

No. 2 Longhorns sweep away Buffs

Colorado spikers fall to third straight top-10 opponent

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
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Jab. Uppercut. Knockout.

After opening the Big 12 season against three heavyweights ranked in the top 10, the Colorado volleyball team felt a little punch drunk as it stumbled off the court Wednesday night.

The Buffs had their moments in the first two sets but were still swept away by No. 2 Texas in a 25-14, 25-18, 25-8 loss at the Coors Events Center.

Liz Kritza's young team was coming off back-to-back three-set defeats against No. 10 Iowa State and No. 8 Nebraska.

The good news: No. 1 Penn State isn't on the schedule.

"I'm not going to lie, it's not easy," Kritza said of preparing for a three-headed monster to begin her first season in the Big 12. "It's not easy knowing you're out-matched and you go into these matches knowing you're going against players that are much bigger and have their sights set on winning a national championship."

Rosie Steinhaus had six kills in the first set for the Buffs, but it wasn't enough to stop Texas from a 15-2 run to end the frame. CU rallied to tie the second set 17-17, only to see the Longhorns shift gears and close it out with an 8-1 run.

"The way we match up you simply can't allow them to go on those runs. That's what we talked about in between the two sets and we just couldn't stop that one big run in the middle of the set," Kritza said. "The third set they came out and showed why they're the No. 2 team and how much we have to improve."

The Longhorns (8-0 overall, 3-0 conference) scored the first seven points of the final set and finished the match off as if they had a plane to catch.

"I think because they are a lot taller we were trying to run a quick offense and kind of get their block off a little bit. I think we were doing that in the first and second games," said Kaitlyn Burkett, CU's only senior, who had 28 of her team's 29 assists. "Then it was kind of everyone getting flustered out there. We went away from our game plan definitely in the third set."

Texas, which had defeated seven consecutive ranked opponents before facing CU, deserves credit for not looking ahead to its match on Saturday in Lincoln. Meanwhile, the Huskers suffered their first conference loss of the season on Wednesday at Texas A&M.

CU's next opponent, Oklahoma, also dropped to 2-1 in Big 12 play with a five-set loss to Kansas.

"We come out each night fighting and no matter who you're playing you should play the same," Steinhaus said. "That's what we're really working for. We need to work on that and just stay consistent in learning what we can from this game and moving forward."

Statistically, the Buffs (5-7, 0-3) were led by sophomore Becah Fogle's 14 kills. Steinhaus, also a sophomore, finished with seven kills and freshman Kerra Schroeder added five.

"They've kind of carried the offense and none of those players really have any significant experience in college, so they're learning on the fly," Kritza said. "This is baptism by fire for a lot of our players, and I'm pleased with the way they are responding."

On the other side of the net, the Longhorns counter with three All-American returners in Ashley Engle (setter), Destinee Hooker (outside hitter) and Juliann Faucette (outside hitter).

Texas finished with just six hitting errors compared to 25 for CU and had 13 team blocks compared to just one for the under-sized home team.

"We really wanted to push Texas to a level that not a lot of people have been able to. They've only dropped four sets all season thus far, and we wanted to be a team that actually pushed them a little farther," Kritza said. "We're disappointed and it permeates through the coaching staff and the players alike. ...

"The players, if anything, have a bad taste in their mouth after this match and they're going to do something about it."

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Texas hooks Buffs for another loss

CU loses three straight

By Richard Londer on September 24, 2009

They tried, but they just couldn't pull through.

The Colorado Buffaloes volleyball team dropped their third consecutive match Wednesday, losing in three sets against the No. 2 Texas Longhorns, 25-14, 25-18, 25-8. The Buffs were coming off back-to-back losses to Big 12 Conference rivals No. 10 Iowa State and No. 8 Nebraska.

Colorado came out solid in the first set hanging with Texas early. Freshman Kerra Schroeder had a huge block to keep the set close, pulling CU to 8-7. Texas ran away with the set after CU committed back-to-back service errors, the last one by Schroeder to give Texas a 17-11 lead.

CU struggled defensively throughout the remainder of the set as sophomore Becah Fogle had two return errors, allowing the lead to open up 20-11. CU was able to manage three more points, two coming from kills by sophomore Rosie Steinhaus.

Colorado was able to gain some momentum to begin the second set as they traded the first eight points. Kills from Schroeder and Fogle helped keep CU close and another Fogle kill kept CU within one at 9-8.

Texas standouts Ashley Engle and Destinee Hooker did everything in their power to prevent the Buffs from closing in as they combined for 10 kills in the set. Later, a missed kill by Texas and a Fogle kill for the Buffs tied it at 17. However, CU dropped the next six points thanks to three kills by Texas junior Juliann Faucette. They eventually dropped the set 25-18.

Texas roared through the third set 25-8. Hooker recorded seven of her 10 kills in the set within the first 10 Texas points, opening up a 10-3 Longhorns lead. What little offense the Buffs generated in the set came from three kills by Fogle. Complicating matters, Texas had 13 blocks in the set, which didn't allow the Buffs to get anything going.

Despite dropping three straight, the inexperienced Buffs' team seemed optimistic of the road ahead. Steinhaus commented on the upcoming match against conference opponent Oklahoma at 7 p.m. on Saturday in the Coors Events Center.

"We are going to come out fighting every game," Steinhaus said. "We are looking forward to Saturday, so it should be a great match."



Freshman outside hitter Kerra Schroeder hits the ball in a 3-0 loss to Texas Wednesday. (CU Independent/Illana Finer)

Head coach Liz Kritza had positive comments on her team's ability to hang with Texas for segments of the game.

"We were able to stay with them for parts of both sets," Kritza said. "But we could not stave off the mid-set run that put them out of our reach."

This young team's ability to rebound from the losing streak will determine how they fare in Big 12 play throughout the rest of the season.

"There is nothing we can do about it now," senior Kaitlyn Burkett said. "We just have to learn and build off of it. We are definitely looking to Oklahoma and showing them we are not just some team who will roll over for them."

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