

CU's Marshall hoping for big finale

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When Shaye Marshall joined the Colorado soccer team, the Buffaloes were fresh off a sixth consecutive NCAA Tournament appearance.

As she heads into her senior year, Marshall is hoping to avoid a fourth straight losing season.

"It's really important for us as seniors to go off with a good note and get CU back on track," Marshall said. "It's always been an amazing program."

The Buffaloes played in every NCAA Tournament from 2003-08, the last three of those years with Marshall's older sister, Nikki, leading the way. Since then, they are 21-32-5, leading to longtime head coach Bill Hempen's dismissal after last season.

With a new head coach (Danny Sanchez) and a roster nearly 50-percent filled with newcomers, the Buffaloes are hoping to put last year's disappointing 4-13-2 season -- the program's worst mark since 2001 -- behind them. "We have one year in the Pac-12 under our belt, so hopefully we can pull out some more wins this year because last year was a tough season," Marshall said.

The lack of wins aside, Marshall has had a successful career to this point. Still, the past three years have zipped by for the former Skyline High School standout.

"It goes by so fast," she said. "It feels like yesterday I was stepping in as a freshman and playing with my sister."

Marshall had the opportunity to play with her sister for one year, in 2009. They were in the starting lineup together the whole season.

"My first year coming in with Nikki, that was an amazing experience," Marshall said. "She kind of took me under her wing."

Even without her sister next to her the past two years, Marshall has enjoyed playing close to her Mead home during her college career.

"It means a lot, honestly, just to be in my home area," she said. "My parents make it out, my grandparents and aunts and uncles. Nikki will be home so she'll be able to see my last season, as well."

Marshall, a communications major, said she has "learned a lot about myself" in college. While evolving as a person, Marshall has also improved as a player.

For most of her career, Marshall has been a regular in the Buffaloes' lineup at center midfielder, the same position she played in high school.

"One of my favorite things about being a center-mid is being a playmaker and distributing balls to forwards who can score," she said.

"I've learned a lot through Bill, as far as how to become a better center-mid and how to score goals. Danny, he's got some great ideas for our team. I've learned a lot."

There is more to learn, Sanchez said. He said he would demand more of Marshall than what she's given in the past.

"The thing I challenged her with in the spring and I'll be challenging her with in the preseason is to have more of a consistent impact on the game," Sanchez said. "When she's on, she's on. I just want to see that kind of consistent performance in longer stretches because we feel she's really capable of having a breakout senior year."

Marshall appears to be poised for that breakout. Yet, it's not a personal breakout year that she craves. She wants to finally achieve team success.

"Our main team goal is to make the NCAA tournament and get in the first couple of rounds at least," she said. "It'll be interesting to see how we do this year."