

- [News](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Subscribe](#)

Buff's learn from past failures

Volleyball team look to snap four-game skid

By Cheng Sio on September 29, 2009

It's not about how you fall down, it's about if and how you get up.

Since 2007, the Colorado Buffaloes volleyball team has stumbled a lot. So far, this season is no exception.

The Buffs, owners of a 5-8 record and losers of four straight (all within Big 12 Conference play), will seek their first conference win of the season when they visit the Kansas Jayhawks (8-4, 1-2) on Wednesday at 5:30 p.m., at the Horejsi Family Athletics Center in Lawrence, Kan.

In past years, such as in 2007 when the team went 6-22 overall with a horrendous 1-19 record in conference play, some players said they didn't know how to respond to losing back then.

"My freshman year when we were losing so badly, after the game we were just so stunned," said junior middle blocker Schylur Edelman, one of four holdovers remaining from the 2007 team. "We didn't know what to say and we tried different things, but it was never anything specific."

Senior setter Kaitlyn Burkett, another member of the 2007 squad, said part of the shock was how they lost. That season, CU lost all 10 games that went the full five sets.

"I think it was so disheartening because we were so close always," Burkett said, "But we just couldn't find a way to kind of finish it."

But 2007 was two years ago, and 2008 (13-16, 7-13 Big 12) wasn't much better.

Today, the few holdovers aren't surprised by the losing, but it's not because they have accepted it. The difference is they now have a plan. This is where first-year head coach Liz Kritza has made her mark in rebuilding the CU program.

In 2005, Kritza's first year as head coach at Tulane, her Green Wave went 5-16 overall and 2-13 in Conference USA. Besides dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina that season, she discovered a valuable lesson.



Kaitlyn Burkett (right) sets the ball to Schylur Edelman (left) as she prepares for the spike at the volleyball game against Kansas State Nov. 12, 2008 at the Coors Events Center. Both athletes were members of the 2007 team. (CU Independent file/Morgan Hofmann)

“The most important thing I learned that’s actually from that experience at Tulane, is how we respond,” Kritza said. “It’s not necessarily we start off in the manner I don’t care to repeat – I’m not pleased with that manner – but our response is the most important, because that’s what we have control over right now. If I learned anything from that first year, it was that lesson.”

Apparently, Kritza’s lesson has permeated into as many places as it possibly can. For instance, while the team’s morale could use a boost with a win against Kansas, players have stayed positive and have even been encouraging one another during the tough times.

“We’ve definitely tried to focus on having a positive mindset with everything, and believing you can win,” Burkett said. “We can’t come into a match thinking you’ve already been defeated. No matter who we’re playing, we have to go in there thinking that we have the possibility to win. If everybody plays their best, anything can happen.”

Edelman agreed.

“If Kaitlyn makes a mistake, we’re like, ‘Come on Kaitlyn, you got that next one. You can do this,’” Edelman said.

At practice, Kritza said she has done “a ton” of teaching in an effort to implement her system as quickly as possible.

“If anything, that’s the part of coaching that most coaches love – it’s the teaching part,” Kritza said. “I feel like there’s still a lot of teaching to be done. With every practice that we have and every match that we have, there’s an opportunity to teach how we want volleyball to be played here at CU.”

Also, the Buffs not only implement a game plan before a match like most teams, but they are now evaluating their performance postgame — win or lose.

“Now, after each game, we watch film, we review what happened, we talk about where we went wrong, and what we can do to correct it,” Edelman said.

The measures Kritza and the team have taken so far have been part of the rebuilding process. While the wins haven’t been coming by the bushels, they know they will come in time. As Kritza said, they all hate losing but those losses could prove to be positive later on. She should know since she went 71-23 the following three seasons after 2005 at Tulane before arriving in Boulder.

“If you’re working as hard as these kids are, really like pouring everything that they have into it and still falling short, that’s difficult,” Kritza said. “That kind of tries your spirit a little bit. But it’s having that vision of what we’re doing here, having belief that we’re on the right path and we’re doing it the right way, but we’re doing it the hard way. There’s no shortcut to sustainable success.”

Contact CU Independent Sports Editor Cheng Sio at Cheng.Sio@colorado.edu.

Share and Enjoy:



Posted in [Sports](#)