

Volleyball: CU Buffs' Kerra Schroeder itching to compete again

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Every time the Colorado volleyball team goes through a scrimmage, Kerra Schroeder gets the urge to be on the court for every single bump, set and spike.

Then her coaches slap her with a reality check and send her to the sidelines.

"It's super hard because I just want to go in there the whole time and just be there because I'm so used to that," said Schroeder, a senior captain for the Buffaloes.

From 2009-2011, Schroeder was the only Buff to play all 300 sets. Her streak likely would have continued throughout the 2012 season, too, but five sets in, she was done.

Schroeder tore the ACL in her left knee on Aug. 25 against Louisiana. It wasn't until recently that she was given clearance to return to the court.

"I honestly feel 100 percent," said Schroeder, who has been involved in scrimmages on a limited basis. "(CU coaches) have a leash on me, pulling me back, because they don't want me to do too much at this point.

"I've got to realize it's just six months (since her surgery on Oct. 2). Six to nine months is the recovery time."

Without the injury, Schroeder would have graduated, as a double major, in May, and then pursued a pro career overseas.

Instead, she has revised her class schedule a bit in order to extend her academic and athletic career. She plans to graduate in December after playing one last season with the Buffaloes.

A 6-foot outside hitter from San Diego, Schroeder is one of CU's most dynamic players. She led the team in kills as a junior in 2011 and as a sophomore in 2010. She has been among the team leaders in several categories throughout her career.

CU clearly missed her throughout the 2012 season, when it went 14-18. It was the Buffs' best season since 2006, but surely would have been better with Schroeder on the court.

Last year, 12 Buffs played at least 55 sets and 11 are back for 2013. Adding Schroeder back into the mix can only help.

"We can all finish the season out better than last (year)," said Schroeder, who still plans to play overseas after college.

Named a captain the past three years, Schroeder put her leadership on full display after her injury. She continued to travel with the Buffs because of the impact she made as a leader. She also proved to be a stellar example with the way she attacked her rehabilitation, which was a completely new experience for her.

"I had never been injured, ever," she said. "I was never the one to be in the training room before or after practice. Never.

"It's kind of a reality check that I have to be in there every single day and do these little, tiny rehab things that seem so irrelevant but are so important to coming back."

Schroeder said she developed great relationships with strength and conditioning coach Chris Sheckler and trainer Nicole Makris. Both of them knew when to push Schroeder and when to reign her in.

As the season went on without her on the court, Schroeder also gained a different appreciation for the sport. She charted stats from the bench. She also watched her teammates make mistakes -- ones she said she would have made, too. But, seeing those mistakes from her new vantage point was important.

"Seeing that and not being in it, I take that to note and I've learned so much of the game from that point," she said. "I'm realizing as I move into practice and am competing that all of that is connecting."

Since her injury, Schroeder said she has had to learn new ways to spark her competitive fire. It may have been a weight-lifting competition among the team, or something in the classroom that sparked it.

Finally, she's able to be competitive on the court, if only on a limited basis for now.

"When I'm on the court, I feel like I've got a whole bunch of energy that I just need to explode with it," she said. "The competitive atmosphere, I've missed that a lot. I need to get out there."

Barring any kind of set-back to her health, Schroeder will get out there on a full-time basis soon. She has made the most of a less-than-ideal situation, but can't wait to see what the future holds.

"It was the hardest thing ever," she said. "I would never wish it upon anyone, of course, but I learned a lot. I'm here for another season, and I'm excited to see what role I'll be in."

Notable

The Buffs will hold an intrasquad scrimmage on Saturday at 2 p.m. at Coors Events Center. Parking and admission is free.

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