

CU returns 16 players from last season's squad

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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With the start of his second season at Colorado just seven weeks away, Danny Sanchez is feeling a little more comfortable this summer.

The head coach for the Buffaloes' women's soccer team, Sanchez is eager to get started after a solid first season in 2012 and a good spring session.

"We feel good about where we're at and looking forward," Sanchez said.

The Buffs open their fall camp on Aug. 7, with the season opener on Aug. 23 in Denver against Northern Colorado.

A year ago, the Buffs had a solid 8-8-4 record in Sanchez's first season. He came to the Buffs after a successful stint at Wyoming, and the Buffs were competitive throughout the season. Three of their losses came in overtime and six of them came by a single goal.

Considering he took over a veteran team that was used to former coach Bill Hempen's style, it wasn't a bad debut season for Sanchez.

This offseason has been a little smoother, however.

"I think we're getting there," Sanchez said. "I think there's a lot more of a comfort level with the returning players, as far as what to expect. Instead of having 25 new players, which, really, is how it felt last year, we'll just incorporate these freshmen into the program."

CU has 16 players back from last year's roster, plus two transfers -- midfielders Tori Cooper (Georgia) and Brooke Rice (Santa Clara) -- who joined the team in January.

That group of 18 went 7-0-1 during CU's spring season. The Buffs exclusively played in-state teams during the spring scrimmages, outscoring their opponents 18-1.

"We played well and we had the two transfers that came in at semester, so it was good to get them acclimated and to work with the team and that went well," Sanchez said.

Seven freshmen will come into the fold next week. That's when most of the team will be together for the first time and start working out as a group.

"That's kind of when they really hit the ground running," Sanchez said.

Sanchez's assistants, Jason Green, Don Trentham and Rebekah Patrick, are all back, as well. That ought to help the Buffs continue to progress this fall, as they go into the year familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of most of the players on the roster.

"We're on the same page," Sanchez said. "We know the challenges ahead and the work that we're going to have to put in. We, as a staff, have always felt very comfortable with challenges

when we've needed to get things done."

One of the big challenges will be the Pac-12 schedule. Despite their improvement in 2012, the Buffs still went just 2-7-2 in their second season in the Pac-12. That mark will hopefully get better this fall, Sanchez said.

"We've been through a season of the Pac-12 (as coaches) and some of these players have been through two seasons," he said. "There's a comfort level there."

CU has five seniors on this year's team and Sanchez said he's been pleased with how that group has helped to prepare the Buffs for the upcoming season.

"Hopefully they'll keep the momentum going until we get started on the 7th of August," he said.

Notable

Goalkeeper Annie Brunner and forward Hayley Hughes, both seniors, have been named captains for the 2013 season. ... CU won't leave the state for any of its nine non-conference games this season. Six will be in Boulder, while the other three are in Denver. ... The Buffs also play their first three Pac-12 games at home, so they won't leave the state until game No. 13. ... A year ago, Sanchez added a couple more freshmen to the team during the summer, but doesn't anticipate doing so this year. "You never close the door, but we don't like to carry a big roster," Sanchez said. "We're at 25 players and we feel really good about that number."

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