

Notes: CU Buffs' Lindow thriving as middle blocker

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Nikki Lindow has always been a stellar athlete.

Add to that a new level of comfort and confidence this fall and Lindow figures to be as important to the Colorado volleyball team as ever.

A standout basketball and volleyball player at Centaurus High School, Lindow has been playing volleyball for only four years but has grown into her spot as a middle blocker and is off to a great start for the Buffs (4-2).

"Beginning of preseason already, they transitioned me to outside to see what I could do because we just needed more options and we had Alexis Austin coming in as a middle," Lindow said after a recent match. "I was like, 'No, middle is my home, I learned it, I'm still new at it and I'm finally coming into myself.' Blocking wise, I'm totally confident. I feel steady."

It shows. Through six matches, the junior leads the Buffs with 33 blocks, which averages to 1.6 per set. She's also second on the team with 55 kills (2.6 per set). Her hitting percentage is a solid .305 and she has been responsible for a team-best 73 points this season.

As good as she is at hitting the ball, she believes blocking is where she can really make a difference.

To the untrained eye, blocking is simple. Just jump and put your arms up. It's not that simple, though, and Lindow is becoming quite skilled at that aspect of the game.

Lindow and the Buffs have to scout the opponent to find out if the hitters are low hitters (such as Cornell was on Friday) or high hitters (like many of the Pac-12 teams). They also have to know if certain setters are prone to using a dump kill.

"There's a lot going on in the head, because I've got three hitters to worry about, let alone the setter if she dumps a lot," Lindow said. "It's a lot of reaction time and a lot of just knowing tendencies of the players. There's a lot that goes into it."

"It takes a lot of repetition. Blocking is difficult because there are so many angles. It's all about angles."

Like the rest of her teammates, Lindow is having to adjust to life without senior Kerra Schroeder, who is out for the year with a knee injury. Yet, within her own game, Lindow has never been more comfortable.

Making a difference

Lindow said the Buffs are enjoying their new coaching staff. Kristee Porter, J.T. Wenger and Ryal Jagd are all new assistants for fourth-year head coach Liz Kritza.

"This whole coaching staff has just a different view on things, a different confidence level," Lindow said. "We love going into practice. It's fun, it's exciting, we're learning things and we're benefiting from it."

Good start for soccer team

After Sunday's 2-2 tie at Northwestern, the Colorado women's soccer team is 3-0-2. It's the first time the Buffs have ever been unbeaten this far into a season. Their previous best start came in 2006 (3-0-1).

Although its early, the Buffs, who have outscored opponents 9-3, appear to be better on offense and defense than they were a year ago. The Buffs are scoring on 15.8 percent of their shots, a dramatic improvement from 8.1 percent a year ago. CU's opponents have scored on just 6.1 percent of its shots, way down from the 14.6 percent clip from a

year ago.

Of course, CU has not gotten to the Pac-12 portion of its schedule, which will bring much tougher opponents, but it's a positive start after a 4-13-2 mark last year.

Gearing up

The CU cross country team began its season with a time trial on Saturday at the Buffalo Ranch course.

The Buffs' men are ranked fifth nationally in the preseason USTFCCCA poll, while the women are 13th. Several individuals stood out for the Buffs, including Courtney Bouchet on the women's side (22 minutes, 4 seconds in the 5.8K race). Six men clocked in at 26:14, with Connor Winter leading that pack in the 8K race.

CU head coach Mark Wetmore told the school's website that he was pleased with how his team ran and that, "I don't see anyone who took the summer off."

Notable

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