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CAMOSUN COLLEGE

CHARGERS NEWS

Chargers women's volleyball on track for 2012-13



While another PacWest season has come to end, it is just the beginning for coaches like Camosun's Chris Dahl who are already in the throes of planning for the year ahead. In his second year as Head Coach of the Camosun College Chargers women's volleyball program, Coach Dahl asserts that the program is on the right track.

With the CCAA National Championships scarcely two weeks ended, Coach Dahl is headed to Vancouver for a week to work with Volleyball BC's High Performance programs. Today, he takes a moment to answer some questions reflecting on the 2011-12 season and to comment on next year's prospects.

The team experienced a few different line-ups in the second half of the season as athletes adjusted positions and roles within the program. How did your young squad handle the changes?

Early in the second half of the season we lost Elizabeth Davis to injury. At the time Elizabeth was the Pac West points and kills leader and subsequently we were tasked with replacing her league leading four points per set. Hilary Graham put forth some big performances in the second semester and entered the Chargers record books with a 25 kill performance. She followed that up with matches of 20 and 16 kills. It was great to see Hilary continue to rise as a leader both on and off the court for the Chargers.

The tandem of Morgan Marshall and Jamie Fleet stepped in to increase our stuff block totals in the second half of the season. Morgan is a rare natural blocker. Her move to the middle of the court at a late stage in the season was impressive. As a coach, I've been able to make these positional shifts with athletes before, but rarely from the outside to the middle. It typically works in the opposite direction, but Morgan is an incredible athlete.

Similar to Morgan's move to the middle and Hilary's switch to the leftside, we also took to training Olivia Redden on the rightside and Carly Hilliard on the left.

A lot of these adjustments in roles were discussed in the fall amongst our coaching staff. We had plans to move athletes like Carly and Olivia from the middle to the wing, but not necessarily for this season. Injuries may have forced our hand and sped up the process, but the athletes responded. Olivia brings a big block to the rightside and has shown the ability to terminate the ball from that position. Carly does very much the same from the other wing, but is also developing into an athlete that can take the first contact off of serve-serve.

The ability to make these moves tells us we have a lot of young talent within our program. Our task is to continue to train behaviors that will lead to success. We feel strongly that the Chargers are on the cusp of turning the proverbial "corner". However, it's more likely that there are a number of corners and looking back on the past two seasons, we've already navigated our way through many of them. Until we reach the top, we'll continue to refer to our map and tackle the next turn with great anticipation.

Although there will be a number of athletes returning to the Chargers next year, there are some athletes moving on. How does the program handle this transition from year to year?

In my second year within the Chargers program we actually got younger, but in doing so we feel strongly that we've moved the program forward. The return of six first year Chargers with a year of PacWest experience under their belts in combination with eight newcomers comprised of Team BC alumni and some incredible athletes from across BC continued to grow our program.

Inevitably, some of our athletes will move on from the program, but the fruits of their labour and their contributions will not be lost or forgotten. Our culture is changing and they have been a part of that shift.

You just can't replace people... it doesn't happen. There's no way to find another Taylor Fedosoff and the energy and joy she brings to the team; or a Suzanna Campbell and her steadying demeanor and balance upon delivery of the ball as a setter. You just can't do it. What you do instead is expose opportunity for others within the program to step forward with their own talents.

All of the athletes moving on from the Chargers after this season do so after contributing to the development of the program. For their contributions we are grateful. Their personalities, talents and skill sets will be missed greatly.

What lies ahead for the 2012-13 season?

As much as the Chargers improved from year one to year two, so too did our league, but that's a good thing. The PacWest continues to be one of the strongest conferences in the country. We continue to attract some of the top talent in Western Canada and as we do this, our student-athletes and their experiences in the league benefit greatly.

Next fall we're looking forward to the return of a strong core from this season's team. There will undoubtedly be an influx of new talent in the program. The commitment of 6'1" outside Erika Morris is just the start as we continue to recruit athletes that will both benefit from and contribute to our training environment. 6'2" middle Natalie Delange has been training with the Chargers this season and we're really looking forward to seeing her on the floor next year.

Our job is to fill the gym with great athletes; athletes that possess the drive and commitment to excellence on and off the court that not only leads to success, but accelerates the journey for all involved. We firmly believe that "As the tide rises, it lifts all boats." Camosun Athletics, in partnership with PISE, Lifemark and the CSEE together with the efforts of our coaching staff and athletes continue to create an environment that people want to be a part of. I can't help but think that when you're doing that, you're on the right track.

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