

Elena Oh: The Young Leader Behind Colorado's Defense

Having started playing lacrosse just five years ago, Elena Oh is now leading the Colorado Buffaloes women's lacrosse defense with confidence from the net.

The sophomore goalkeeper for Colorado, Elena Oh, from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, started playing lacrosse in 2021 after her freshman year of high school, when she saw her sister's high school team win a championship.

"Seeing how a team in lacrosse can work together like how my sister's high school team did was really inspiring, and I wanted to be a part of something like that," Oh said on her inspiration.

With the help of her father, who played lacrosse for MIT, Oh received one Division I offer from Colorado. However, the sport was not the only thing that drew her to Boulder.

"Boulder is like my favorite place on earth," Oh said. "I really love the environment and the people. It's just such a great place to be."

Goalkeeper is known to be one of the most mentally demanding positions in lacrosse as they are always put in high-pressure situations. Oh is constantly put in game-deciding moments, but she takes on that pressure with grace and enthusiasm.

"Just remembering my why," Oh said. "It's just to have fun, stay relaxed, and be in the moment. So, just trying to take that through every single shot and every single possession."

Now, just two seasons in with the Buffaloes, Oh has racked up several honors. So far this season, she has been awarded five consecutive Goalkeepers of the Week from the BIG 12. She was most recently added to the Tewaaration Watch list, an award given to the best college lacrosse players in the United States.

Oh matched career high saves with 12 at Stonybrook and has not allowed more than 10 goals in a single game this season. She ranks fifth in the NCAA in save percentage (.543) and fourth in goals-against average (6.59). However, her impact goes beyond her stat sheet.

"She is the backbone of our entire defense," senior defender Jess Peluso said. "She brings all of our energy."

Sitting in the net, Oh has a unique perspective compared to any other player on the field; she can see everything. Her role is not only to be the last line of defense from the goal but to help direct

the entire defense on where to move and where everything is coming from. Oh takes this job in stride.

“She’s always loud, she’s telling us what to do, and she’s always right to,” Peluso said.

Oh has always shown confidence in the net. Even as a freshman, when she got her opportunity to step into the game, she took it and ran with it. Displaying how important she would become for Colorado’s defense.

Now, as a sophomore, she has continued to step up for the team with her leadership. Although she plays with a more experienced defense, Oh is not afraid to let her voice be heard, one thing that head coach Ann Elliot Whidden values.

“For this team, understanding our systems and what we’re capable of and the different roles that she can lead and be vocal in,” Whidden said. “Her consistency, her mindset, and her work ethic are huge leadership things that carry over and fit with us on the defensive end.”

Oh fully embraces the leadership aspect of her position as a goalkeeper and embraces opportunities to mentor players younger than her.

“Being able to help out our freshman especially. Help them on their first away trips or away games, it's just stuff like that. It’s just a nice role to have,” Oh said. “When you teach, you learn twice.”

As Colorado looks towards the back half of their season, Oh will continue to be the backbone of the defense.

Sources:

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