

CU Buffs volleyball team suffers letdown vs. Kansas State Wildcats

By **Joshua Linden**stein, Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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Colorado volleyball coach Liz Kritza knows that sometimes the taste of victory makes losing hurt all that much more.

Such was the case for her squad on Wednesday night at the Coors Events Center.

The Kansas State Wildcats pulled off a third-set rally that turned the match in their favor for good in a 25-19, 19-25 25-21, 25-17 triumph over the Buffs.

Riding high after their first Big 12 Conference win in eight tries last week, the Buffs walked away actually feeling like they'd let a victory slip away. After winning the second set and jumping out to a 6-0 lead in the third, the Buffs watched as their lead slowly eroded until the Wildcats took a 2-1 advantage.

The Buffs (6-13, 1-9 Big 12) never led in the fourth as KSU (8-11, 2-7) eventually pulled away.

"I think this is a game that we definitely could have won, and we didn't execute as well as we should have in some areas," said CU sophomore Rosie Steinhaus, who led the Buffs with 15 kills. "That's something we need to capitalize on in the future, especially when we have leads like that."

Kritza made it clear that no one in the Buffs' locker room is settling for moral victories after finishing the first half of conference play 1-9. But the fact her players are expecting success now is a step in the right direction from just a few weeks ago, Kritza said.

"It's coming for us," Kritza said. "I see glimpses of it, just not enough to piece us through entire sets and, unfortunately, entire matches."

CU struggled offensively for most of the night as the Wildcats kept the Buffs off-balance with their serving.

Colorado hit just .154 for the match and never higher than .235 in a set. The Buffs also lost the first set, something that has spelled doom for them this season as they've lost 12 of 13 such matches.

But there were some bright spots against a Wildcat squad that was ranked in the top-25 to start the season before suffering its own struggles in conference play.

Steinhaus powered a convincing second-set win with five kills in the frame. The Buffs held KSU to just .121 hitting in the second and never trailed after taking a 6-5 lead early.

"It gives us a sense of confidence each time we do better, each game, each match," freshman Kerra Schroeder said.

In the end, though, the Wildcats' big hitters proved too much for the Buffs.

JuliAnne Chisholm had six kills in the third and finished tied for the game high with teammate Kelsey Chipman at 16.

"We still obviously have some inconsistencies, and until we remove those then we're going to struggle through," Kritza said.

Still, Kritza sees things starting to click: "It's just a matter of time before we get to piece together really high-level plays in sequence, and when we do that, we're going to like the results."

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