

Linder lifts Buffs past Cornhuskers

CU improves to 2-0 in Big 12 behind goalie

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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It's awesome."

One of Linder's best friends is Nebraska defender Carly Peetz, who took one of the Huskers' 21 shots. CU only took 13 shots, but seven of them were on goal, including Kassidy Fitzpatrick's game-winner after a mad scramble in front of the net in the 68th minute.

"Kara really earned her stripes out in California," Fitzpatrick said. "She played great for us and she continues to make big saves for us."

The Buffs were coming off losses at No. 14 Florida (3-1), No. 3 Stanford (4-0) and No. 12 Santa Clara (1-0). Hempen, the man behind the maddening non-conference schedule, knew his 5-5 team was limping into this key homestand.

"I'll be honest, our confidence was shaken. I could tell in training this week," said Hempen, whose team is without standout midfielder Kate Russell, who suffered a serious ankle sprain in Palo Alto. "I told the kids it was a great exercise in perseverance. They kept at it and kept at it."

Freshman midfielder Quinn Krier, making her first start at CU, sent a nice ball into the box for Nikki Marshall -- always a good idea -- who went airborne to battle Nebraska keeper Tara Macdonald for possession.

After Marshall and Macdonald collided, forward Amanda Foulk passed the ball to Fitzpatrick, who calmly and quickly buried her goal into an open net.

"Today was a good day for us to refresh our game and kind of start with a clean slate and just start over," Fitzpatrick said. "Not a lot of people are fortunate enough to fly out there and play the No. 3 team in the country. We look at it as a privilege to go out and play against those kind of players. We can only learn from it and apply it to Big 12 play."

Nebraska (5-5-2, 0-1) was averaging a Big 12-best 4.5 goals entering the match. Texas Tech was second in the conference at 2.67 goals per game.

Kara Linder was a soccer legend growing up in Nebraska.

She led Lincoln East to two Class A state championships and was a member of a club team that won five consecutive state titles.

She was All-City (Lincoln), All-Heartland Conference and All-Nebraska throughout her prep career.

Yet the Cornhuskers did not offer Linder a scholarship. Bill Hempen wisely crossed the border and recruited the goalkeeping prospect.

And on Friday afternoon Colorado improved to 2-0 in Big 12 play with a 1-0 shutout victory over Nebraska at Prentup Field.

"It means a lot," Linder said after making five saves, including four in the second half, to help the Buffs end a three-game losing streak. "It's a game I look forward to every single year.

Morgan Marlborough, a 6-0 freshman forward, leads the conference with 13 goals and four assists (30 points). Second on the scoring list entering Friday's action was Oklahoma's Whitney Palmer with 16 points (seven goals, two assists).

Amy Barczuk, CU's 5-11 freshman midfielder, marked Marlborough on set pieces. Ally Goodman and Kelly Menachof also played key roles defensively to pick up the slack with Russell out of the lineup.

"Our defense really got a lot of work against Santa Clara and Stanford," Linder said. "We really had to come together in the back. I think we definitely felt more organized this game and it helped."

The Buffs are 1-4 against ranked teams this season, but the victory was a 1-0 shutout of Oklahoma State in the opener on Aug. 22.

Right now Lincoln's finest has the Buffs alone at the top of the conference standings.

"A dream of mine was to grow up and play in the Big 12," Linder said. "So after seeing Boulder and what Colorado had to offer, it was an easy decision."

CU hosts Iowa State at 1 p.m. Sunday at Prentup Field.

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Bufs end victory drought

Colorado snaps three-game skid with win over Nebraska

By Esteban L. Hernandez on September 26, 2009

The fresh autumn breeze that gently swept through Prentup Field brought a reminder of fall's arrival. Along with the season's change returned the sweet scent of victory for the Colorado Buffaloes womens' soccer team.

The Buffs (5-5, 2-0 Big 12 Conference) ended their victory drought at three games by beating archrival Nebraska (5-2-2, 0-1) 1-0 on Friday.

"I'll be honest, our confidence was shaken; I could tell in training," said CU head coach Bill Hempen. "Yesterday's training wasn't very good. I would have not preferred this kind of game trying to gain confidence. But I told the kids that it was a great exercise in perseverance."

The exercise may have paid off, especially in the second half.

What began as a scuffle in the 68th minute between Nikki Marshall and Nebraska goalkeeper Tara Macdonald ended with Kassidy Fitzpatrick scoring her third goal of the season. The goal was assisted by junior forward Amanda Foulke.

