

Volleyball: Elysse Richardson CU Buffs' force for good

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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When the Colorado volleyball team notches a big point, Elysse Richardson is often the first player to offer congratulations to the player that scored.

When the Buffs lose a point, Richardson is often the first player to throw smiles of encouragement to her teammates.

There may not be anything more consistent in the CU athletic department than Richardson's ever-present smile.

"She is the truest of team players that we have," said coach Liz Kritza, whose team is off to a 10-2 start. "She's kind of the spark plug, the energy, the life blood of this team."

Richardson, a 5-foot-3 junior libero, isn't the best player on the squad, but her impact can't be denied.

"She has this knack for bringing out the best in people and she really takes pride in that," Kritza said. "She wants to be the player that's stable, that nobody worries about, that can pull out the best from all these young players and it's really, really essential for our team success with all the young kids we have."

Richardson brings much more than a smile to the Buffs. She has experience, with 58 career matches under her belt. This season, she leads the team with 120 digs and has received a team-high 196 serves, meaning she's a vital cog in starting the offense.

"The serve reception becomes so much more important and she has to be calm and stable and balance that with being the one that's driving the team and pushing them forward," Kritza said.

For all the good she does in the fundamentals of her position, it is Richardson's positive attitude that may have the biggest impact on her team.

"I've got to keep everyone moving," she said. "If they feel they're not doing well, hey forget it, smile, enjoy it. In case someone falls, I'm there to push them back up again."

She said her mother taught her to be a positive force and Richardson relishes that role on the Buffs.

"When things are going great, everyone is happy," Richardson said. "But, when things are going bad people are looking around. If they look around and see someone with a smile, hey, it's volleyball. They remember. That's why I've kept doing it. It relaxes everybody a little bit."

A psychology major, Richardson actually gets an opportunity to put what she learns in the classroom into use on the volleyball court.

"It's fascinating," she said. "A lot of it does translate onto the court, just how people think, what motivates people, keeping positive. A lot of it has transferred, which has been awesome."

With Richardson as one of the team's emotional leaders, the Buffs have progressed during her career and she hopes that progression continues.

"It's just fun," she said. "We've had ups and downs, but we've stayed together."

Notable

Through non-conference play, Nikki Lindow and true freshman Alexis Austin are tied with a team-best 121 kills for the Buffs' volleyball squad. ... The volleyball team has a .237 attack percentage, which is on pace to be the Buffs' best since 2005. The Buffs had a .169 percentage in 2011. ... The soccer team opens Pac-12 play on Friday at Oregon. ... The men's golf team will host the Mark Simpson CU Invitational next Monday and Tuesday at Colorado National Golf Club.

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