

ASU's Ricedorff learns early about marriage challenges



Jeff Metcalfe, azcentral sports

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On hand injury suffered by QB husband Rathen before Mesa CC game Sept. 19



(Photo: Courtesy of Jacki Erickson)

Kizzy Ricedorff was in celebration mode, signing autographs after Arizona State volleyball's upset of then No. 6 Illinois last Saturday when she learned that her husband Rathen, playing quarterback a few miles away for Mesa Community College, had suffered a serious hand injury.

"I got to their game at the end of the third quarter, and he was still playing," Ricedorff said. "I didn't expect it to be that bad."

In a freak pre-game accident, Rathen was stretching with his hands on a fence track. Someone rolled the fence gate along the track and over his throwing hand, opening a deep cut on his little finger. Ricedorff opted to play against Pima Community College even though trainers had to continuously change the gauze covering the cut due to bleeding. He threw for 249 yards and three touchdowns, rushing for two more scores, in a 41-27 win that earned him a second straight Western State Football League offensive Player of the Week award.

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By 11 p.m., the Ricedorffs were at an emergency room where Rathen first received stitches then was told of a break in his hand that would require surgery, first scheduled for 8 a.m. but not performed until Sunday night. Kizzy was awake for 42 hours straight dealing with the first crisis for the newlyweds, married July 18.

"He's a good patient, tougher than I would ever be," she said. "I'm really proud of him. It's been hard to separate the private life from practice," leading into Thursday's Pac-12 opener against No. 14 Arizona. ASU is No. 7, tied for its highest ranking ever. "Once I'm at practice, I'm at practice and once I'm at home, I'm definitely at home taking care of him and being kind of a nurse. It's one of the things that comes with marriage."

Kizzy is a junior playing for the first time as a right-side hitter. She met Rathen when, after a two-year Mormon mission, he walked-on at ASU, redshirting in 2014 before transferring to Mesa CC, where he worked his way up to starter in his third game but now will be out 4-6 weeks, most of the remainder of the regular season.

ASU volleyball coach Jason Watson is used to having married athletes from his years at BYU and sees no drop-off in Ricedorff's commitment. "If anything I think there's some security there and some peace of mind (for her)," Watson said. "You worry about if she is still going to be a part of the team or removed from the team dynamics. Both of them being involved in athletics, I think they get it. There's a mutual respect for what they're trying to do."

Ricedorff said marriage "makes me a little more patient. Honestly I think it was the best thing for us. It's the most amazing support system. If anything it's less of a distraction that I can go home at night and just be with him and debrief, and he's always there for me no matter what."

- ASU volleyball remains at home for matches against Oregon State at 1 p.m. Sunday, No. 8 Stanford at 6 p.m. Oct. 2 and California at 1:30

p.m. Oct. 4.

Bowman swim era opens

The Bob Bowman era of ASU swimming begins with an intrasquad meet at 3 p.m. Friday at Mona Plummer Aquatics Center followed by a meet at Pacific on Oct. 3.

"I have a feel for how they train and in some areas I'm pleasantly surprised," said Bowman, 2016 U.S. men's Olympic coach who is returning to college coaching for the first time since he was at Michigan from 2005-08. "There are some people who can swim. But I don't really know how they race until we start going to some real meets."

Bowman cannot yet comment on recruiting commitments, but CollegeSwimming.com lists the first two commits under Bowman as Nils Lervik, a 6-8 freestyler from Norway, and Zach Poti of Orlando, Fla., who is qualified for the U.S. Olympic Trials in backstroke and butterfly.

"Our women's team is very small so we have need in every area," Bowman said. "On the men's team, we have a lot of good breaststrokes and good ones so we're kind of looking in other areas. The recruiting cycle now starts a year earlier than it did before. So by the time I got here, most of the major recruits had already decided what they were going to do. Rather than spending a lot of time trying to fight that or get them to change, we focused on the available athletes who were going to help us in the short term, looking world-wide. We've had great interest."

ASU has not won a swim dual meet vs. Arizona in either gender since 2002 when the men downed the Wildcats. Bowman already understands he doesn't receive a Kachina award until one of his wins a rivalry dual. "It seems like it (beating UA) is pretty important around here so I need to make that a priority and I am," he said. "We've got a long way to go, but I'm very excited about that."

Soccer roundup

- ASU soccer (4-3) opens Pac-12 play at home at 11 a.m. Sunday against Washington State (7-1). The Sun Devils are on a three-match losing streak and played their last match and a half without leading scorer Cali Farquharson due to injury.
- UA (6-1-1), ranked No. 25 in the NSCAA coaches poll, is home against No. 21 Washington (7-1-1) at 4 p.m. Friday. The Wildcats won 2-1 in overtime at UC Riverside last week on Gabi Stoian's fifth goal.
- The Grand Canyon women (3-5-1) open Western Athletic Conference play at Cal State Bakersfield on Saturday. The GCU men (3-2) are at Pacific on Friday and Cal State Fullerton on Sunday.

Reach Metcalfe at 602-444-8053 or jeff.metcalfe@arizonarepublic.com (<mailto:jeff.metcalfe@arizonarepublic.com>). Follow him at twitter.com/jeffmetcalfe.

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