

# Transfer Omazic steps into unexpected role for MU volleyball after starter's injury

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By Liad Lerner

When last year's SEC All-Freshman team player went down with a season ending injury, Omazic was thrust into the lineup and hasn't looked back since.



Missouri's Tyanna Omazic hits the ball over the net and into two LSU defenders in Missouri's three-set win on Friday, Oct. 26, 2018 at Mizzou Arena.

Missouri volleyball middle blocker Tyanna Omazic didn't want to become a starter. At least not in the way it happened.

The 6-foot-2 Kansas City native spent the 2017 season playing for the Illinois Fighting Illini, making 14 starts and 26 appearances in her freshman season. But in May, she announced her transfer to Missouri prior to her sophomore year.

Omazic became a Tiger with tempered expectations on the amount of playing time she would receive, given she was competing against senior Alyssa Munlyn and redshirt sophomore Kayla Caffey – who between them have earned eight All-SEC team and SEC All-Freshman team awards – in her position.

“I knew what my competition was going to be, so coming in I was not expecting to be on the court,” Omazic said. “But I had that mentality that when I come into the gym and when I come into Mizzou, I’m gonna make sure to show them that I deserve a spot, not that I was given that spot.”

When Caffey suffered a season-ending injury to her leg during preseason training, Omazic was thrown into the lineup in the least ideal manner.

“We were all shocked and hurt,” Omazic said. “I was hurt too because I wanted that competition to make me work harder and now it felt like that spot was given to me.”

Coach Wayne Kreklow had been planning on rotating Caffey and Omazic depending on the opposition, but the injury forced him to put all his eggs in the transfer’s basket.

Omazic’s season got off to a slow start, but she had a statement game against Miami (Fla.) on Sept. 1, posting 13 kills, hitting .500 and tallying four total blocks. She has since continued growing into her role and now has the fourth-most kills on the team (185) and the second-most blocks (94).

“Ty has done a nice job of clicking with [setter] Andrea [Fuentes] the last couple of weeks and her numbers have gone up,” Kreklow said. “It’s helped our team a lot, because it spreads – those couple of rotations when she’s up there with the setter – and creates a lot of openings and gaps for everybody else.”

Omazic has showcased her powerful slide attack since joining the starting rotation, where the middle blocker runs behind the setter and jumps off one foot to hit the ball. Middle blockers are typically set directly in front of the setter rather than behind her.

“Ever since club volleyball in high school I’ve just always been a slide attacker,” Omazic said. “[Coaches] definitely recruited me from high school as being well rounded off of one foot and being able to go behind the setter. It’s just something that I’ve been known for, a slide attacker.”

But like many of her teammates on this inexperienced Missouri team, Omazic said she is still learning and getting better every week.

“There’s always room for improvement for my slide; there’s always room for improvement for my blocking and just being a well-rounded player,” Omazic said. “Middle is one of the hardest positions on the court. You have a lot of things and responsibilities to do, so

blocking would be where I want to improve more on.”

No. 24 Missouri (20-5, 10-3 SEC) will only lose one starter next year to graduation, Munlyn, and her position will likely be filled by Caffey’s return, so Omazic is looking forward to what the team can accomplish next year, once the players have had a whole season together under their belts.

“Obviously Kayla’s injury has really put a toll on us,” Omazic said. “But I feel like everybody stepped up. I think that with her coming back next year, she’s gonna be 10 times greater with me and her in the middle.”

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