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Communications

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While Shadowing Orthopedic Surgeon, Jordan Vitale, '20, Met Family Affiliated with Hockey Champs



Jordan Vitale, center, a Gardner-Webb exercise science major, met twins, Natalie DiMaio, left, and Julia DiMaio, right, during her internship with Dr. Ira Guttentag in Tampa Florida. The twins' father works for the St. Louis Blues National Hockey League team, and they invited Jordan to Toronto to celebrate the team winning the Stanley Cup.

Gardner-Webb University senior, Jordan Vitale, '20, received a unique opportunity while completing the required 300-hour internship for her Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science. Vitale, a native of Tampa, Florida, and a fan of the Tampa Bay Lightning National Hockey League (NHL) team, attended a Stanley Cup party.

Her internship was to shadow and observe Dr. Ira Guttentag, an orthopedic surgeon at Florida Medical Clinic in Tampa, who serves as the orthopedic doctor for the Tampa Bay Lightning. During her time at the clinic, she met several interns and became friends with two who were her same age—twins, Natalie and Julia DiMaio. “They live in Toronto and their father, who had previously played in the NHL, is a scout for the St. Louis Blues NHL

team, who was in the final round of the Stanley Cup playoffs at the time,” she related. “The St. Louis Blues ended up winning the Stanley Cup, and because the twins’ father worked for them, he was able to have one whole day with the Stanley Cup, including a cup party.”

The twins invited her to come to the party, and Vitale made a quick trip to be a part of the once-in-lifetime experience. “The day of the party, we rode in a limo all over the Toronto area, bringing The Cup everywhere we went,” she shared. “We took many pictures with it and even ate pizza out of it. That night, at the party, all of the guests were able to see The Cup and take pictures with it. It was an incredible experience that I will never forget, and I am forever thankful for the DiMaio’s allowing me to join in on their special day. It’s the most random thing that has ever happened to me and made my internship experience even better than it already was.”

In addition to the excitement over the Stanley cup, Vitale gained valuable experience watching Guttentag work with patients during diagnosis, treatment and surgery. “I learned a lot about the anatomy of both the knees and shoulders,” she explained. “I was able to watch multiple types of surgeries, such as ACL (Anterior Cruciate Ligaments) reconstructions, meniscus repairs, total knee replacements, partial knee replacements, shoulder labrum tear repairs, and shoulder replacements. All of my exercise science classes helped me prepare for my internship, as well as classes like Anatomy & Physiology. During surgeries, it was nice to understand the medical language that the doctor and nurses were speaking. I could actually picture what they were talking about when they named different bones, ligaments, and muscles and could understand what I was looking at during surgery.”



From left, Jordan Vitale, Julia DiMaio and Natalie DiMaio pose with the Stanley Cup before taking the cup with them on a limo ride through the city of Toronto.

Vitale's interest in orthopedics began when she tore two ACLs and her left meniscus playing soccer in high school. "I had to get ACL reconstructive surgery to repair both of these injuries, as well as a meniscus repair, in order to continue playing soccer," Vitale asserted. "During my senior year of high school, my meniscus repair did not hold, so I had to get another surgery. Dr. Guttentag operated on my knees three times over the course of my four years of high school. I was exposed to his expertise and had the opportunity to develop a relationship with him."

She wanted to play collegiate soccer and chose to accept a scholarship from Gardner-Webb because of its excellent academic reputation. "Gardner-Webb gave me the best option for being able to continue my athletic career and also get a great education," she affirmed. "I

feel as if it is very rare for a small and private university to have Division I athletics. Gardner-Webb is one of the best places that I could have chosen to go to school. I originally thought I wanted to be a Physician Assistant; however, during my sophomore year, I decided that I wanted to go to medical school and become a doctor.”

Above all, Vitale appreciates all the people at Gardner-Webb who have invested in her future. “Everyone you meet here is willing to help you out with anything and everything, especially the professors,” Vitale asserted. “I have felt as if every professor I have had during my time here has done everything they can to help me succeed.”

[Learn more about the Department of Exercise Science.](#)