

Family: UNR football player died a hero

By Associated Press

The parents of a UNR football player from Honolulu who is presumed to have drowned in Lake Tahoe say their son died trying to save others.

Rescue crews called off their search for Marc Ma on Monday, but officials say efforts to recover his body will continue.

Ma, 20, had been on a paddleboard trip with several football players on Friday when the group encountered strong winds on the West Shore. Ma's board was found adrift.

"The kids got into trouble," Ma's father, Michael, told the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*. "They were kind of far out. That's what we're getting from the kids and the people on shore."

Michael Ma said his son had been worried about the safety of his fellow teammates and had gone in the water in search of them. He suspects hypothermia was a factor in his death.

"Marc was the closest to shore and decided to go and find somebody to help," he said. "He ended up trying to swim in to get help. I don't think he realized how cold the water was."

Marc Ma had attended Iolani School before heading to Nevada to play as a defensive end for UNR's football team.

"Our entire Iolani community is deeply heartbroken and saddened over the news of Marc's accident," the Honolulu school said in a statement. "He was a tremendously talented student athlete who inspired his classmates, teachers, and coaches. He never stopped chasing his dream of playing Division I football."

Marc Ma's brother, Matthew, who is a golfer, said he was inspired to play in the 108th Manoa Cup on Monday by learning just how much his young brother was loved and appreciated. He initially withdrew from the event after Marc went missing.

"I've gotten calls and texts and messages from kids who are still playing high school football at Iolani. I don't know who these kids are, but they're all reaching out and I didn't realize that his reach was so far and so broad. Actually, I'm not surprised," Matthew Ma told Honolulu TV station KHON.

Michael Ma said he and his wife, Michele, plan to stay at Lake Tahoe until their son's body is found.

"Since we've gotten here, we didn't realize how close to God he got, how many lives he's touched," Michael Ma said.