

RACING

A Duke the Next Danica?

JMU Senior Jenna Wagner Will Travel Around the Country this Summer After Being Selected as One of 25 to Compete.

By **JEFF HARRIS & EMMIE CLEVELAND**
contributing writer, *The Breeze*

JMU senior Jenna Wagner only has one speeding ticket, and she drives a Nissa Xterra — six days of the week. On Saturdays, she races.

Wagner received word Feb. 10 of her selection as one of 25 to compete for the Volkswagen Jetta Turbocharged Direct Injection Cup this summer. After sending an application, she traveled to Las Vegas for a three-day tryout. Wagner was one of two females chosen to compete.

"I mean it's always good to see girls in the sport and doing well in the sport," Wagner said. "It always makes you feel, I don't know, prestigious, whenever you beat other guys, if you're one of the few girls that's selected to run in a class full of boys."

Wagner has raced since 2005 and has little trouble balancing her media arts and design major with her sport.

"It sometimes can get a little hard, having to go home every weekend [or] every other weekend, but I don't find it too

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JMU senior Jenna Wagner races here in an Indy-style car. Early this month, Wagner traveled to Las Vegas to try out for the Jetta Cup series that will tour across the United States. She made the team, and the series' first race is in April.



RACING

Brings Family Together

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hard to balance my school work," Wagner said. "I still have time to do my homework when I'm at home, because the only day we're at the race track is Saturday."

And Saturday events are family-oriented. Jenna's father Jack Wagner, for example, takes on roles as public relations through press releases, mechanic and spotter during the race, as well as father and fan.

"In high school I did softball and basketball, and I love those sports, but racing's just like, it really brings my family together 'cause everyone can participate in it," Wagner said.

"Even though I may be one of the only ones driving, my family still comes to watch me and goes to the track and helps do everything we have to do on any given Saturday."

The Wagners have one additional car on their race team — usually driven by Wagner's uncle but occasionally by her father.

With her father and uncle as her two major inspirations, she officially broke into racing at age 16 on the Lonesome Pine Raceway circuit, near Coeburn.

"This was a program where the track provided cars for a young driver to drive a 4-cylinder car provided and prepared by the track," Jack Wagner said.

Wagner first started receiving acclaim in 2008, when, as a member of the MOD-4 engine class she won Rookie of the Year and finished sixth in the points standings.

The following season, she moved up to the charger division, which involved a switch to a more powerful engine and heavier car. In that division, she won co-Rookie of the Year



COURTESY OF JACK WAGNER

Media arts and design senior Jenna Wagner travels home to Bristol almost every Saturday to race. She began racing at age 16.

honor, finishing third in the point standings.

Wagner will travel to Alton on April 23 to participate in her first Turbocharged Direct Injection event.

She will race in the cup's 10 events with a chance at the \$100,000 grand prize. Her season will officially end with the last race taking place Sept. 26 in Puebla, Mexico.

But until then, Wagner hopes to continue her recent successes.

She is expecting to graduate in May and is debating getting

a job or going back to graduate school.

Any aspirations she might have of becoming the next Danica Patrick, the IndyCar driver who made the leap to NASCAR earlier this month, remain a dream for now.

"I'd like to continue racing, and I hope to continue racing," Wagner said. "I hope it will open new doors for [women] and put us in new classes."

"I'd love to drive in NASCAR, that would be my ultimate goal, but we just have to take it one circuit at a time."

WOMEN'S

Three Games Remain

