

Injuries plagued last two seasons for senior netter

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Throughout her career at Colorado, Erin Sanders has compiled an injury list that seems suited for a linebacker or running back.

A senior for the Buffaloes' women's tennis squad, Sanders' ailments have included: a broken foot that required two surgeries, cortisone shots in her wrist and shoulder for tendinitis, two concussions and a hip flexor injury.

"The football players come in the training room and here I am again with crutches and they're like, 'What are you doing?'" Sanders said. "Who would have thought that a non-contact sport would be so hard on your body? The training staff will tell you that they're going to be ready for me to leave.

"It's pretty impressive I'm still walking at this point."

Sanders can joke about it now because she's on the verge of wrapping up a healthy senior season with the Buffaloes. She and her teammates will close out the regular season on Saturday with a home match against Utah at 11 a.m.

Aside from a bout of mononucleosis, which kept her out of one match early in the season, Sanders' body has held up for the first time since she was a freshman in 2010.

"It's been really fun and enjoyable to just play with a 'there's nothing to lose' mentality," she said. "I've really been fortunate to not have something stopping me this season."

Sanders, who came to CU after a stellar career at Ponderosa High School, is 7-14 in singles play this year. She is also 13-10 in doubles play, including 9-8 with current partner Julyette Steur.

"I've had some good success with my doubles partner this year, which has been really fun because I love doubles," said Sanders, a double major in psychology and news editorial. "I'm a much better doubles player than a singles player."

"I'm definitely not disappointed (this year). I am not satisfied, but there's been a lot of really good things from this season that I'm happy about."

The way she started her career, Sanders figured she would be further along by now. She moved up to the top singles spot at CU to start her sophomore year in 2011.

Her bad luck began early in that season, however. Two matches in, she discovered she had a broken left foot. She believes it happened in a match against Boise State, but she kept playing that match and didn't learn of the break until the next day.

She missed the rest of 2011 season, and then various ailments -- including a concussion after her doubles partner smacked the back of her head with a ball -- cut into her 2012 season as well.

Even now Sanders said she doesn't think she's ever returned to 100-percent healthy, but said the aches and pains are "something you play through because you want to play."

During her career, she has compiled 28 singles victories and 32 more in doubles. There's no telling how good she could have been with better health, but Sanders isn't bitter about the path she's taken.

"I would definitely say it's not everything that I had hoped to achieve, but looking back at all the injuries, I'm really proud of what I have accomplished, considering the things that have held me back," she said.

Nothing is holding her back now, as she looks to close out her career on a good note. After Saturday's match against Utah, all that's left for Sanders is next week's Pac-12 Championships in Ojai, Calif.

For many athletes, the end of a career brings sadness. Not for Sanders. She actually let out a "woo-hoo!" when reminded of the quickly approaching finish line. In fact, she is even giving up a whole year of eligibility. Granted a medical hardship for the 2011 season, she could have returned for 2014, but declined.

"I've had a great time the past four years," she said. "I'm not tired of it, but I know I've given all that I can. I'm excited to see myself all the way through the end. It's exciting to say I played four years.

"I think it's a good thing that it's coming to end, to let my body recover."

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