

Colorado volleyball: Buffs shock No. 11 UCLA Bruins

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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Although senior Nikki Lindow had never been a part of a victory against a ranked opponent, she showed up to Coors Events Center on Friday with a good feeling.

"Walking into the gym today, I honestly knew we were ready and we were going to take this team," Lindow said.

She was right.

Lindow had perhaps the best match of her career in helping the Colorado volleyball team to a five-set upset of 11th-ranked UCLA, 27-29, 25-15, 24-26, 25-23, 15-12.

CU (9-2, 1-1 Pac-12) snapped a 41-match losing streak against ranked opponents, including an 0-39 mark under current coach Liz Kritza, with the come-from-behind victory against the Bruins (9-3, 0-2).

"This was the most exciting match I've been a part of here," Kritza said. "Not just because of the victory, but because of the effort on the court and what the administration did as far as marketing to pack this place. It was a really significant night for our program. It's a critical moment as our program has been building.

"To be able to take out the No. 11 team in the country in front of a crowd like this on our home court I think is a milestone for our program."

A solid crowd of 2,777 fans was energetic and entertained from start to finish. Even in the two sets the Buffs lost, they forced the Bruins to work extra hard to get the winning points.

In the past, the Buffs struggled to keep pace in the later stages of sets against good teams. This time, they never let up.

"If you can be within two points when it gets to 20, it's like the last two minutes of basketball," Kritza said.

Because they have more options on offense and more talent throughout the roster, Kritza said, they're able to keep up with opponents now.

"If you can side out a certain percentage, you can play with any team in the country," she said. "It's just a matter of sustaining it and not letting one or two rotations slip."

During the fourth set, it appeared that the Buffs would let this one slip away. UCLA won a tense third set and then stormed to a 12-2 lead in the fourth set. That would have been enough for past CU teams to fold.

"I think it's fair to say that," said junior Neira Ortiz Ruiz, who tied her career high with 14 kills. "This year, we know we can do it and we believe it and we really want it and we know we're going to get it."

After falling behind 12-2, CU went on a 10-1 run, with Lindow mixing in several kills and blocks. She finished with a career-high 12 blocks and was one away from her career high in kills with 14.

Along with Ortiz Ruiz and Lindow, Taylor Simpson had 15 kills and 15 digs, Nicole Edelman had 56 assists and Kelsey English, Kerra Schroeder, and others made key contributions, as well.

"We showed some serious team work tonight," Lindow said. "It was the most calm feeling I've ever had in my life on the court. We looked at each other in the eyes and we had no question that we were going to handle this game, even in the fourth set."

Simpson's final kill of the night put the match away and sparked a celebration.

"It was the greatest feeling in the world," Simpson said. "Obviously we were up and I was like, 'I'm going to end this game right now' and I did. It was a great feeling. I can't stop smiling over it."

"It's so exciting to be a part of something bigger than yourself. It's so awesome I can't put it into words. It's awesome that we got this win and I can't wait to see what we do the rest of the season."

Notable

CU's last win against a ranked opponent came on Oct. 29, 2008, when the Buffs upset then-No. 2 Nebraska. ... UCLA lost on Wednesday to No. 4 Southern Cal. ... CU out-hit the Bruins .211 to .169. ... Mariana Aquino and Karsta Lowe each had 18 kills to lead UCLA.

Contact staff writer

Brian Howell at

howellb@dailycamera.com

or twitter.com/BrianHowell33.