Meet Julia Baer, University of Richmond Class of 2015 graduate and recent Quidditch World Cup Champion. That’s right - we said Quidditch.

For those who are unfamiliar with the sport, Quidditch is based on a fictional game of the same name invented by author J. K. Rowling, which is featured in the Harry Potter series of novels and related media. Quidditch gained popularity as a non-fictional sport most prominently on U.S. college campuses in the mid 2000’s. Now, the sport has spread across more than 25 countries and includes multiple international tournaments.

When Julia arrived on campus in the fall of 2011, she was looking for a way to get involved and chose to check out the Quidditch team. As she says, “I was just another freshman giving a club sport a try.” However, she quickly fell in love with the sport and played all four years at UR.

Upon graduating, Julia moved to Massachusetts where she joined a community team, Quidditch Club Boston. Julia and her team won a national championship in 2016. Later that year, Julia was selected for the U.S. National Team for the first time, and traveled to Frankfurt, Germany in the summer of 2016 to compete for a world title. In 2018, Julia was again selected for the U.S. National Team. The team traveled to Florence, Italy in June and brought home the gold after defeating Ireland, Brazil, Italy, Austria, the UK, Belgium and Australia.

Julia says, “It was an experience I will never forget, and the path that led me to the world championship began at UR. I am forever grateful to have had the opportunity to learn and grow in this sport in Richmond. Without the Spiders, I’d never have made it this far.”

Outside of her Quidditch career, Julia is employed at the New England Aquarium where she is the primary caretaker for the jellyfish and shorebird exhibits. In the summer of 2014, Julia was awarded a UR Summer Fellowship which covered her travel and living expenses so she could accept an internship at the Aquarium. She largely credits the Fellowship as a massive driver as her success as an intern. After that summer, Julia was invited back for a second internship the following year, which was followed by a full-time offer. Julia loves her job “because it gives [her] the opportunity to work with animals daily while also educating the public about the importance of protecting marine species.”

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