

## Volleyball: Kritza wants CU Buffs' at forefront of sand movement

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BROOMFIELD -- The week began with much of the state shoveling snow and bundling up in layers.

For the Colorado volleyball team, the week ended with players in tank tops and their feet in the sand. CU hosted rival Colorado State on Friday afternoon in a sand volleyball exhibition event at The Sports Oasis.

"We look at it as trying to expose the community (to the sport) and they need to get used to seeing high level sand volleyball because it's a completely different sport than the indoor game," CU head coach Liz Kritza said.

Kritza is hoping the community will get many more opportunities in the future to watch the Buffs play on the sand. The CU administration is thinking about adding sand volleyball to its list of sponsored sports.

"It's becoming inevitable in the Pac-12," said Kritza, who added that half the conference will have sand volleyball teams by next year. "If we want our players to be able to play at the highest levels ... this only helps them get themselves to a place where it's viable for them."

Many of the top volleyball recruits around the country are looking at schools that offer indoor and sand volleyball options. With so many Pac-12 schools beginning to offer the sand game, the Buffs see the urgency of adding it, too.

David Clough, CU's faculty athletic representative, attended Friday's event. He said it's a "reasonable probability" that CU will add sand volleyball, possibly as soon as 2014 or 2015.

"We would love for this to happen as soon as possible," Kritza said. "There's a competitive piece to this with recruiting. The sooner we add this, the better we can develop the program and the firmer the foundation will be."

Friday was a good first step.

For many of the CU and CSU players, this spring was their first exposure to the sand game. CU had seven sand workouts before Friday. The Buffs' Emily Alexis said she hated it the first two days, but had a blast on Friday and plans to play throughout the summer.

"Everybody loves it," CU's Taylor Simpson said. "We love playing indoor, but it's a great change to just be able to come and play outdoors and get in a different atmosphere."

In addition to having fun with it, the Buffs want to add the sport because it helps to develop their indoor game, too. Sand volleyball features two players on each side, compared to six on a side for the indoor game. Playing on sand helps players establish better footwork. It also helps them develop a better all-around game because it's tough to hide their weaknesses.

"I would absolutely love it," CU's Nicole Edelman said of the Buffs possibly getting a sand team, "because even in the seven days we were training, it helped us indoor. It's really good for cross training."

A critical component for CU adding sand volleyball is getting some support from other schools in the Front

Range.

CSU is now seriously considering adding the sport. Kritza has had talks with other schools, including Denver, Regis, Colorado College, Air Force, Northern Colorado and Wyoming, about adding teams, as well.

"If you look worldwide, you see the pockets that have great volleyball, they always have good beach volleyball in those areas," CSU coach Tom Hilbert said. "We need schools in the Denver metro area to add it so that we can have people to play. If that happens, I can have a pretty good case to get my administration to do it, because there are some great benefits to it."

CU is already seeing some of the benefits with its current roster, but the Buffs are hoping this is just the beginning.

"(Front Range schools) are waiting for somebody to lead the way," Kritza said. "With the conference that we're in and the visibility that we'll have with the Pac-12 Network, I think that's where we're going to want to position ourselves.

"We want to be one that congeals this group and gets us going to lead the way because it's going to be a really good thing for the area."

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