

Soccer: CU Buffs open season with 3-0 win at Northern Colorado

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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GREELEY -- First-year Colorado soccer coach Danny Sanchez has 27 players from all different parts of the country.

In Friday's season opener, it was his two homegrown players that led the Buffaloes to a 3-0 win over Northern Colorado at Jackson Stadium in the first game of the annual Colorado Cup.

Former Fairview High School standouts Anne Stuller and Nikki Machalek combined for all three goals as the Buffs rolled.

"I love it," Stuller said about ex-Knights stealing the show. "I grew up with Nikki and I'm just so proud of her and just really proud to be a Knight and a Buff, of course."

Coming off a 4-13-2 season, CU needed a win like this. It was the Buffs' widest margin of victory since a 3-0 win against these same Bears on Aug. 21 of last year.

CU wasn't too interested in looking back at last year, however. The Buffs' only concern is what the game means for this squad.

"First and foremost, we scored three really good goals," Sanchez said. "It wasn't a 3-0 game; I think the possession was maybe a little in the advantage of UNC. I think the difference was we finished our opportunities."

Finishing was a struggle for the Buffs last year, as they had just 13 goals in the final 17 games. On Friday, however, they came out strong against the Bears.

"We know UNC is the defending Big Sky champions, at their place under the lights, first game of the season and not having a preseason game, we knew there was going to be some growing pains and there was," Sanchez said.

Whatever growing pains there were, they were eased by the fact that CU played nearly the whole night with the lead.

Stuller, a junior who tied for the team lead with four goals in 2011, got halfway to that total in less than 30 minutes on Friday. She scored her first goal just 5:03 into the game.

"The first one, Hayley (Hughes) just flicked it on and I read the ball," Stuller said. "It sneaked through the two centerbacks and it was an easy put-away."

At the 29:50 mark, Stuller lined up for a direct kick and booted a rocket that fooled Bears goalkeeper Natalie D'Adamio. Sanchez called it "a world-class strike."

The 2-0 lead held until Machalek added some insurance at the 70:51 mark. The freshman put home her first goal on the first shot of her college career.

"It was amazing. It feels awesome," she said.

Like Stuller, Machalek was pleased to see the Fairview girls show up strong.

"After the game, everyone was like, 'It's the genes from Boulder, the Fairview girls,'" Machalek said. "It was awesome."

Machalek is one of 12 freshmen on the roster. Eight of them played on Friday, including midfielders Madison Krauser and Courtney Dudley, who were in the starting lineup.

"It's tough to jump into a situation like this and we feel they did well," Sanchez said. "Nikki scored a good goal. We said, 'Go in and make something happen in five minutes,' and she did."

As a whole, the Buffs made it happen Friday. Annie Brunner had a nice game in goal, the defense kept UNC off the board and the Buffs got off to a successful start.

"It was a great game for us," Stuller said.

Notable

Sanchez took over at CU this season after four years at Wyoming. He is now 268-60-23 for his career, which includes six seasons at Metro State. UNC out-shot the Buffs 15-9. However, CU had more shots on goal, 6-3. ... CU is 7-0 all-time against UNC and has never allowed a goal to the Bears. ... CU concludes the Colorado Cup on Sunday with a trip to Colorado College. The Buffs beat the Tigers 5-0 last year and have won six straight in the series.

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Colorado 3,

Northern Colorado 0

At Jackson Stadium, Greeley

Colorado (1-0) 2 1 -- 3

N. Colorado (0-1) 0 0 -- 0

Goals (assists) -- CU: Anne Stuller (Hayley Hughes, Shaye Marshall), 5:03; CU: Stuller (unassisted), 29:50; CU: Nikki Machalek (Emily Paxton), 70:51.

Goalkeepers (Min-Goals allowed-Saves) -- CU: Annie Brunner (90-0-3); UNC: Natalie D'Adamio (90-3-3).