

CU Buffs' Liz Kritza returns from China coaching trip

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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Buffzone.com

Colorado volleyball coach Liz Kritza expects her players to improve. So, she figures she ought to improve, as well.

Last week, Kritza returned from China after having the opportunity to work as an assistant coach for a USA Development team. The team participated in the Challenge Invitational, playing against some of the top professional teams in China.

"Just like we want our players to expand, I think it's really important for coaches to continue to expand their knowledge," she said. "To do that, we have to interact with other coaches from all parts of the world."

Kritza said the tournament gave her a great opportunity to see the game at a different level. She also learned a few things, she said.

"You can't help but learn," she said. "It either solidifies your own philosophy and your training that you're doing, or it maybe helps you re-think a few things."

"Having that international experience and keeping your perspective sharp on the sport, and not just within your own country but throughout the whole world, I think it's really important for coaches who have players of that caliber."

CU has six players with USA Volleyball experience, including all three incoming freshmen: Alexis Austin, Nicole Edelman and Chelsey Keoho. Veterans Emily Alexis, Nicki Brown and Nikki Lindow also have USA Volleyball experience.

Kritza will bring her own international experience back to the team this fall.

"It was great experience for the kids that were on that tour," she said. "I'd love for our players to go out and play two weeks in a foreign country."

Getting antsy

CU volleyball players report on Aug. 7, with the first practice scheduled for Aug. 8.

Kritza can't wait.

"Any competitive person and coach, they want to get going and they want to just start working," she said.

CU had a disappointing first season in the Pac-12 last year, going 6-24 overall and 1-21 in the conference. Kritza and the Buffs are eager to improve those marks.

"We want to see what we can do," Kritza said. "Everybody feels great and has the best intentions."

"They're focused. I think it's a drive that's coming from within this group."

With the 19th-ranked recruiting class in the country and 12 games scheduled for TV coverage, the Buffs have a renewed energy.

"They're pretty focused from everything that I've seen," she said.

Camping

The Buffs have held several camps already this month, and they will be busy with even more the rest of the month.

CU is hosting a high performance camp this week. From July 23-27, they will hold an all-skills day camp for players in grades 3 through high school. Then, from July 30-Aug. 1, they will hold a team camp for high school teams.

"Camps for us are really important," Kritza said. "I think it's important for our players to interact with the youth in the community. That's really how we generate excitement for our program."

For more information on the camps, call 303-492-5669.

Notable

The Buffs return their top two attackers from last year, senior Kerra Schroeder (3.95 kills per set) and junior Nikki Lindow (2.16). Emily Alexis was fourth in attacking (1.77). ... Lindow also led the team with 80 blocks. ... The Buffs lost their top setter (Alyssa Valentine) and digger (Megan Beckwith) to graduation. ... CU had a 30-match conference losing streak before knocking off Washington State on Nov. 18. The Buffs lost their final two Pac-12 matches of the season. ... The Buffs open the season on Aug. 24 against Texas Southern in the Sam Houston State Invitational in Huntsville, Texas. The Buffs play their home opener on Aug. 31 against Cornell in the Omni Hotels Classic.

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