

Sophomore absorbed invaluable lessons while injured

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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At the time that she broke her ankle, on Jan. 28, 2012, Colorado's Abrianna Torres was devastated.

Two meets into her freshman season with the Buffaloes' track and field team and her season was over.

"I was really bummed," said Torres, who broke her ankle while landing a long jump attempt at a meet at the Air Force Academy. "It just sucked because I came here to do track and my first season I hurt myself."

What began as a major disappointment to her career, however, has turned into a blessing as Torres is now showing signs of greatness.

About 15 months after breaking her ankle, Torres will compete in the heptathlon on Saturday and Sunday at the Pac-12 Championships. The meet will take place at Katherine B. Locker Stadium in Los Angeles.

"I'm excited to go to USC and do the best that I can do," Torres said. "I'm so ready to compete. It's just real exciting."

Torres is one of four Buffs competing this weekend. Brianne Beemer (ranked third in the Pac-12), Torres (fourth) and Genny Mayden (eighth) will all compete in the heptathlon. Brock Emory is the lone CU athlete that will compete in the men's decathlon. He ranks seventh in the conference.

Torres competed in one heptathlon during her career at San Luis Obispo (Calif.) High School and the results impressed CU coaches. Since then, she has been working on becoming an all-around athlete.

"I love every meet because I feel like it's another chance to get a little bit more under my belt," she said. "It's just preparing me for the big meets we have coming up."

Initially, Torres was crushed when she learned she'd have to sit out the entire 2012 season. As it turned out, redshirting and sitting out may have been the best thing for her.

"I've definitely learned a lot and grown so much from it," she said. "I feel like I was able to grow in technique. High school, I was purely an athlete. My coach really tried to work technique in there, but I went off of my pure strength."

"(Last year), I was able to sit next to coach in practice and listen and see those things that she was pointing out for people to do. That definitely helped me."

CU assistant coach Lindsey Malone, who works with the Buffs' multi-event athletes, said the mental preparation is key for any athlete. It was forced upon Torres, but she made the best of it. Now, Torres is adding the physical aspect of the sport.

This year, Torres has set personal records in the shot put, javelin and long jump. Her personal record in the high jump has also come while in a CU uniform.

"It's a real confidence booster to see your progress throughout the year," she said.

Malone has been watching the progress, too. She likes what she sees, but said Torres hasn't even really taken off yet.

"I think this is only scratching the surface of what she has in store for her," Malone said.

Malone said the coaching staff believes the 2016 Olympic trials is a realistic goal for Torres. Winning a national title at CU is realistic, too.

"The biggest thing is keeping her head on straight and making sure that you're doing all the details right," Malone said. "Everything is in the details."

Torres has done a great job so far in paying attention to detail. That's why she's looking forward to a great performance in Los Angeles.

"I believe I can be right there (competing for the conference title), absolutely," she said. "I'm going to push to be the No. 1 spot, but I just want to score for my team."

Torres added that she's taken a very calm approach into her first conference championship meet.

"I'm just ready to go out there and have fun," she said. "This is my first year; I'm going to see what I can do and every year after that I'm just going to try to better it."

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The meet will take place just a few hours from Torres' home and both of her parents will be there. Torres said it'll be the first time her parents have seen her compete as a collegian. ... This weekend is for multi-event athletes only. The rest of the Pac-12 championships will be May 11-12, also in Los Angeles.

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