

Tulane grad says goodbye to summer at the Olympics

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Evan Nicoll, a May 2012 graduate, wanted to make his last summer of freedom count before he started the full-time job grind as the class officer for young alumni and student philanthropy with the Tulane Fund this fall.



Evan Nicoll (in the red shirt), a 2012 Tulane graduate who was president of the Undergraduate Student Government, hangs out with the American fencing team during the 2012 Summer Olympic Games. (Photo from Evan Nichol)

Nicoll rallied his fraternity brother, junior Stephen Russell, and cousin, 2007 grad Lance Nicoll, to form a Tulane delegation to London as NBC started the network's Olympic opening ceremonies coverage.

The group scored tickets to the men's freestyle wrestling 74 kg semi-final and quarter-final, where they witnessed the come-from-behind victory of American Jordan Burroughs over two-time world champion Russian Denis Tsargush. Burroughs would go on to win gold in the final.

"If there were just a few more seconds, he probably wouldn't have won," Nicoll said.

The trio had the option of waiting at the U.S. embassy every morning for between five and eight hours for the chance of getting day-of tickets, but they chose instead to explore the city and watch the games at neighborhood pubs. Many events were streamed live on jumbo-trons in the park; Nicoll described the crowd atmosphere as similar to Jazz Fest.

Many of these new faces thought that Nicoll was an Olympian. Decked out in a red Nike dri-fit USA shirt, Nike shoes and a Nike backpack courtesy of his days as a pole-vaulter for the Green Wave, he was approached by multiple people who assumed he was an Olympic athlete.

"I wasn't going to go along with it, but after four or five people asked, I was like, 'I'll go along with it,'" he remembers. "I pretended to be a steeplechaser and a pole vaulter."

Perhaps the case of mistaken identity was an omen, because the friends soon found themselves partying with the American fencing team one night.

"Even though we just went to one event, it was really exciting meeting people from Italy, China, all over the world," Nicoll said.

Johanna Gretschel received a bachelor's degree with an English major from Tulane in 2012 and she is in the master's degree program.