

## Squad can't keep up with Trojans in final home match of season

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Michelle Miller's final match in front of the home crowd didn't go as well as she had hoped, but the Colorado senior feels satisfaction knowing she's leaving the Buffaloes' volleyball team in good hands.

"If you look at last season compared to this season, we're steadily getting better," Miller said. "I'm completely positive about this program only going up."

Miller and the Buffs gave it their all on Saturday night at Coors Events Center, but No. 8 Southern Cal had too much in its arsenal, sweeping the Buffs 31-29, 25-19, 25-17.

Coming out of the gates, Colorado (14-14, 4-12 Pac-12) was fired up and nearly took the first set. The Buffs missed on four set points before losing the opener 31-29 to the Trojans (24-4, 12-4).

"We didn't play perfectly, but played aggressively," CU head coach Liz Kritza said of the first set. "When we do that, we had what we needed to as far as match-ups, we had enough point scoring, we had enough with our blocking assignments to make sure we were slowing them down enough. We just couldn't pull that one out. That's a function of a really good, experienced team."

Had the Buffs been able to pull it out, it might have been a totally different result the rest of the way.

"Totally, 100 percent (agree)," said junior Nikki Lindow, who had eight kills and two blocks. "I think we let the refs kind of get in our heads tonight and we couldn't overcome it mentally, I think. That frustration kind of got to us in many of the unwanted calls that we got."

After taking the first set, USC rolled with the momentum the rest of the way. The Trojans used a late 7-0 run to win the second set and an early 5-0 surge to pull ahead in the final set. Samantha Bricio (12 kills, 3 blocks), Katie Fuller (11 kills, five blocks) and Sara Shaw (10 kills) led the way.

The Buffs got 11 kills from Neira Ortiz Ruiz, nine from Alexis Austin and eight each from Lindow and Ana Pantovic. But, it was another tough lesson for a growing program.

"I think we're getting there," Kritza said. "There was a lot of learning out there tonight, and I can see that. Despite the bitter taste of not pulling out the win that we want, I can see the improvement in my players."

As tough as the loss was, the night really belonged to Miller, who is CU's lone senior. She was honored before and after the match.

"It's almost surreal that it's all here and I'm not going to play (in Boulder) ever again," Miller said.

A product of Round Rock, Texas, Miller transferred to CU after one season at Sam Houston State. During the past three seasons at CU, she has played in 67 matches, serving a variety of roles, including setter, defensive specialist and serve specialist. She was named a captain this season after Kerra Schroeder went down with a season-ending injury.

"It's been a great experience," she said. "Lots of ups and downs, but the coaching staff this year has been awesome and I couldn't ask for any other better teammates. It's been really great."

Lindow, who has played with Miller for three seasons, said the Buffs will miss her in 2013.

"I can always look to Michelle to be steady and calm," Lindow said. "She's our steady girl on the team and she's consistent. She's probably one of the most consistent players on this team. Having a player like that will be definitely missed. We all look to her, even off the court. It's going to be hard (without her)."

Notable

USC outblocked the Buffs 18-9. ... CU had more kills, 42-41, but USC had a better attack percentage, .235 to .117. ... Nicole Edelman had 36 assists for the Buffs, while Chelsey Keoho had a team-high 12 digs. ... Miller had six digs. ... Attendance was 1,140, the fourth time in 15 home matches that the Buffs topped 1,000 fans. ... Colorado has four more matches this season, all on the road. The Buffs finished 7-8 at home this year, including 4-6 in Pac-12 play.

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