

Del Norte senior commits to play for top JC program after graduation

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After an outstanding and very successful high school career playing multiple sports for the Del Norte Warriors, senior McKenna Curtis recently announced that she will join one of the top community college programs in the state after graduation.

Curtis is a two-time Big 5 MVP in volleyball and helped lead the Del Norte girls to back-to-back undefeated conference championships in 2022 and 2023.

In the fall she will play for Feather River College in Quincy, a perennial powerhouse program that made it all the way to the state championship game last year.

Curtis has long wanted to play college volleyball, which she admits is her favorite sport, and she received plenty of interest from multiple schools.

Last spring, she opted not to play high school softball — another sport she excels in — in order to focus on volleyball and prepare her better for the jump to the college game.

She spent much of the early part of 2023 playing for The Rise National 18U team out of Medford, one of the most respected travel team programs on the West Coast, and it was an experience she believes helped develop her game and prepare her for the next level.

She visited multiple California JCs and admits Feather River was an easy choice.

“My coaches Debbie and Petra (Lorenzi), they were talking to me about the school and how good they are,” Curtis said. “I thought JC was the best for my skill level, so I emailed the coach (at Feather River) last year and we kept in contact.

“And once I got to visit the school and meet the coaches and players, I knew it was the place for me. It definitely felt like this is where I belong.”

Curtis held a recent letter signing at Del Norte High School, with family and teammates in attendance.

And she says it is her teammates and the time they spent together that she will remember the most from her time at Del Norte.

“I’m going to remember the team,” she said. “We worked so hard over the last couple of years to really build a strong core team environment, and I think that’s the reason we were so successful.

“We were so tight knit with each other and I think that’s what separated us from the rest of the league.”

The Del Norte girls certainly enjoyed plenty of success over the past two seasons, including a perfect run through the Big 5 in 2023 where they did not drop a single set in conference play.

Curtis was named conference MVP as a junior and co-MVP with teammate Lili Nunez this past fall.

But she’s quick to credit her teammates for all of that success.

“We all had the same goal and we were all there for the same reason and I think that’s something very special to me,” Curtis said.

One of the things that Curtis liked about Feather River is the style of head coach Sarah Ritchie.

“It’s a similar coaching style to what I’m used to,” the Del Norte senior said. “They’re no nonsense and very competitive and I know that’s where I thrive as an athlete. I don’t mess around.”

She also immediately liked the town of Quincy when she visited the campus.

“The school is the first thing you see when you drive into Quincy,” she said. “It’s a small town, smaller than Crescent City.

“The school itself is really nice, not too big and it kind of reminds me of home. It’s kind of like a really cool small-town vibe.”

Feather River also is a school well-known for sending its volleyball players on to Division-1 programs with scholarships, something Curtis hopes she can achieve.

“That is my goal,” she said. “If I go through the program and work as hard as I can, I know that could be the outcome for me. That’s the level I’m aiming for.”

Curtis will likely play either as a defensive specialist or libero for her new team, roles she feels comfortable with.

But she added she’s grateful for the opportunity to play anywhere on the court for such a respected program.

“I think they’re looking at me as a defensive specialist or libero,” she said. “That’s what the coaches told me. But I think it will come down to who shows up (in the summer). I’m willing to go wherever they want me.”

Before she heads to Quincy, however, Curtis still has some unfinished business to take care of with the Warriors.

This spring she’s back on the softball field and eager to help lead her team to a second straight conference championship.

“It’s going pretty good,” she said. “This is my last year and I’m going to go and have fun and work as hard as I can.”

Curtis is considering majoring in kinesiology.