Fitzpatrick considered the potential of the winning goal.

"We can go out onto Sunday and our next games knowing that anything is possible in this conference," Fitzpatrick said.

Shut out in the last two games, the goal was CU's first since its Sept. 13 loss to Florida.

The first half saw little action from Colorado as the Buffs defense focused on slowing down Nebraska, who was more active during the first half.

Freshman defender Amy Barczuk said there was some miscommunication during the first half between the defenders and midfielders regarding marking players that caused minor issues. But they were able to handle the Cornhuskers in the second half.

"We were staying more composed and organized," Barczuk said, referring to the second half.



Sophomore midfielder Kelly Butler crosses past 'Huskers defense. The Buffs won 1-0 over visiting Nebraska Friday. (CU Independent/Lee Pruitt)

With the help of Barczuk, the Buffs were able to stop Nebraska's leading scorer, Morgan Marlborough, who had scored in six consecutive games.

Hempen said Barczuk's height was a factor in matchups. Marlborough's six-foot frame was well-matched against Barczuk's 5-foot-10 height.

"We tried to put Amy on [Marlborough] to kind of negate any free kick situations that might cause some issues," Hempen said.

A clash between Marshall and Macdonald kept the second-half action from ceasing, a scene that would become commonplace as Macdonald continuously challenged Marshall by stepping outside the penalty box.

Sophomore midfielder Kelly Butler was the author of one of four Colorado shots on goals within the first 10 minutes of the second half.

After her shot was blocked, Butler set herself up for an additional effort with a fierce header from the resulting corner kick. However, Macdonald made a diving save to keep the game scoreless.

With only conference games left in the schedule, this game marks the true beginning of Big 12 play, a fact Barczuk believes only adds value to the victory.

"It's definitely huge to us, considering this is when Big 12 play really starts for us," Barczuk said. "Every game is a big game in the Big 12, obviously. We want to achieve."

For Fitzpatrick, this game is proof of the opportunities sports provides for success.

"You know, as long as we are in for the fight every game and we find a way — even if it's a scramble like that in the box — I think it does not matter," Fitzpatrick said. "As long as we fight, we're here for each other and we are playing for each other, we can only do big things in the Big 12."

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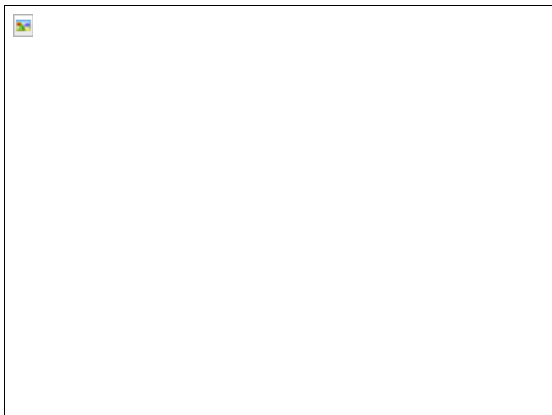
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Buffs shut down high-scoring Huskers

September 26, 2009 | 12:18 am No comments

By George Tanner



BOULDER — After a couple of weeks of getting pushed around by the big dogs, it was nice to push back. The University of Colorado soccer team ended a losing streak against three national powerhouses with a 1-0 victory over Big 12 rival Nebraska on Friday at Prentup Field. Kassidy Fitzpatrick scored her third goal of the season, in the 68th minute after a scramble in front of the Cornhuskers' goal.

Freshman Quinn Krier, starting her first game for injured Kate Russell, played a long ball in to Nikki Marshall inside Nebraska's penalty area. Marshall headed the ball past goalkeeper Tara Macdonald, and the ball dropped for CU's Amanda Foulk.

Defender Carly Peetz dumped Foulk to the turf, but the ball squirted free and found the left boot of Fitzpatrick, who approached the melee from the right side. She fired the ball into the netting with authority.

"Quinn Krier had a great ball in to our forward, Nikki, at the time, and Amanda also is in a great position," Fitzpatrick said. "They're holding off the defenders, and luckily it bounced out. It was a good opportunity to spank it in there with the left. Even if it was a scramble, I'm really proud of how we positioned ourselves. It was a good mixup right there.

"You need to make those defenders think, 'Oh, my gosh, where's the ball?'" They'll lose sight of it, and that's where you get that opportunity."

