

I vividly remember the first tournament I played on the Jamaica National Volleyball team. I was 15 years old, playing in Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic (DR) for the 2005 Women's Volleyball Pan-American Cup. This tournament hosted world class teams that I had only seen on television, including teams from Cuba, Canada, USA, Brazil, and the DR. To say that I was in awe would be an understatement. Our volleyball program at the time was developing young players like myself by providing exposure in international tournaments. Although this was a great opportunity, I recognized earlier in the tournament that my team and I lacked the physical capacity required to play at such a high level. Many of my teammates worked full-time jobs, had families, or were full-time students; yet, we were expected to play at the level of Olympic athletes. In addition to these challenges, funding to completely prepare the team was nonexistent. There was no access to strength and condition coaches, rehabilitation programs, or sports medicine physicians.

During that tournament, my teammates and I suffered multiple injuries. One of these injuries included a torn meniscus that my 15-year-old teammate suffered, which ultimately ended her volleyball career. At the time, I was too young to understand exactly what had happened, but I do remember a team of medical personnel rushing to the court to assist her. That was the first time I observed firsthand the way in which sports medicine played a role in athletics. At this time, I already had an interest in medicine, but little did I know that this tournament would ignite the passion that I now have for the field of Sports Medicine. A short time later, I witnessed the same event occurring at the collegiate level, as I became a volleyball player at North Carolina Central University. However, the experience was quite different in that there was an organized comprehensive support staff that helped in the treatment (and prevention) of injuries. That experience helped me to understand how proper medical follow-up could facilitate an athlete's safe return to play. It is after these experiences that I came to the realization that this was my ultimate career path.

As a third-year medical student at East Carolina University, I had the opportunity to work with primary care sports medicine physicians. During my rotations, I spent time in the outpatient clinic setting, the training room, and on the sidelines of local high school sport events in the area. Since then, I had many more opportunities to work in the field of Sports Medicine and also engage in research opportunities. I also had the privilege to complete multiple pre-participation physicals for underserved middle and high school students, and provide sideline coverage under the supervision of well-trained family medicine sports medicine physicians for amateur and professional athletic events. These were completed during my residency training at the University of Miami. These experiences solidified my interest and love for the field of sports medicine. As a family medicine resident, I was able to provide care for athletic, as well as non-athletic, populations. I have also gained experience with musculoskeletal imaging through the American Medical Society for Sports Medicine and an elective in sports radiology.

During my journey from an athlete to a family medicine resident, I have gained so many invaluable experiences that have made me who I am today. More importantly, I look forward to serving a population of athletes who are from underserved areas and lack access to proper care. I have been able, through athletics, to combine my two passions for medicine and sports, all while playing the game that has been the foundation of my purpose throughout my life. I look forward to learning and being challenged through a well-rounded sports medicine fellowship program.