

Aggies outlast Buffs in five

After losing first 2 sets, CU rallies to force a fifth

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coming off back-to-back five-set victories over Kansas State and Kansas.

Colorado volleyball has not arrived yet.

But Liz Kritza's program turned the corner during a three-game home stand at the Coors Events Center.

The second-year head coach was sure of that by the reaction of her players after Texas A&M escaped its final trip to Boulder with a 25-22, 25-17, 18-25, 23-25, 15-6 victory over CU on Wednesday night.

"I don't have a happy team right now," Kritza said after the Buffs fell to 5-6 overall and 2-3 in Big 12 play. "They're not in that locker room thinking, 'Well, we fought hard.'"

"And that's a really great sign because that cannot be coached. It comes from your team, it comes from your leaders, and I have that. ... We'll look back on this as a positive."

CU, which finished 2-18 in the conference last season, was

That high level of play continued in the first set as the home team had a 75 percent attack percentage (19-for-25). The problem was the Aggies attacked at 86 percent.

"It's hard for our team to think, 'Wait a minute, we're doing everything we're supposed to do, we're hitting, we're attacking at a high clip, yet we're still not winning,'" Kritza said. "The fact that the results aren't in line with the level of play is a tough thing.

"Again, a valuable lesson. Sometimes if you're playing well and they're playing well, whoever makes fewer errors will come away with that set."

The Buffs made plenty of mistakes in the second set, falling behind 7-0 and into an 0-2 hole at the intermission.

"They could have laid down in that third set and they didn't," Kritza noted.

CU outplayed the Aggies (9-5, 3-1) -- a team that recently swept Texas when the Longhorns were ranked No. 8 in the polls -- and won the third and fourth sets in dramatic fashion.

The Buffs rallied behind killing machine Kerra Schroeder (19 kills), smooth setter Alyssa Valentine (48 assists), and some scrappy plays by Richi Bigelow (seven kills, 14 digs), Nikki Lindow (nine blocks), Megan Beckwith (20 digs) and Anicia Santos (11 kills).

"We definitely could have won," Schroeder said when asked how Texas A&M compared to some of the other teams CU has faced this season. "That's all I can say."

Despite taking the momentum into the fifth set and having won their previous two matches in five sets, the Buffs allowed the visitors from College Station to score the final eight points.

"Any team can beat any other team (in the Big 12). It just depends on the game your team brings and how confident and aggressive you are," senior outside hitter Rose Steinhaus said. "We definitely had the momentum and we were ready to fight. They just outlasted us."

CU dropped to 3-3 at home this season with road trips to Missouri and No. 13 Texas up next.

However, unlike recent teams, these Buffs will travel with confidence.

"There`s a different feel in the gym even when we`re practicing," Steinhaus said. "We know how well we can do and the level we can play at. I think we expect that from ourselves now. That`s something new, so that`s exciting."

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