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## Soccer Matches, Then a Doctor Does Too

**On Friday, former Olympian Rachel Van Hollebeke and her 116 fellow graduates at UC San Diego School of Medicine will find out where they will head next in their new careers as doctors**

When folks ask if there's a doctor in the Buehler house, the answer has always been yes — at least for the last three generations. Here's the kicker: On Friday, there will be one more: Rachel Buehler Van Hollebeke, former two-time Olympian on the U.S. women's national soccer team and soon, a brand new doctor with a game plan.

Friday is Match Day. Each year, at precisely the same moment — 12 p.m. on the East coast, 9 a.m. on the West — thousands of graduating medical school students across the country simultaneously tear open an envelope. The single sheet of paper inside informs each graduate where he or she will do their residencies — in other words, where each will spend the first several years of their careers as working doctors.

On Friday, Van Hollebeke, who is completing her four years at UC San Diego School of Medicine, will open her envelope, discover where she will do her residency and begin her medical career.

“I grew up with medicine. My father just retired after 40 years as a cardiothoracic surgeon. My grandfather and great-grandfather were general practitioners. I always knew that one day I would pursue medicine.”

But first came soccer. Van Hollebeke was a star on the Stanford University women's soccer team, majoring in human biology and pre-medicine. She was preparing for the medical school admission test when the national team called her up to play in the 2008 Summer Olympics in



*Former Olympic soccer player and soon-to-be doctor Rachel Van Hollebeke and her 8-month-old daughter, Leona.*

Beijing. (The U.S. prevailed, beating Brazil 1-0 for the gold.) Van Hollebeke was with the national team again in 2012 when it beat Japan, 2-1, to win at the Summer Olympics in London.

Throughout her time with the team, Van Hollebeke kept her eye on the ball and her medical aspirations. She studied between matches and on road trips, and shadowed team doctors to keep her hand in medicine. In addition to her career on the national team, Van Hollebeke also played for several professional teams, retiring in 2015. “My last game was in Portland with the Thorns Football Club, then I flew to San Diego where I literally attended medical school orientation the next morning.”

Playing high-level soccer and learning to become a doctor are a lot alike, said Van Hollebeke. “There are similarities. Both involve hard work and dedication. You’re part of a bigger team, with intense, common goals.”

Van Hollebeke plans to practice family medicine. On Friday, she will find out where, surrounded by family, including her 8-month-old daughter, Leona, and her sister, Anna Buehler, who is currently a third-year student at UC San Diego School of Medicine and, no doubt, intent to get a peek at what Match Day holds for her next year.

## **Match Day, Past to Present**

Begun in 1952 and operated by the non-profit National Resident Matching Program, Match Day culminates months of applications and interviews by fourth-year medical school students, each of whom may have visited a dozen or more hospitals and institutions across the country in search of their perfect match.

Each student creates a ranking of their choices. Meanwhile, each hospital and institution creates its own list of preferred students. A computer algorithm compares the lists, crunches the numbers, generates millions of possible combinations, and finally, produces a single choice for each matched student.

This year, Match Day is Friday, March 15. The 117 members of the 2019 graduating class at UC San Diego School of Medicine will gather just before 9 a.m. at the Medical Education and Telemedicine Building on the La Jolla campus.

“Match Day is a celebration, a way to mark all of the years of hard work, long hours and good, old-fashioned perseverance put in by every graduate,” said Kama Guluma, MD, associate dean for admissions and student affairs.

“This is their moment. They will all soon officially become physicians, and Match Day reveals their first step and place in that new life. It’s a rite of passage for every doctor.” (Guluma joined the UC San Diego School of Medicine faculty in 2001 after completing an emergency medicine residency at the University of Michigan.)

Medical school is not easy, Guluma said. It is four years of rigorous study, labs, hospital rounds and long hours. “Our students have not only excelled at a very difficult and demanding curriculum, but many have carried additional challenges. They may be the first doctors in their families. They may have young families of their own or have spouses deployed overseas. They all have a story.”

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#### MEDIA CONTACT

**Scott LaFee**, 858-249-0456, [slafee@ucsd.edu](mailto:slafee@ucsd.edu)

**Michelle Brubaker**, 858-249-0456, [mubrubaker@ucsd.edu](mailto:mubrubaker@ucsd.edu)

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