

Volleyball: CU Buffs sweep Cornell

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Being able to rise up and pound the ball to the floor for a key point meant more to Neira Ortiz Ruiz than maybe she anticipated.

The sophomore tied her career high with 11 kills in Colorado's 25-19, 25-21, 25-21 win against Cornell on Friday night at Coors Events Center.

It was a performance that forced the San Juan, Puerto Rico, native to choke up a bit.

"It feels good because I finally get to control the ball," she said. "It's been a long road and it's good to be on the court and playing well and helping my team."

CU (4-0) is off to its best start since 2008, when it began the year 6-0. This is just the third time in program history that the Buffs have started 4-0 (also in 1992).

The Buffs got there on Friday with several players stepping up. Kelsey English, Alexis Austin and Emily Alexis had seven kills each, while freshman setter Nicole Edelman continued to assert herself with 30 assists. Junior Nikki Lindow controlled the net with six blocks and five kills.

[Click on any photo to see full gallery](#)

It was the type of team effort the Buffs are going to need with senior Kerra Schroeder out for the season with a knee injury.

"All of us now have to contribute to add up to what we're missing," Lindow said. "It is really rough (to lose Schroeder), but I think this really shows the dynamic of our team and how we come together and really portray leadership roles. Its exciting, but devastating at the same time."

As good as others were for the Buffs, it was Ortiz Ruiz who took the spotlight. She tied the 11 kills she had at Arizona on Nov. 12. She also set a career high with three blocks and posted two aces. "I feel like it's my first time really playing and playing, to not my highest potential, because I still have way long to go, but up to what people expect me to do," she said.

Kritza is hoping that Friday's performance wasn't the peak, but a springboard for Ortiz Ruiz.

"Neira has been steadily getting better in our gym," Kritza said. "For us, we shared the secret with everybody else. We've been expecting a lot more from her, because we've seen her develop. Her career performance will continue to be bested the further and further we get into the season."

The Buffs controlled play for much of the first two sets, holding off every rally Cornell (0-2) mustered. The Big Red were aggressive early in the third set, taking a 4-1 lead. CU snagged the lead for good, at 14-13, but it wasn't until Austin pounded her seventh kill of the night that the Buffs secured the win.

After winning just six matches a year ago, and going 19-66 the previous three years combined, this start is giving the Buffs the confidence boost they sorely needed.

"When we came out today, we were excited, we were ready to play, we knew what we needed to do after scouting," Lindow said. "Just walking in with swag is what we have for the first time, honestly. It's nice to look at each other and see in each other's eyes that we've got this. We're coming in with confidence, and we know that we're great players and if we work together, game over."

Cornell was playing its second match of the day. The Big Red lost to Fresno State, 25-17, 25-18, 25-22, earlier in the

day. Marissa Brand led Fresno State with 13 kills and 13 digs and Barbara Alcantara had 29 assists. Breanna Wong led Cornell with eight kills.

In the second match, Northern Arizona knocked off Fresno State, three games to one, 19-25, 25-21, 25-21, 25-21. Kelli Dallmann had 21 kills for the Lumberjacks (4-0). Dallmann was MVP of the UNLV Invitational a week ago. Kalee Kirby had 47 assists for NAU, while Alcantara had 48 for Fresno State. Brand had 17 kills.

Today CU will face Northern Arizona at 11 a.m. and Fresno State at 7 p.m. Cornell and Northern Arizona will square off at 4 p.m.

NOTABLE: CU has three 3-0 wins already this year. The Buffs had just one in each of the past two years. ... Wong and Rachel D'Epagnier led Cornell with six kills, while Kelly Reinke had a solid match with 24 assists. ... CU is 10-3 in its last 13 home openers and 19-8 overall.

Follow Brian on Twitter: @BrianHowell33.

Volleyball: CU Buffs' Kerra Schroeder out for season

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Kerra Schroeder had been waiting for the start of Colorado's volleyball season for a while.

She wasn't anticipating such a quick end to the year.

This week, Schroeder learned that she will miss the remainder of CU's season with a torn ACL and MCL in her left knee. The senior was injured in CU's 3-0 win against Louisiana on Aug. 25.

"It's really tough," Schroeder said after Friday's win against Cornell. "Mentally right now I feel like I can go out and play. It stinks that I can't help my team. At the same time, I'm going to be right there on the sideline with them. I'm going to travel with them. I'm going to still be that leader that they know I am."

Schroeder is one of two seniors for the Buffs, along with Michelle Miller. A 6-foot outside hitter from San Diego, Schroeder had never missed a match or a set during her college career until the injury. She had started in each of her 87 career matches. During the 2011 season, Schroeder started in all 109 sets, leading the team with 431 kills and ranking second with 286 digs. She also led the team in kills in 2010 (372) and was third in 2009 (236).

"I couldn't think of a bigger impact on our team than to lose Kerra Schroeder," head coach Liz Kritza said. "Not just the point production or her digs totals or her passing for us. There's a cumulative effect of everything that she does for this team."

Schroeder was injured during the first set of the match against Louisiana and knew right away it wasn't good.

"I've never been injured before," she said. "When I did it, it just felt weird and I knew I did something. It didn't hurt, it was just weird."

Not as weird as it'll be for the Buffs to play without their leader. Yet, as a naturally upbeat person, Schroeder is clinging to positives. The best news for her is that she has yet to use her redshirt season. She plans to do that this year and return to the Buffs for the 2013 season.

"It means a ton," she said. "If it had been down the road in the middle of the season and this had happened, I would be devastated. This way, having the redshirt, having the support from my coach and my teammates, I can come back and do what I need to do."

Kritza said the Buffs had one open scholarship for 2013 anyway, so Schroeder's return will not impact the roster in that regard.

"What it does is it affords us the opportunity for younger players to have to step up and develop," Kritza said. "When she returns to us, we'll have a higher level team that she'll be able to step right in and resume her role as a leader for this group."

Follow Brian on Twitter: @BrianHowell33.