



Kritza's Buffs have no patience for rebuilding

CU volleyball players want to turn around program soon

By Ryan Thorburn
Sunday, August 9, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — Liz Kritza has proven herself capable of rebuilding a program she loves under extremely difficult circumstances.

Four years ago she became the head coach at Tulane, her alma mater, and then Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans.

The Green Wave finished 5-16 in 2005, 15-11 in 2006, 28-6 in 2007 and won its first conference championship last season.

So how much rebuilding is there to do at Colorado?

"We're way ahead because there's not a hurricane coming," Kritza said Saturday during media day at the Dal Ward Center.

Like Dan Hawkins three years ago and Jeff Bzdelik two years ago, Kritza didn't inherit a lot of depth at CU. The 2009 roster only includes 11 players right now, although the first-year coach said adding a body or two before fall classes begins is still a possibility.

That doesn't mean some of the talent in place is going to patiently wait for more help to arrive on campus.

"We're not waiting for year three. We're doing this now," insists junior middle blocker Schylur Edelman. "We're ready to play and turn this program into a top 10 program."

Kritza, a Colorado Springs native, was pleased to hear one of her leaders express the confidence that appeared to be lacking down the stretch last season. The Buffs inexplicably followed up their upset victory over then No. 2 and undefeated Nebraska with seven losses in their final eight games.

The 13-16 finish cost Pi'i Aui his job, despite compiling a 199-154 record during his 12 seasons on the bench.

"That's what we're working on now is taking the full potential that we have in our team and really reaching that," Edelman said. "The new coaches are pushing us harder than we've ever been pushed before and we're starting to realize, 'Hey, we can do this.' ...

"It has definitely been an eye opener."

After being hired by athletic director Mike Bohn on Feb. 10, Kritza quickly established a more grueling offseason conditioning program and put the Buffs through a difficult spring season.

"I think it's great to have such high expectations of our team," sophomore Rosie Steinhaus said. "You go into practice knowing it's going to be draining, both mentally and physically, but in the end it's all going to be worth it."

Kritza said recruiting Colorado will be a priority if CU is to climb the ladder in the Big 12. Senior Kaitlyn Burkett went to the same high school (St. Mary's) as her new coach but is one of only three in-state players on the roster.

"We have a wonderful chance to build the foundation of a program that will challenge for a national championship," Kritza said. "It has to start somewhere."



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