

# Kritza likes CU players' work ethic

## Buff spikers begin season at Florida Invite on Friday

**By Ryan Thorburn** Camera Sports Writer  
Boulder Daily Camera

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Liz Kritza's peers don't exactly have great expectations for the Colorado volleyball program this season.

The Buffs were picked to finish 10th in the Big 12 coaches preseason poll, ahead of only Texas Tech. CU wasn't represented on the preseason all-Big 12 team, either.

Inside the Coors Events Center, however, a much different vibe exists as Kritza prepares the team for her CU debut this Friday against Valparaiso at the Florida Invitational in Gainesville.

"The expectations that I have for this program are so high, and what's really neat going into the first season is that passion to compete at the highest level has spread through my staff and the team," said Kritza, who was hired to replace longtime CU head coach Pi'i Aiu on Feb. 10. "We understand it's going to be a tough road, but that will actually make it more exciting and satisfying when we do do it."

Aiu compiled a 199-154 record during his 12 seasons leading the program. After a 6-0 start and later an upset victory over undefeated Nebraska, the Buffs inexplicably lost seven of their final eight matches last season, prompting athletic director Mike Bohn to make a change.

Kritza, a Colorado Springs native, had a 76-39 record at Tulane and guided her alma mater to its first conference championship and NCAA Tournament berth. She was named the American Volleyball Coaches Association's coach of the year in the Midwest Region twice during her four seasons at Tulane.

Even with the recent addition two freshman walk-ons, CU's 2009 roster only includes 13 players. Kaitlyn Burkett is the lone senior, and talented junior middle blocker Schylur Edelman will miss the first couple weeks of the season with a high ankle sprain.

"There are no shortcuts. They have to play our system right and our strength will be having everyone play their particular role in it. And that's what lays the foundation," Kritza said. "The positive part of it is there are more paths to the court for all these young players. There's just not a huge line to stand behind."

It will take some time on the recruiting trail for Kritza to upgrade the overall talent in the program. But she enters her first season in Boulder with no complaints about her current players' work ethic and will accept no excuses when it comes to competing in the brutal Big 12.

"They're training at a championship level," Kritza said. "We're going to continue to improve with each training cycle every year, but I think we've had a good start and the players feel a little more ready than perhaps they did in the past. ...

"I have to be patient as a coach, our staff has to be patient. I expect a lot of learning to go on, but the only way these players are going to do that is to play."

## Booters head to Denver

After Saturday's 1-0 victory in the season-opener over No. 11 Oklahoma State, CU head coach Bill Hempen didn't allow freshman Amy Barczuk to enjoy the win very long.

"I told her this is great you get this time between now and next Friday because the rest of the season it's Friday-Sunday," Hempen said. "Take this game and then think about having to play another one 36 hours later with the same intensity. That's what lies ahead for you."

The Buffs return to action on Friday against No. 13 Illinois at 4 p.m. and then face St. Mary's on Sunday at 11 a.m. Both games will be played at the University of Denver.

CU's impressive non-conference schedule also includes games against DU, Oregon, Utah, Florida, Santa Clara and No. 2 Stanford.

"It's only good for us to be playing teams like Stanford and whoever else we're playing," senior Nikki Marshall said. "Those are big teams that are only going to make us better. The better the competition you play, the better you're going to be. I think it's really important that we play teams like that, and we're looking forward to those games."

CU senior goalkeeper Kara Linder was named the Big 12's defensive player of the week for shutting out the Cowgirls. The Buffs are currently ranked 18th in the NSCAA poll.

#### **Notable**

The cross country team has started practicing for the 2009 season, which begins with the CU Alumni/Open Time Trial on Sept. 5. Head coach Mark Wetmore, assistant Heather Burroughs and All-American Jenny Barringer returned to Boulder from the IAAF World Championships in Berlin last week. Barringer set a new American record in the 3,000-meter steeplechase and finished fifth overall. ...

The men's golf team opens the fall season with the State of Colorado Cup on Sunday on the Ballyneal Golf and Hunt Club near Holyoke.

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