The victory lifts the Buffs to 2-0 in conference and 5-5 overall, following a stretch of uneven results against powerhouse teams. In road losses against Florida, Stanford and Santa Clara in the past 13 days, CU allowed eight goals and scored only one.

Buffaloes coach Bill Hempen said he didn't think returning home to face Nebraska would be the cure.

"If I had to pick a game to try to get out of a slump, this wouldn't have been the one — because they were going to come at us maybe not with the same level of player, but certainly with the same level of intensity," he said. "They knocked us around. And from my kids' standpoint, we hung in there and started to push back a little bit, for the first time all year. And if you do that then you get the respect of your opponent."

And perhaps the victory.

The Buffs turned the game around at halftime. Nebraska began the match with intensity, but CU turned the tide after 45 minutes of play and after some coaching moves by Hempen.

First, he moved up Kelly Butler to play forward with Marshall, and the pair of strikers forced the Huskers to behave on defense.

“When you had one up there, it was up to her. With two, I could get the second one in behind,” Hempen said. “It made them a little more honest in the back because they were getting forward a little bit, a little bit more than we would’ve liked.”

Second, Hempen challenged his players to be more decisive with the ball and to do so more quickly.

In the first half, the Huskers feasted on turnovers that they created with pressure from all across the pitch, forwards, midfielders, defenders. Fitzpatrick said that Hempen told his squad to make shorter passes and make them faster.

“Every time you take a touch you have to realize they’re getting closer to you,” Fitzpatrick said. “We needed to play quicker. Just listening to our coaches helped, because they told us they’re going to be tackling out there really hard. He was mostly concerned that we play shorter balls quicker. Don’t always look for the long ball. Just find the quickest pass possible because they’re right there all the time. You need to play quick. Find the open player. Don’t find a player who’s going to be pressured so close.”

And it worked. CU controlled play in the second half, setting up the goal with some enterprise from the offense and relieving the pressure in its own end. The frustrated Nebraska attack withered, and the challenges dwindled.

The Cornhuskers lost only their second game of the season, and it came in their Big 12 opener. Before Friday, Nebraska had outscored its opponents 36-9. CU goalkeeper Kara Linder made five saves as the Buffs held the Huskers scoreless for the first time this year.

It was Linder’s third shutout of the year and fifth victory.

SALTING AWAY THE VICTORY: The final minute was a barometer of how far the game had turned. Linder drained 15 seconds off the clock during a goal kick, one in which she stopped for a drink from her water bottle before addressing the ball. And a head’s-up play by Erin Bricker ate up most of the final 20 seconds. After a Nebraska defender played the ball back to Macdonald, Bricker rushed at her and blocked her kick. The ball went sailing back across the end line, but Macdonald had to track it down, place it at the six-yard box, back up and kick again. Bricker’s alert decision took away all the time Nebraska had to make one last run down the field.

MISSING: The victory was more impressive when considering that the Buffs played without field general Russell, who sprained her ankle last week against Stanford, and central defender Taryn Vitacca, who pulled a hamstring in practice on Tuesday. “Not having Kate, that’s a big deal,” Hempen said. Krier filled in for Russell on Friday.

WOMAN OF THE MATCH: Many candidates: There’s Fitzpatrick, who scored the winning goal. There’s Nebraska forward Molly Thomas, who missed wide a couple of times and hit the crossbar in the first half. There’s Linder, who just happens to be a Lincoln native. There’s Marshall, Kelly Ross and Amy Barczuk, who played center back in the absence of Vitacca. The CU defense was able to keep super-freshman Morgan Marlborough under wraps. Marlborough scored 232 goals in high school (that’s not a typo), and the 6-foot striker from Missouri leads Nebraska with 14 goals in nine games. Barczuk was able to keep her quiet with a combination of positioning, muscle and dominance in the air. Ross was there as the Nebraska forwards shifted and swirled. And Marshall played center back at the beginning of the game and at the end. I’ll go with the goal scorer. Let’s give this one to the goal scorer, Fitzpatrick.

UP NEXT: Colorado continues its Big 12 weekend when it faces Iowa State at 1 p.m. Sunday at home. As always, admission and parking are free at Prentup Field. CU’s Student-Athlete Advisory Committee is teaming up with Coats For Colorado and will collect gently used and new coats on Sunday to donate to individuals and families in need in Colorado.



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