

## GCC's Stuck continues to build Gauchos volleyball program

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By TORY WEEKS, Special to The Glendale Star |

As a seventh-grader, Lisa Stuck found herself out on the blacktop bumping a volleyball around. With each thump of the volleyball against her hands, Stuck fell in love with the game more, not knowing what a future in the game would hold for her, if anything.

"I was just enjoying the game and my friends," Stuck said. "That was my focus. I loved competing and if it wasn't in volleyball, I was competing in another sport."

Stuck started her career at Palo Verde Elementary and followed the game of volleyball into high school at Apollo. There, she competed in volleyball, basketball, track and field and softball, but volleyball was always her favorite. Stuck made such an impact on the school that she was later inducted into the Apollo High School Hall of Fame.

For most people, once high school ends, their playing days also end and become distant memories to tell their kids some day. Not Stuck; she packed up her volleyball shoes and headed to Tempe to play for the Sun Devils. The rise of competition from high school to college is tough to get accustomed to, but Stuck made it seem easier than it was.

"The jump from high school to college was challenging," Stuck said. "The game is so much faster and at that time, volleyball wasn't very strong in Arizona. I had to rely a lot on my athleticism and had to work really, really hard."

Stuck played for Arizona State University's volleyball team from '80-'83. While there, she was named to the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) All-American team in '82 and '83. She led the team in kills, aces and digs, and is still ranked No. 7 all-time in kills. All of this earned her another spot in a Hall of Fame. Stuck became the first women's volleyball player to be inducted into the ASU Athletics Hall of Fame in 1993. Her picture can be seen inside Wells Fargo Arena and in the Athletic's History display at Sun Devil Stadium.

"My ASU Induction was one of the most memorable and meaningful experiences of my life," Stuck said. "It meant so much to be recognized for my time at ASU in that way."

Even with as much as Stuck had accomplished from high school through college, she wasn't even close to being done.

Her playing days continued when she participated in multiple international volleyball events. She competed in the World University games in Edmonton, Canada, including a tour with the USA National Team, which took her overseas. Additionally, she was a part of a USAV (USA Volleyball) National Championship team and won a National Championship for a semi-professional softball team.

Finally, Stuck decided it was time to hang up her cleats and shoes, but was she gone from volleyball for good? Far from it, actually. After she had completed her playing career, Stuck decided to stay in the game as a coach.

"I had to learn how to separate the player from the coach and that took many years," Stuck said. "It was hard not to take my team's performance personally early in my coaching years. I've learned to become more of a teacher of the game, rather than an extension of the player I used to be."

Over the last 25 years, Stuck has coached at Mesa Community College, University of Nevada/Las Vegas, Northern Arizona University, and now Glendale Community College. And if that wasn't enough, she has coached the AZ Region USA Volleyball High Performance team for three years, as well as holding volleyball camps for young players.

"Playing for her (Stuck) was honestly my dream since the age of 12, when I was first introduced to Lisa at a small volleyball camp," said Sydney Bunker, sophomore. "Lisa is by far the best coach I have ever had and knew I would be honored to play for her."

Many people find themselves in a nine-to-five desk job for the rest of their lives and end up hating it. On the other hand, Stuck just loves what she does, and it resonates well with her team.

"I look up to Lisa in more areas in life than just volleyball," said Carli Beck, sophomore. "She is competitive and hard working about everything. She will do the best she can possibly do and nothing less."

Stuck has proved to her team that she's not an ordinary coach, making her team anything but ordinary. From holding sumo wrestling matches in the gym, to playing games and eating pizza at Peter Piper, to printing out and posting quotes for her players before a game, the team is constantly left guessing - something heard about some of the greatest coaches in any sport.

"Sometimes she surprises us and we do something fun for practice," said Haley Christiansen, sophomore. "One time we had a sumo wrestling match and other times we went to Peter Piper and did team bonding games in the gym. These activities are not only fun but they help bring us together as a team, which helps us on the court."

This past season, Stuck and the GCC Gauchos accomplished a feat that neither had before. For Stuck, it was a national championship as a coach, and for GCC, it was the school's first ever national championship in volleyball. The Gauchos are currently undefeated and ranked No. 2 in the nation.

"I've been fortunate to have had a lot of success in athletics on both sides: coach and player," Stuck said. "I owe a lot to the game. It paid for my college education, allowed me to travel the world and to have a fulfilling career."

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