

Soccer: Danny Sanchez's CU Buffs' squad must find way to score more

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Danny Sanchez can preach philosophy and extol the virtues of sound defensive play all he wants as he begins the first season as the Colorado Buffaloes' head soccer coach.

Nevertheless, one thing becomes glaringly apparent upon review of the Buffs' disappointing 2011 campaign: CU needs to score more goals.

After winning a pair of Division II national championships at Metro State and leading Wyoming to the best record in the school's history in 2011, Sanchez takes over a CU program still trying to feel its way through the Pac-12 Conference after posting a 4-13-2 mark last year. Reviving a largely stagnant offense could prove to be a huge first step towards becoming more competitive in perhaps the best collegiate women's soccer conference in the country.

Sanchez addressed Buffs nation on Saturday as he went through his first media day in CU gold and black.

"We're moving some people around and we're trying some different things," Sanchez said. "I think it all starts, believe it or not, with defending. If you're chasing a game all the time, you're giving up goals and you're not going to be banging in goals.

"Goal-scoring is the most difficult thing to do. That's why those players are the most famous players. That's why those players are the richest players in the world. That's what I tell our team. For our players, we expect everyone to be able to score."

The Buffaloes managed to score only 21 goals in 19 games last season, the program's first in the Pac-12. That level of production simply will not get the job done, yet the bright side for CU is that the club returns most of the players who contributed to that total.

Returning to the field for CU will be Fairview alum Anne Stuller, who shared the team lead with four goals, as well as three of the other four players who notched multiple goals in 2011 -- senior Amy Barczuk, junior Hayley Hughes, and sophomore Darcy Jerman.

"I'm an upper-classman and I accept that challenge. I'm looking forward to the pressure of scoring more goals," Stuller said. "I really want to be that for our team. I want to be someone who can score a goal at Stanford, or at Oregon. I really want to be a play-maker this year."

Although the Buffs struggled last season, improvement should be expected given the glut of experienced returnees and the infusion of energy brought by Sanchez. CU lost five 1-0 decisions last year, and making a few additional plays here and there could reverse those outcomes this season.

"Last year, we consistently saw 1-0 losses," Barczuk said. "It's those minor details that will change those 1-0 losses into 1-0 wins. It's the one time you lose focus on defense that you get scored on. And it's that one time that you don't focus on offense that you don't score. I think it's just sharpening up those details in order to reverse those this season."

The Buffs open their season on Friday at Northern Colorado as they attempt to defend their crown in the Colorado Cup, the annual statewide competition between CU, Denver, UNC, and Colorado College.

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