

Streetsville actor lands lead role in new Family Channel film

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A spontaneous and passionate speech from Streetsville's Ana Golja might have been that little bit extra needed to land the actor her first lead role in a film.

Golja, who many will know from her character Zoe Rivas on the *Degrassi* television series, had gone in for an audition to play the role of gymnast Ariana Berlin in the Family Channel film *Full Out*. Following her reading, Golja on a whim decided to tell those in the room just how passionate she was about landing the role.

Since she did get it, Golja believes it might have been just what the casting directors needed to see to give her the part.

"I read the script (for *Full Out*) and I was so incredibly moved by Arian's story and I knew I needed to have this part," said Golja, 19. "It was a bit of a risk because auditions are usually pretty formal so I'm not really sure what got into me that day."

Full Out tells the story of Berlin, an elite gymnast and Olympic hopeful whose life took a sharp turn after a near-fatal car accident in 2001. After a hard road of rehabilitation, Berlin initially found it difficult to get back into gymnastics so she decided to join a professional dance crew.

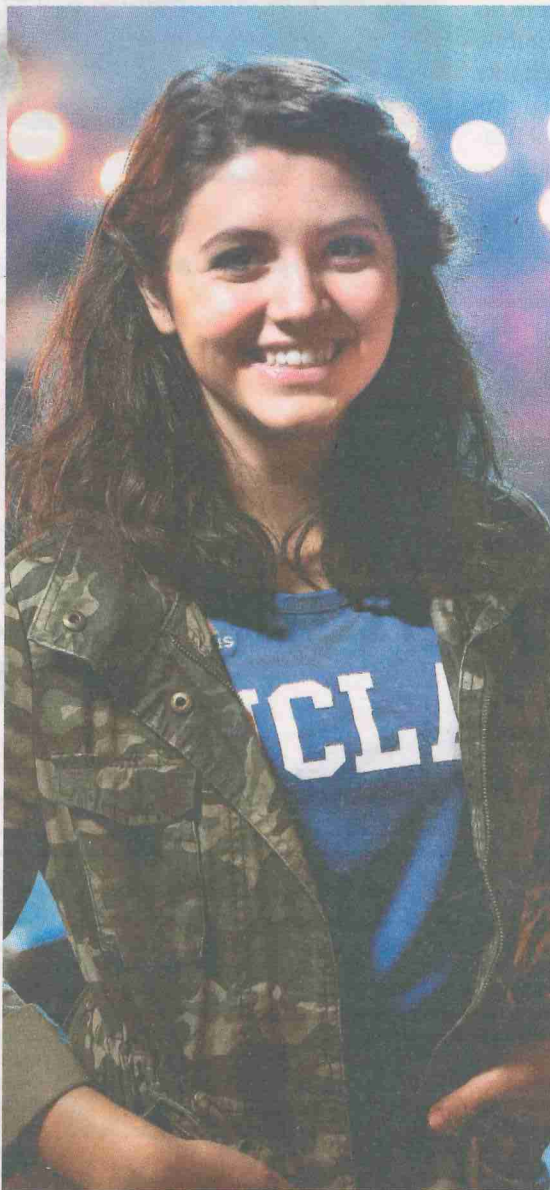
But, the itch to compete in gymnastics was still there. She eventually landed a spot on the UCLA Bruins gymnastics team and won an NCAA championship while there.

"It's such an incredibly story and so moving," said Golja. "You just can't help but think what an incredible woman she is."

Although Golja had done a little bit of gymnastics when she was a child, she had to put in about eight

weeks of training to prepare for her role. She was pleased with the progress she made and was able to perform some of Berlin's actual beam and floor routines by the end.

"I had so much fun with the training and I have a completely newfound respect for gymnasts," said Golja.



During the filming, Berlin was around the set. She served as a gymnastics double in the film and also makes a cameo as the assistant coach of the UCLA gymnastics team. Having the real Berlin there was a little "nerve-wracking" at first for Golja because she wanted to hit all the right notes and portray a faithful take on Berlin.

Despite the initial nerves, Golja said the two women quickly bonded and she was able to go to Berlin for all sorts of tips and advice throughout filming.

"We have the exact same personalities," said Golja. "We're both fighters and very driven."

Meanwhile, the multi-talented Golja doesn't just act in the film. She recorded the song *Feel So Good* for the film's soundtrack and is currently working on her debut EP that she hopes to release in the spring.

Full Out was filmed in October, mostly in Toronto but also in parts of the GTA.

Her television career will also continue with *Degrassi: Next Class*. She will reprise her role as Zoe in the new production, which will air on Family Channel

in Canada next year and also on Netflix internationally.

"Zoe is very different from me with a lot of attitude and sass that's masking her true feelings," said Golja. "Deep down, she just wants to be loved. But, what I like about her is that you never know what to expect when playing Zoe."

Streetsville's Ana Golja as Ariana Berlin in the Family Channel film *Full Out*, which airs on Sept. 11 at 7:30 p.m. on the Family Channel. Photo by Rhys Jones