

## Women's basketball: CU's Reese recovering from broken orbital bone

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With one swift kick to the face, Jen Reese's season was over.

"The surgeon said it was (similar to) the impact of a horse kick," Reese said.

On Feb. 23, Reese and her Colorado women's basketball teammates were in Stanford, Calif., to take on the Cardinal. Two minutes in, Cardinal All-American Nnemkadi Ogumike inadvertently kicked Reese, fracturing the orbital bone in her left eye.

"It honestly left like my eye went into my brain," she said. "I couldn't see anything."

Initially, she and the Buffs weren't sure how serious it was, but it turned out that her promising freshman season was over.

"There were fractures in my orbital bone and bone fragments in here," she said, pointing below her left eye. "They had to go in and fix everything in that."

More than four months later, Reese is still recovering and hoping to get back on the court soon.

"It's going to take probably the full six months, so I have three more months to go," she said.

Reese was just starting to hit her stride when the injury occurred. A 6-foot-2 forward from Clackamas, Ore., Reese got into the starting lineup a month earlier. She wound up averaging 7.8 points and 6.0 rebounds per game, giving the Buffs a solid inside presence on both ends of the court.

"I felt like I got a lot of experience freshman year in playing," she said. "I think that will help me going into my sophomore year, knowing how much work it takes to get to the next level."

Unfortunately for Reese, when the Buffs went to Los Angeles for the Pac-12 Tournament and to Oklahoma for the WNIT quarterfinals, Reese stayed home.

"(It) was a downer," she said. "There was nothing I could do."

In some ways, that's still the case. Unlike a knee or arm injury, there is no rehabilitation for a broken orbital bone.

"I honestly wish I would have broken a leg or something," she said.

She has made significant process, however. She said her vision is probably "98 percent" back, which has alleviated her long-term concerns.

"I've seen improvement a lot since surgery," she said. "I couldn't even see. Straight ahead was blurry and double. Going to school was hard. I missed a lot of school and tests."

Physically, Reese has worked on being as fit as possible.

"The elliptical is my best friend right now," she said. "I'm doing circuits everyday and starting to jog. I can shoot pretty much whenever I feel like."

Reese also lifts weights, but is not allowed to lift anything too heavy because that will cause too much pressure in her head. She is also not allowed to participate in contact drills. That's been the toughest part, as she has watched her teammates go through drills and pick-up games without her.

"Watching them play pick-up is just a nightmare to watch," she said.

Reese knows her time will come. Before too long, she'll be back on the court in practice -- likely with goggles -- and playing with her teammates.

"Pretty much I have to start all over," she said. "The thing I'm looking at is I've done it before so I know I can do it again.

"Once we start preseason, I'm just going to see how it goes from there. I can't really say because I don't know. I'm hoping it'll be fine and I can push through."

The Buffs are hoping an older, more experienced Reese can help them improve this coming season. As for Reese, she wouldn't want to go through that injury again, but she's got a good attitude about it.

"It's a good story to tell," she said. "The first draft pick (in the 2012 WNBA Draft) broke my eye pretty much."

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