

Do the Best You Can

At 6-5, Alix Klineman has enjoyed all the success that a High School and Collegiate volleyball player can through awards and success on the court. But Klineman is in a dogfight at the moment, competing with 25 other women for a shot at the 2012 USA Women's Olympic team.

She has just finished an outside hitter's tournament, a tournament she won beating three other outsides in a drill that lasted over an hour. She is exhausted, drained and yet, after this interview, changed practice shirts and went back onto the court to work on her passing.

This is your first real training block for an Olympics. How do you look at this experience coming up toward the final few months?

Well, I trained a little bit in 2008, I took time out my freshman year. It was a relatively short period. But, every time you get in the gym it's a chance to get better. I think any elite athlete's goal is to play in the Olympics someday. So there are two aspects of this; I'm trying to reach my goal and at the same time, anything I can do to get better. I know this is a win, win situation. I know I'm not walking out of here with nothing; I'm walking out of here with all my improvements.



Looking around this gym of elite and amazing athletes, more than half of them won't be asked to go to London. How do you as a player handle that?

I think he (Hugh McCutcheon, Women's USA National Team Coach) knows that everybody here wants it and everybody is willing to be here and put in the work. As long as we've got a lot of talent and a lot of people willing to work I think he wants to give them a chance. There is a lot of people here and the reality is twelve people are going to get to go.

So personally, how do you look at the situation?

I know that I'm relatively new to the gym and I think maybe the youngest one in here but I am confident in myself but at the same time I know my chances are slim but I'm going to give it my best shot and make it as hard for them to say know as I can make it. Like I said, even if I don't make it I know that I'm still going to get better and it's only going to make me more prepared the next time around.

What made you the kind of player you are, the one that can compete for an Olympic team berth?

It's hard to answer that myself, but I think for me I just work as hard as I can at everything. I think it's rare for a tall player like me to play all the way around and that's something I pride myself in. I focus just as much on passing as I do on hitting. I know I'm not known for my ball control but it's something that I want to be good at so I put in the work for it.

At Stanford you're freshman year, Coach Dunning had you in the back row and you took you're lumps but by you're senior year, you had improved greatly.

A lot of it is the mental side too. I think now I know that I'm somebody that's going to be targeted because not only am I not the ball control person the libero is but they also want to take me out of hitting as well. It's just another mental aspect that I have to prepare for and I think I've gotten better at that knowing that I've got to pass in order to hit and be on the court, so it's just something I have to do.

What does the future hold for you? Four years down the road, are you looking at Rio?

I'm for sure going to try and be in the gym next year regardless of what happens. I think also at some point I'm interested in playing on the beach. I don't know when that will happen and obviously there has to be a career in that which right now is a little bit up in the air. But, I'll probably be playing volleyball for a long time.

What's the best advice you've ever gotten to help you get to where you are today?

I've gotten so many great pieces of advice along the way. I know one thing my Dad always says to me because I come home sometimes and I'm so frustrated with how I played because, you know, it's an up and down thing and it's a long journey. He just says, "Do the best you can." And at the end of the day if you've put everything you have onto the court you can't regret anything. I know it's simple, but it helps.