

ASU water polo player defends the goal — and our data

Data science student Marie Rudasics juggles competitive sports and position at payment processing company

By Kelly deVos, ASU News

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[Marie Rudasics](#) is the last line of defense.

Six players advance across the pool with a single objective in mind: making sure that yellow hydrogrip ball finds its way into the net. Rudasics, goalkeeper for the Arizona State University [women's water polo team](#), is there to stop them. In that role, she is ranked second in terms of save percentage by the Mountain Pacific Sports Federation and has a career high of 12 saves in a single game. She remains in position, treading water, tracking the ball, staying sharp and waiting for the next shot.

But Rudasics is also an emerging data scientist who is just as busy outside the pool, studying and applying the same focus and determination to protecting our most precious digital assets: our financial information. Just as she guards the goal, she also helps guard our bank accounts.

Rudasics is working toward a master's degree in data science from the [School of Computing and Augmented Intelligence](#), part of the [Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering](#) at ASU. She juggles her efforts as an athlete with her studies and a position as a data governance officer for a leading payment processing company.

Governing how data is guarded

During her senior year, while pursuing undergraduate degrees in business data analytics and economics from ASU's [W. P. Carey School of Business](#), Rudasics landed an internship with the payment processing company's data and model risk management team. Through that experience, she began to imagine a long-term career in protecting data privacy.

“During the internship, I began to understand a lot more about data itself — not just how to analyze data but also how to build models off of it,” Rudasics says. “My manager really encouraged me to ask big questions. Why is data privacy important? How do we manage it?”

As she contemplated her next steps, Rudasics began to think a Fulton Schools master’s degree in data science could expand her future career options. She enrolled in the program and accepted a part-time job in data governance, where she helps craft policies and programs that set rules for how data is collected, stored and managed.

After she earns her master’s degree, Rudasics hopes to remain with her current employer. She sees tremendous opportunities there for a data scientist.

“The company uses data science in a lot of ways,” she says. “They might want to understand certain fraud trends or research how to predict fraud. But data science can also help leaders see how new products are doing or marketing campaigns are performing.”

Meanwhile, she continues to swim.

Balancing life on the pool deck and data dashboard

During water polo season, Rudasics follows a challenging schedule, typically starting weight training at 6:30 a.m. before moving on to regular practice. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons, she attends class and focuses on studies. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, she often works. While much of her remaining time is filled with homework, she does try to seize opportunities on weekends to relax and recharge.

The 21-year-old native of rainy Bellevue, Washington, was initially attracted to ASU for its strong athletics, flexible academic programs and the opportunity to swim in the sunshine.

Rudasics says remaining proactive is key to managing her schedule, and she laughs at the thought of study sessions on bumpy plane rides to water polo matches. She is currently studying data mining with [Yanjie Fu](#), an associate professor of computer science and engineering in the School of Computing and Augmented Intelligence. The advanced course addresses security and privacy issues in data mining, the process of sorting through large sets of information to spot helpful patterns. Rudasics is careful to plan well in advance for class assignments and tests.

She also says that she applies lessons learned in the pool to her life behind the screen.

“Team sports really teach you that failure is just an opportunity for growth, and you cannot grow without any type of failure,” Rudasics says. “In a data science role, I might not get it right the first time, so I keep practicing. I continue to practice, learn and ask for help, and eventually I will

succeed.”

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



Marie Rudasics, goalkeeper for the Arizona State University women's water polo team, protects the goal during a match. Out of the pool, Rudasics is a data science student working toward a master's degree in the School of Computing and Augmented Intelligence, part of the Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering at ASU. She has combined a student-athlete's competitive drive with an engineer's analytical ability to assume a successful role in data governance for a leading online payment processing company. Photo courtesy of Marie Rudasics

Text image(s)



Rudasics poses on the ASU Tempe campus in her undergraduate graduation regalia. In 2024, she earned bachelor's degrees in business data analytics and economics from ASU's W. P. Carey School of Business before joining the Fulton Schools as a data science master's degree student. Photo courtesy of Marie Rudasics