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Cesar Chavez Football Opens in Alaska Media Release

Besides being a great story for an urban school in Arizona committing to opening up their football season in Anchorage, Alaska, the school needed help raising funds for the trip of a lifetime for many young men. This media release proved to be an important vehicle in Cesar Chavez High School's football team achieving its goal of traveling to Alaska.

While it first was distributed in January, it took a little time for the media to pick up on the unique nature of the story. Affluent suburban powerhouse teams in Arizona had travelled to Las Vegas, California, Colorado and Ohio for early season games, but no team, especially a low-income school, with a 96% minority population and little financial support, could imagine an exotic trip to faraway Alaska.

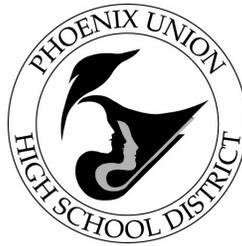
But the story grew legs, and television stations came out to see the reaction of coach and players during spring football, and soon, Anchorage stations got in on the act. The school reached its lofty goal of over \$24,000 raised for the trip, as dreamy-eyed players wondered on camera if they needed to pack parkas and snowshoes for the August game.

With the trip still a month away, at least two Phoenix television stations are planning to accompany the team to the 49th state, and send home travelogue features each day.

Another angle is that one of the most diverse schools in Arizona, will be playing, and interacting with the East Anchorage High School students, a school that proclaims itself as the most diverse school in the U.S.

Another twist to the story is that East Anchorage has agreed to play Cesar Chavez in Phoenix next year, exchanging 60-degree days for game time temperatures over 100 in the desert. That will be yet another chapter in this adventure story.

- Linda Abril
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- Bioscience
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- Cesar Chavez
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PHOENIX UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

January 23, 2018

Contact: Craig Pletenik (602) 764-1530

Cesar Chavez Football to Open 2018 Season in Anchorage, Alaska

PHOENIX UNION— It seems the high school football season starts earlier every year, and in Arizona, that means heat. Cesar Chavez High School has gone to extremes to cool off next year, while providing an amazing adventure for the team. The Champions will open their season in Anchorage, Alaska, August 17.

Chavez has agreed to a home and home series with East Anchorage High School the next two years. East Anchorage will play in Phoenix in 2019. Chavez athletic director Lenny Doerfler came up with the idea.

“Arizona teams go to California, Nevada, but kids can go there anytime. But how many of our students have the opportunity to travel to Alaska.” Doerfler said.

“I thought Mr. Doerfler was joking when he talked about it. Not many schools like us go out of state to play a game,” football coach Manny Alcantar said. “We would be the first team in Arizona to play in Alaska. I was excited and happy that this was presented to us. Still in shock but blessed we have a chance to play in Alaska.”

“Our boys deserve it just as much as any other high school going out of state to play a football game. The majority of our kids have not been on planes or been further than Nevada. This will be something they remember for decades to come.”

Doerfler knows the area well, having spent 19 summers there, participating in coaching camps, and connecting with the local coaches, who were trying to improve high school football in the state. That familiarity will help Chavez navigate the locale.

“They are going to provide transportation once we get there, and we will probably sleep in the gym, since school won’t be in session yet. Their coaches are inviting our team to an Alaskan feast of salmon, halibut, moose and bear.”

The East Anchorage Thunderbirds were 9-3 last year, advancing to the quarterfinals of Division I, the largest school division. The school, with an enrollment of 2,200, has also been labeled the most diverse school in America, culturally, ethnically and socio-economically.

“When our AIA athletic directors came together to discuss scheduling, they asked who was going out of state. When I said Chavez is going to Alaska, they all said, ‘what? when?’ They were shocked,” said Doerfler.

Now comes the hard part, raising the \$25-30,000 to take 40 student-athletes and staff on a long road trip. Doerfler says Chavez has a very active booster club that will help. They are planning a golf tournament, and hoping to receive some help from local businesses. Doerfler also wants to educate parents about the Arizona Education Tax Credit, where up to \$400 can be donated, and that amount is credited after tax returns are completed. The deadline for this year’s credit for 2017 taxes and contributions is April 16.

The team will fly into Anchorage Tuesday night, and have a chance to see the sights, Wednesday and Thursday. The game is Friday evening, but with the long hours of sunlight, they may not even need Friday night lights.

While the temperature in August is in the 60's in Anchorage, you have to wonder what East Anchorage will think the next year when they have to travel to Arizona in the summer. Seems Chavez got the better deal on this schedule.

To help the Cesar Chavez team's journey to Alaska, contact the school's athletic department at (602) 764-4045 or doerfler@phoenixunion.org. To contribute to the Chavez football team through the Arizona Education Tax Credit online, visit www.phoenixunion.org/taxcredit.