

Marshall set for home finale

Buff booters host Texas Tech on Friday

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The emotions of Colorado's soccer coach and the program's star player are a bit different this week compared to the preseason.

When Bill Hempen addressed the media at a press conference in August he nearly broke down in tears when the subject of Nikki Marshall's legacy came up.

As preparations began for Friday's regular-season finale against Texas Tech -- which will be the final appearance for Marshall and the rest of the senior class at Prentup Field -- the coach was all business.

The Buffs (8-9 overall and 5-4 in the Big 12) really need a victory to enter the conference tournament with some momentum.

"If we were 16-2 right now it would be a lot worse for me, but we have to focus," Hempen said after a crisp practice Tuesday morning. "It's almost good for me to put the emotions aside so that we can focus on what we have to take care of, which is hopefully coming out with a win."

Marshall, the program's all-time leading scorer and one of the great players in Big 12 history, is embracing the bittersweet countdown to the end of her brilliant CU career. The senior from Mead is usually calm, cool and collecting goals.

"Honestly, I think those emotions are what is going to prepare me for the game," Marshall said. "I know that Friday is the last game I could ever possibly play here. That in itself is motivation to leave my heart on the field."

Marshall put on a show in her previous game at Prentup Field, scoring four goals in a 5-1 victory over Oklahoma. But in the five-game road swing that followed, the Buffs managed a total of only two goals and went 1-4 to drop from the top of the conference standings to third.

"We've been pretty good defensively, but at the end of the day it doesn't show with our record," said senior goalkeeper Kara Linder. "Not being able to score goals puts a lot of strain on us defensively. We're in a slump right now, but I'm hoping there's light at the end of the tunnel."

The Buffs have a history of playing well in the Big 12 Tournament and believe they can beat any of their conference rivals on the neutral field in San Antonio.

"None of the games that we lost was one team by far better than the other," Marshall said. "I think the Big 12 is competitive this year and that's why it's crazy with wins and losses going on for every team. I think we have as good a chance as anyone to win the tournament."

Friday's "Senior Day" match against the Red Raiders will kick off at approximately 3:08 p.m. and will be televised live on Fox Sports Rocky Mountain.

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Colorado's cross-country teams will attempt to reestablish their dominance at the Big 12 Championship this Saturday in Columbia, Mo. The women's race will start at 9 a.m. with the men's scheduled to begin at 10 a.m.

The women, led by NCAA favorite Jenny Barringer, are currently ranked No. 3 nationally behind Washington and Villanova. The Buffs are looking for their 12th Big 12 title in their last 14 years.

Barringer won the NCAA Pre-National Invitational two weeks ago with a time of 19:50.9, finishing a full 30 seconds ahead of her nearest competitor, and CU edged Florida State and Oregon for the team title.

The men are ranked No.4 behind Stanford, Oregon and Big 12 rival Oklahoma State after finishing second at the NCAA Pre-National behind Stanford. The Buffs have won 12 Big 12 titles in Mark Wetmore's previous 14 years as head coach.

Volleyball homecoming

After CU's football team faces Missouri in the Homecoming game at Folsom Field (an 11:30 a.m. kickoff), Liz Kritza's volleyball team will host Iowa State at the Coors Events Center (4 p.m. start).

The Buffs (6-14 overall, 1-10 Big 12) play at Oklahoma tonight.

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