

Hempen`s Buffs muster 2-1 victory against Utes

CU nabs win before hitting road against ranked teams

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Bill Hempen didn't see Colorado's game-winning goal.

The Buffs soccer coach -- like many CU football fans later in the evening -- had seen enough of his lethargic team during its match against Utah on Friday at Prentup Field.

"Honestly, my head was down. I was like, 'Please score because I don't want to watch anymore,'" Hempen said after CU's 2-1 victory over the Utes. "My head was down and I was just waiting for the reaction. When I heard it I figured we scored."

Kate Russell didn't see the goal, either. And she helped set it up with a brilliant free kick that sailed perfectly to the far post, where Mary White headed it in front of the goal to Kym Lowry for the decisive goal in the 88th minute.

"Phenomenal," Russell said of the victory, which improved the Buffs' record to 4-2. "It's funny because the sun was out and in my face and I didn't see it. That late in the game, it's something we were just very fortunate to get."

Kelly Ross scored her first goal of the season in the eighth minute to give CU an early 1-0 cushion. But the Utes (5-3) actually seemed to be the team with the momentum after the opening tally.

"After that first goal, I felt like we kind of slowed down and they kind of picked it up. It was definitely a battle after that," Russell said. "They had some chances they couldn't capitalize on, then they did cash one in and it was a fight until the very end."

Utah evened the match on a goal by Erin Dalley in the 55th minute. Lauren Hair set her up with a perfect cross that CU goalkeeper Kara Linder, who made four key saves, could do nothing about.

"They're not that excited with how they played today," Hempen said of his players. "You can't overlook that fact. I know they're trying as hard as they can. Sometimes it looks like they're going really slow, but I know they're trying."

The Buffs -- who have already played nationally ranked Oklahoma State and Illinois -- will embark on their first true road game of the season against No. 14 Florida on Sunday.

"You get up and down for various games and Utah, for us, has been a regional game where we've kind of had their number," Hempen said. CU has won six consecutive games against the Utes and lead the all-time series 6-1. "I don't think they were looking past this game, but I expect them to be a lot more excited for Florida."

The good news is the Buffs, who opened the season with a victory over the Cowgirls, are 1-0 in Big 12 play and will be battle-tested once the conference season resumes. After playing Florida, Hempen's team will face No. 2 Stanford in Palo Alto.

"I've actually enjoyed it," Lowry, who also scored her first goal of the season, said of the difficult early slate. "The competition is great, and I think it's good for us to play these teams and prepare for conference games."

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