I’m working hard at it. I’m pretty good at soccer, so I hope it will come true.”

Sandoval plans to graduate in 2022 and attend a university on scholarship for soccer. He plans to

get a college degree and a stable career.

“I’m going to graduate high school. I’m trying to get a scholarship for soccer to attend college. If I can’t, I’ll go to Northwest Community College, do two years there, then go to Ole Miss,” Sandoval said. “I’m going to work hard this summer. In the future I hope to get a good job, take care of my family, and have a good career.”

According to Sandoval, having his son has made him refocus his life and make changes for the better.

“I’m actually glad this happened because it has motivated me to do more things than other people do,” Sandoval said. “I do more than everyone else.”



Courtesy of Joel Sandoval

Jayden, Sandoval’s five-month year old son, laughs while lying with Sandoval. The driving force behind his father’s ambition, Jayden’s birth brought Sandoval inspiration and purpose.

# Junior Zoe Rubenstein competes in Miss Teen Magnolia Pageant

By Benjamin Makamson

staff writer

Junior Zoe Rubenstein was recently crowned Miss Teen Oxford and then went on to represent the division during the Miss Teen Magnolia State Pageant, which took place in Vicksburg on Nov. 21-22.

Rubenstein also won the Pageantry Magazine Award, which is equivalent to the best sportsmanship.

The pageant contestants had to participate in multiple competitions in order to win.

“Teens throughout the state compete in three categories to win Miss Teen Magnolia State Queen,” Rubenstein said. “Contestants compete in an interview, casual wear, and evening gown competitions. The state winner receives a \$1,000 cash scholarship.”

All participants in the state pageant were required to have a sponsor.

Rubenstein is a member of the OHS dance team and also a member of the Oxford Elite Dance Company dance studio where she dances competitively.

Oxford Elite Dance Company agreed to be her sponsor.

In order to be prepared for the pageant, Rubenstein found outfits for each category, rehearsed her walk, and practiced answering interview questions.

“[The interviewers] asked about different activities in my life, but some questions were random,” Rubenstein said. “My favorite question was when they asked me if I could meet anyone in history, who would it be. At first, I panicked a little because I did not think they were going to ask me a question like this. I told the judge that I would choose Jackie Robinson because baseball is my favorite sport and he broke lots of barriers in history.”

For Rubenstein, the pageant provided a rare opportunity to socialize with others during the pandemic.

“I enjoyed meeting a lot of new people. This year I have not been given many opportunities to meet new people, so the pageant was a great experience,” Rubenstein said. “Everyone was so helpful and kind and we all had so much fun.”



Photos courtesy of Zoe Rubenstein

Junior **Zoe Rubenstein** represents Miss Teen Oxford in the Miss Teen Magnolia Pageant in Vicksburg, Miss., on Nov. 21-22. Rubenstein won the Pageantry Magazine Award at the event.