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First of many for Colorado?

Buffaloes end first NCAA Tournament with eye on more

Scott Rabalais, NCAA.com

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Colorado Athletics

Alex Stewart shot a one-under-par 71 in Friday's final round.

FRANKLIN, Tenn. – Long before the trophies were handed out Friday afternoon at the NCAA Division I Women's Golf Championship, the Colorado Buffaloes were headed to the Nashville airport for the flight back home.

The Buffaloes finished 18th in a field of 24 teams, and none of its players challenged the final individual leaderboard.

COLORADO SCORES

PLAYER	R1	R2	R3	R4	TOTAL
E. Talley	-1	+4	+4	+2	+9
A. Stewart	+3	+1	+7	-1	+10
J. Wallace	+6	+4	+8	+4	+22
J. Coleman	+4	+1	+2	+3	+10
K. Coleman	+3	+8	+4	+9	+24

Note: Par is 72 per round, 288 for championship

But there isn't only one kind of winning. There's being a part of something that's never been accomplished before, and building the foundation for the future of a program trying to make its mark. Trying to make Colorado golf known for something more than the school where three-time U.S. Open champion Hale Irwin once played. (Irwin was the 1967 NCAA men's champion as well as an All Big-Eight defensive back.)

"It was a great season," Colorado coach Anne Kelly said. "Our team played with a lot of heart. We would have liked to have played better here, but that's golf. It was a great learning experience."

"Our goal all year was to get to the national championship and

compete for it."

Consider mission accomplished, as the Buffaloes reached the NCAA Tournament for the first time in their program's history.

It was the last in a series of significant milestones for the Colorado women this season.

The Buffaloes, ranked a school-best No. 10 coming here, won a school record three team titles this season: the Edean Ihlanfeldt Invitational near Seattle, the Clover Cup (by a whopping 31 strokes) in Mesa, Ariz., and the Anuenue Spring Break tournament on Maui. Colorado also had two second-place finishes, including one in the Allstate Sugar Bowl tournament in New Orleans where the Buffaloes finished second behind Duke but ahead of Alabama, Southern California and Auburn when those teams were ranked Nos. 2, 3 and 4 in the country.

Then came a chance to host the NCAA West Regional on the Buffaloes new home course, Colorado National in Erie, just east of Boulder.

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The top eight teams from each of three regionals advanced to the championship tournament, and after the season they'd had to that point the pressure was clearly on the Buffaloes.

"We had a little more pressure than we expected" hosting the regional, sophomore Alex Stewart said. "The first two days we didn't play well, but the last day we were 9 under."

Colorado rallied to finish fourth, and easily earned its invitation to the championship.

"We had so many fans come out for the regional," said senior Emily Talley, her team's top individual finisher in a tie for 38th. "We struggled the first two days, but we put it together and had a special last round.

"Getting to our first nationals is enough of an accomplishment."

The difference for Colorado has been what has often been the case for programs trying to make a jump: improved facilities and recruiting.

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Stewart was a key transfer from Purdue, joining senior Jess Wallace, a previous transfer from Pepperdine. They and Talley formed the backbone of a regular five-player lineup that was bolstered by twin sophomores Kristin and Jenny Coleman.

"It's a great feeling knowing I'm leaving the program in good hands," Talley said. "They're great girls, the ones still on the team and the ones they have coming in.

"It's exactly what I wanted out of my college career."

There are challenges for Colorado, being labeled a cold-weather school, but the Buffaloes' success will likely not melt that like the spring thaw in the Rockies.

"Now we're in the Pac-12 and we're more than capable of being up there with the best of them," Talley said. "Yes, we have some weather, but when it's bad that's when we're traveling."

It was a bittersweet time as Colorado packed up its van in the Vanderbilt Legends Club parking lot for the trip to the airport.

"Today is a little sad because we're saying goodbye to a couple of seniors," Kelly said. "But we're looking forward to the future."

Next year, the NCAA Tournament moves east to the University of Georgia's course in Athens.

The Buffaloes are already making their plans.

"We know we can make it to nationals again," Kristin Coleman said.

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N.C. State, Colorado finally get to the Dance



Photo by [Tracy Wilcox](#)

Emily Talley of Colorado happily signals her ball safe at No. 16 on Thursday at the 2012 NCAA Division I Women's Golf Championships.

By Lance Ringler

Friday, May 25, 2012

[Photo Gallery](#)

Women's NCAA Championship: Final round



Check out images from the final round at the 2012 NCAA Women's Division I Championship in Franklin, Tenn.

FRANKLIN, Tenn. - If you did not know much about women's college golf, you might think the Bowl Championship Series is in charge of selecting the field for the NCAA Championship. Just one of the 24 participating teams comes from a non-BCS conference - Pepperdine, from the West Coast Conference.

And the Waves are hardly a mid-major in golf.

Even with the dominance of big schools in women's golf, a pair of teams from the big-school leagues made their first trips to the finals this year: North Carolina State and Colorado.

For North Carolina State and head coach Page Marsh it was a long time in the making.

"This is a culmination of the 12 years, and we are proud of all the players we have had coming through," said Marsh, who is in her 12th year as the head coach at North Carolina State. "It is a tribute to everybody who has come through the program that has helped build the momentum to get here."

The Wolfpack had the better week of the two newcomers, tying for 13th, five shots in front of Colorado, which was 18th.

There is a uniqueness to the North Carolina State coaching staff. Marsh brought on a couple of veterans to help her mold this squad. Todd Selders, who spent 10 years at SMU, is Marsh's assistant, and Sally Austin serves as volunteer assistant. Austin spent 16 years as the head coach at North Carolina.

"You have two other experienced head coaches, and everyone has a lot to offer in their own way," Marsh said. "It's great for me to have two people who have gone through all of this. Collectively, we have almost 40 years of head coaching experience. I think that was a very positive variable."

For Colorado, it was a bittersweet week. Head coach Anne Kelly's team came to the finals with a chance of posting a top-10 finish. Colorado entered at No. 10 in the *Golfweek*/Sagarin College Rankings. However, the Buffaloes could not build on an 11th-place standing after the opening round and slid to 18th.

"Our goal all year was to get to the NCAA Championship and compete for it," Kelly said. "We were just a little off, a couple of shots per player off. You take that and learn from it. It was a good season."