

## Colorado soccer: Pioneers top Buffs in tough conditions

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DENVER -- Sue Stuller held back tears after the University of Colorado's 3-0 loss to No. 16 University of Denver on Sunday.

The loss wasn't the only thing that caused tears to well up in her eyes.

It was the lack of sleep after four days of heavy rains and flooding in Boulder, and the forecasts for more into Sunday night. The thought of her basement in the Table Mesa neighborhood of Boulder, full of water. The idea that her daughter, CU forward and Fairview High alum Anne Stuller, might have to find another off-campus house to live in because hers was so damaged by floodwaters.

"It's been hard," Sue Stuller said after pausing to collect herself. "But Boulder's full of resilient people. Boulder is resilient and so is this team."

Anne Stuller said her parents would "let the whole house flood" rather than miss a Buffs game. One of Anne Stuller's shots bounced off the post, but the Buffs (6-1) didn't get any closer to scoring than that. The game, which was scheduled to be held at CU's Prentup Field, was relocated to DU's CIBER Field due to flood conditions in Boulder.

Both teams were scoreless in the first half. Midway through the second half, DU's Anna Willis passed the ball to Kristen Hamilton, the Pioneers' leading scorer, who knocked the ball in from 12 yards away. The Willis-Hamilton combo worked again with less than 3 minutes to play, giving the Pioneers (7-0) a 2-0 lead.

After that, the Buffs replaced several defensive players with attackers, opening the team up to vulnerability near the net. For Denver's third goal, Hamilton passed to a wide-open Willis who scored with 19 seconds left on the clock.

"That hurt," said Buffs goalkeeper Annie Brunner.

Brunner, who lives in a house near Anne Stuller, said she and her roommates did not experience any damage from flooding. They've opened up their home to Stuller and other teammates affected by the storms to just hang out or do laundry, Brunner said. In total, six Buffs soccer players were displaced by the storms, said coach Danny Sanchez.

"They're taken care of and the Boulder family and the whole athletic department is supporting them 100 percent," Sanchez said. "But no excuses. I think at the end of the day Denver deserved to win the game and that was the result."

It rained off and on throughout the game, and though players from both teams slipped dozens of times on the wet field, Sanchez said he thought the field held up well. Sanchez acknowledged the staff at DU for hosting the game on such short notice and was grateful not to have to reschedule the match.

That "no excuses" sentiment was echoed by Anne Stuller, who said the lack of sleep in the last few days and helping her parents with clean-up at their house shouldn't have mattered in Sunday's game.

Anne Stuller said soccer's been a "blessing" and a welcome distraction during the flooding, though she would've liked a different outcome from the game against in-state rival Denver.

"It's made my heart heavy, just for everybody around, my friends who've gotten hit," Anne Stuller said. "I have had a heavy heart the past couple of days."

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