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Mid Competes in Chilean Military School Athletic Competition *By Midn. 2nd Class Jordan*

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Special to Trident

Midshipman 2nd Class Jordan Gruber spent the spring semester studying at the Chilean Naval School in Valparaiso, Chile. Here, he recounts his experience attending an interscholastic track meet in the country's capital Santiago:

The Chilean military is a diverse public service entity. While the U.S. makes a distinction between civil services and military services, the Chileans often blur the two groups. The Chileans have essentially five service branches: army, navy, air force, police and investigations. Each branch of service has a school in which they train their officers. These schools are not universities. While all Chilean officers receive education in the school of their branch of service, none of them earn a bachelor's degree. The schools' first priority is not college education but officer development. The higher education of the cadets is a secondary concern.

Every year, the five service schools of Chile compete in a variety of sports. These competitions are called "Las Interschuelas," the Interscholastic Competitions. These competitions include a wide variety of sports, including the Interscholastic Track and Field Meet. Every year the track and field meet is held at the Chilean Military School in Santiago. We traveled to Santiago by bus on the day before the competition, and we stayed in the school's barracks. I had the privilege of participating as an athlete representing the Chilean Naval School.

I participated in all three of the throwing events: shot-put, javelin, and discus. Each event had a total of 15 competitors, three from each school. It was very similar to a track meet in the U.S. The top eight throwers in preliminaries had three extra throws to better their marks and all of the top eight throwers scored points. First place scored the most points, and eighth place scoring the least. The top three throwers in every event were awarded medals and formally congratulated at the winner's podium. In the shot-put competition on the first day I won fourth place. On the second day I won third place in the discus and third place in the javelin competition.

Despite a remarkable showing in all the throwing events, the Chilean navy men's team lost to the military school by sixteen points (255-271). The females won their meet by a vast margin. After the winning teams were congratulated and presented with their trophies, we took a few minutes to celebrate. The celebrations included catching all of the senior cadets and dunking them in the Steeplechase pool. When there were no more seniors to dunk, they decided to dunk "gringos" in the Steeplechase pool. As it happened, I was the only "gringo."

This track meet was an invaluable experience for me. Despite being dunked, getting sunburn, and doing pushups for arriving just on time to a meal formation, I came away from the meet with two medals and invaluable memories. The trip was worth it to see the culture of the military school here. I made friends with members of all the service schools, and I had conversations that will remain with me forever.

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