

Dixon fights through injury to achieve pro volleyball dream



(Photo Courtesy of the University of Florida)

Anna Dixon didn't get a chance to finish her college volleyball career the way she wanted, but she persevered through injury to achieve her dream of playing professional volleyball.

It was setting up to be an epic finish to Anna Dixon's collegiate volleyball career.

Dixon, as a graduate transfer, made the move to the University of Florida for her final season and quickly made an impact on the Gators' roster.

Despite have to learn a new position due to an injury on the team, Dixon seemed to flourish. She helped the Gators out to a quick start and everything was going according to plan.

Then, the unthinkable happened.

Dixon suffered a season-ending elbow injury that put a premature end to her collegiate career. It was a devastating blow.

However, instead of sulking, Dixon worked that much harder to get back to the court and achieve her ultimate goal – playing professional volleyball.

All that hard work finally came to fruition back in July when Dixon, a 2019 Louisburg High School graduate, signed with the Atlanta Vibe, which is a part of the Pro Volleyball Federation.

“I am super excited to compete at the highest level, but also to be able to do that here in the US,” Dixon said. “It has been a dream of mine to be able to play professionally, in front of club girls who are in the same shoes that I was in many years ago. I am excited to give them the opportunity to have something to look forward to and work toward. Blessed for the opportunity and ready to get to work.”

Work is all Dixon has done to put herself in a position to achieve her lifelong dream.

After finishing her time with the University of Missouri volleyball program, Dixon transferred to Florida last year for her final season. She joined one of the top teams in the SEC and was looking forward to a postseason run.

An injury to a middle blocker left a void of the Gator team earlier that year, so Dixon volunteered to fill that role despite playing her entire college career on the outside.

Dixon, who stands at 6-foot-3, hadn't played middle blocker since middle school. She made the process look seamless as she helped the Gators to big early season wins as the vaulted up to No. 3 in the nation at one time.

After making that sacrifice, and finally getting comfortable with her new surroundings, injury struck in October. She quickly had to move from a vital piece on the court, to a cheerleader and assistant coach on the sideline.

“It was really hard seeing my season end so early, especially with the type of season the team was having,” Dixon said. “I was finally getting in the groove of playing in the middle and was figuring it out. I think I was playing the best I had ever played in my college career.

“I was surrounded by such amazing people. Whether I was playing middle, on the bench, playing all six rotations, or whether I was out with injury, it was such a positive, happy environment. I still found ways to contribute to the team even though I wasn’t on the court. I was very thankful for the support system that I had, and the recovery was tough, but I knew the hard work was going to pay off.”

The road to recovery wasn’t going to be an easy one.

For the next five months, Dixon would not only spend it rehabbing her injury, but doubts would start to creep in.

“There were ups and downs for sure,” Dixon said. “I was planning on going pro in January, then I was going through not being a collegiate athlete anymore, not being in school and going through an identity shape as well as rehab and training. A lot of people who are going through rehab always wonder how it is going to turn out and is it going to be the same. I just tried to focus on getting better each day. If it works out great, and if not we will figure out.

“There were certainly low moments for me, but I had an amazing support system that helped me through it and it made those days better.”



Better days were to come for Dixon and in July, she signed with the Vibe and her career as a professional has become to take shape.

Practice begins in December, while the season runs from January through May. The Vibe, along with the Pro Volleyball Federation, are currently in their second year of existence and Dixon is looking forward to making the move to Atlanta.

“I am excited to feel all the hard work I have put in with my recovery finally pay off,” she said. “I am excited to compete again. Sports gives you a feeling that I think nothing else

can give you when competing with your team. I am excited for that competition and to get after it. Also I'm ready to get down to Georgia. I have explored the city a couple times, so looking forward to getting to know the girls."

Dealing with a difficult injury changed Dixon's perspective on life, and more specifically, volleyball. It made her appreciate what is in front of her, including those that helped her through such a trying time.

"My biggest goal is not to take any opportunities on the court for granted," Dixon said. "I remember being out and watching practices every day, I would just think that when I get back out there I am just going to play with a free mind and never take anything for granted again. Now that I am training and practicing again, I am already feeling myself putting expectations on myself again. It is great to have goals, but as a player I am better when I am focused on the present moment and taking it one day at a time. I just want to continue that mindset throughout the season and do the best I can.

"I also have a wonderful support system around me and I couldn't have done it without them. I have grown tremendously in my faith throughout this past year. I have always known, that when I got hurt, His plans were going to be greater, whatever that may look like. I am just excited to see what those plans are for me in Atlanta."