

Volleyball: CU Buffs sweep Washington State

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The significance of a second Pac-12 win wasn't lost on the Colorado volleyball players on Friday night.

CU swept Washington State 25-17, 25-17, 29-27 at Coors Events Center and, at 2-3 in Pac-12 play, has already doubled its conference win total from last year.

"We're already doing better than last year and it's not even halfway through the season," said sophomore Kelsey English, who, like many of her teammates endured a 1-21 conference season in 2011. "It feels like we made a major accomplishment so far."

Alexis Austin had a team-high 16 kills and English added 13, as the Buffs (12-5, 2-3 Pac-12) had an all-around good night at the net and snapped a three-match losing streak.

"It shows how much we've been working and we're really trying to get there," said Austin, a freshman who finished just one kill shy of her season high. "Hopefully we keep it going and keep working hard."

Last week, the Buffs had a rough road swing through Oregon, losing in four sets to Oregon State and getting swept by Oregon, the No. 2 team in the country. They responded on Friday with an all-around effort against the Cougars (10-7, 0-5).

CU had a .312 attack percentage, its best in Pac-12 play so far this season. Freshman setter Nicole Edelman had a lot to do with that, notching 38 assists.

"We had a tough road swing last week and I really challenged them," head coach Liz Kritza said. "One of the things I challenged them to do was to pick up their scoring. I really can't ask for a team to hit much higher than .312."

Early on, it looked like the Buffs might be in for a long night. Washington State took a 12-6 lead in the first set. The Buffs rallied for a 15-2 run, however. Nikki Lindow served 12 straight balls in that run, three of them for aces.

"She really did change the momentum," Kritza said. "She's been working on that serve for a while and it couldn't have come out at a better time in my opinion."

Momentum carried over to the second set, as CU jumped to a 9-3 lead early and never let the Cougars get on a run.

Washington State played a better third set and, in fact, nearly extended the match. The Cougars had a 24-22 lead and five set points. CU fought off all five, though, and sealed the win when Ana Pantovic pounded her ninth kill -- setting a new career high.

"Once you have the momentum going down, it's sometimes hard to get it back, so we just carried all the way through and finished it and didn't have to worry about that any more," English said of the importance of finishing the match in three sets.

It was a big night for the Buffs, but also for English. She had a rough week of practice, Kritza said, but was sensational on Friday. She had 13 kills and no errors in 17 swings. Her .765 attack percentage is the 12th-best in CU history.

Notable

Freshman Chelsey Keoho led the team with 12 digs. ... Sophomore Emily Alexis, who started the first 14 matches, did not play for the second consecutive match. Alexis ranks fifth on the team in kills and was in uniform, but it was a coaching decision to keep her on the bench the past two matches. ... Libero Elysse Richardson celebrated her 21st birthday on Friday. ... Jaicee Harris led Washington State with nine kills and 11 digs. ... On Sunday, the Buffs host Washington, tied with Oregon at No. 2 nationally, at 3 p.m.

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