

Colorado can't overcome 0-2 deficit vs. Arizona

By Ryan Thorburn *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

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This time the Colorado volleyball program stood alone in the spotlight.

On Friday night, Liz Kritza's team produced a well-timed comeback win over Arizona State in front of a crowd of 3,117, most of whom mostly showed up at the Coors Events Center to check out the "Buffs Madness" basketball event that followed.

An impressive Sunday evening crowd of 2,851 gathered to see an encore performance to the Buffs' five-set win over the Sun Devils.

CU fell behind 0-2 again but was unable to fight all the way back in a 22-25, 16-25, 27-25, 16-25 loss to Arizona.

"Friday was a success for us and it was a big part of why we had so many people here tonight," freshman setter Nicole Edelman said after finishing with 37 of CU's 44 assists. "I am very disappointed in the way that we played and in the way that we showed for all these people because they deserve better."

The Buffs (13-7, 3-5) missed a golden opportunity to get to .500 in Pac-12 play.

The home team led 9-3 in the first game after a kill by Alexis Austin, but the Wildcats (11-8, 3-5) surged ahead 18-16 and held on for the three-point win.

Arizona carried the momentum over into the second game, building a 16-11 lead en route to a 2-0 lead at the intermission.

"We seem to be getting good at it because we keep coming out and dropping the first two sets," Kritza said of recovering from early deficits. "It really is all about our team and playing at our level and not giving up so many unforced errors. That's what it comes down to."

The third game went back and forth from start to finish with 14 ties and seven lead changes.

CU trailed 22-24 but fought off two match points with a Nikki Lindow kill and an ace by Edelman.

After Lindow's sixth kill of the frame and a block by Austin, Ana Pantovic put the game away with a kill that had the crowd on its feet.

"It's a great thing when you have players feeling connected to their fans. They want to play hard for the fans," Kritza said. "We need to not just put on a good show. We need to come up with victories. That's what people come for."

"If you win here, people will come out in droves to support the teams. We love that about all the Buffs fans."

Arizona squashed the potential of another dramatic fifth game in Boulder by dominating the fourth game.

Madi Kingdon led the visitors with 15 kills. The Wildcats had 9.5 team blocks compared to only 2.0 for CU.

Austin led the Buffs with 11 kills. Kelsey English and Neira Ortiz Ruiz each had 10 kills.

"We're incredibly disappointed because we wanted to take both matches at home this weekend," Kritza said.

"There is no good explanation for it because we're at the point now as a program where we should be able to step up when it's time."

The Buffs will travel to Los Angeles this week to play No. 6 UCLA on Friday and No. 5 USC on Sunday.

"It can be a really fun weekend if we play well," Edelman said.

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