



Women's golf coach Anne Kelly believed her 2010-11 team could be special.
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Brooks: Kelly Has Women's Golf On The Upswing

BOULDER - Anne Kelly's instincts told her that the 2010-11 season could be a special one for her University of Colorado women's golf team. And as she approached her 14th year as CU's coach, Kelly was savvy enough to listen. When the fall season began, her instincts were right on target.

Still, like most coaches in most sports, Kelly craved just a wee bit more validation. She got it before play began in the third round of CU's Heather Farr Memorial Invitational on Saturday, Oct. 9 at the Colorado National Golf Club in Erie.

Leaving the course after Friday's first two rounds, five of Kelly's players were involved in a multi-car accident about a half-mile from the venue. Although there were no serious injuries, sophomore Taylor Doyle and juniors Devin Dougherty and Meaghan Kari were forced to withdraw from final-round play. The vehicle's other two passengers - juniors Emily Talley and Jessica Wallace - were sufficiently shaken to initially decide not to play on Saturday.

CU led after two rounds of the tournament, but Day 3 appeared bleak and all but lost; the Buffs apparently didn't have enough healthy bodies to continue.

"And things were going along so well," recalled Kelly, a Colorado native (Aspen) who spent six years on the LPGA tour and has coached at North Carolina-Greensboro and been a teaching pro in Arizona. "It was an unfortunate accident,

but it just shows how quickly things can change.

"Three of the players had concussions and couldn't play. That morning we just came to the conclusion that we wouldn't have a team. But when that word got out, 'Jess' (Wallace) called me in tears and said she had to play for the team. You could hear the passion in her voice."

Kelly told Wallace to come to the course and get checked by CU's medical personnel. Next came a telephone call from Talley's father, and after inquiring about his daughter's health, Kelly told him the team still was a player short and wouldn't be able to finish the tournament. Their conversation ended that way.

Not long thereafter, Emily Talley telephoned Kelly and told her, "If you can find me some shoes (Talley's remained in the smashed vehicle) I can play."

No problem, said Kelly: "We wear the same size."

Wallace was cleared to play about half an hour before the final round and Talley - with Kelly's shoes waiting- was given the medical green light about 15 minutes later. Paired with freshmen twins Jenny and Kristin Coleman, CU had its team. But other schools in the field were using five golfers, with the worst score among the five dropped. With four golfers, the Buffs had no margin for bad shots, and they went into the last round hoping to protect a five-stroke lead.

"Poor 'Jess' cried for about the first six holes," Kelly said. "We gave her a roll of toilet paper to put in her bag and she just gutted it up and played."

And she played pretty well. Wallace shot an even-par 72 and won the tournament, rallying from a seven-stroke deficit with 10 holes to play. The Buffs won by 16 strokes - the largest margin in program history - despite their Friday night/Saturday morning of adversity.

Said Kelly: "It just shows how much heart they have."

Ranked No. 31 nationally, CU completed its most successful season under Kelly last week at the NCAA East Regionals in Daytona Beach, Fla. The Buffs' finish didn't match their pre-tournament expectations: at 18th, they weren't among the top eight finishers and therefore didn't advance in NCAA play.

Kelly and her players were hoping to compete on a western course and admittedly were "surprised" at being deposited in Florida. "But that's not an excuse," she added. "There's always that chance of getting shipped somewhere; we were excited for the warm weather but the conditions were definitely different." And compounding those were the effects of preparing for the tournament during finals week.

Regardless, Kelly said she "thought we would play better . . . we did the best we could, but it just wasn't our week. That's just the way golf goes. We walked away disappointed, but we'll use it to spur us on."

Kelly loses no one from her 2010-11 squad, which was composed of four juniors, three sophomores and three freshmen. Juniors Wallace (72.97) and Talley (73.71) finished one-two overall for the Buffs and had nine top five finishes between them (Wallace six, Talley three). Kristin (76.06) and Jenny (76.57) Coleman were Nos. 3-4, with Doyle (78.16) at No. 5.

Wallace, who had taken an unofficial visit to Boulder during her recruitment, enrolled at Pepperdine and played for two years before transferring to CU, which Kelly called "huge for us." Wallace, of Langley, B.C., set numerous school records, as did Talley, of Napa, Calif.

A top 20 junior player in Canada, Wallace had CU high on her initial list of colleges. After she decided to leave Pepperdine, Buffs Assistant Coach Brent Franklin's connections in Canada also proved instrumental in steering her to Boulder.

Then there was CU having Colorado National Golf Club as its home course. Wallace, said Kelly, is a non-stop worker: "She really, really likes to practice . . . Colorado National was huge for us getting her - and it'll continue to be great in

our overall recruiting."

Hired in 1997, Kelly has directed a steady ascent for the CU women golfers. In 2009, the Buffs competed in the NCAA Western Regionals for the first time. Kelly concedes, "It's taken more time than I would have liked, but we do it right at Colorado in all things and with our golf program. Recruiting for golf here is different - recruits think we've got snow on the ground six months out of the year.

"But the addition of our golf course and the prospect of an indoor facility (at Colorado National) are making a huge difference for us. And I've got a terrific assistant in Brent (he began as a volunteer assistant in 2003, becoming full-time in 2005). He's a very good instructor; I couldn't ask for any better."

And joining the Pac-12 Conference - it becomes official on July 1 - should be a boon for Kelly's recruiting. "It's already helped us - and we're going to need it," she said. "The Big 12 was a very good conference, but if the Pac-12 isn't the best conference for women's golf in the country it's a close second.

"But that's what I want for our program, and I think every other coach does, too. Like they say, to be the best, you've got to play the best. And I know that USC, UCLA, Arizona and Arizona State have very, very strong programs."

Kelly believes the Buffs can compete - mainly because she already knows they have the heart for it. That became clear last October.

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