



Hempen's Buffs snap out of scoring slump

Marshall scores twice as CU rolls past Nebraska

By Joshua Lindenstien
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Credit the pre-game running of Ralphie or the power of the puke bucket. Either way, the University of Colorado soccer team officially gave its recent scoring woes the boot on Friday.

The Buffaloes exploded with four goals in the first half, including three in an 11-minute span early, to beat the Nebraska Cornhuskers 4-0 at Prentup Field.

The victory was just the Buffs' third in 11 attempts against their formidable foes from the east.

"It's a great feeling," Mel Hicks said. "Our goal was to come out and battle and that's exactly what we did today."

Nikki Marshall scored two goals. Nikki Keller and Kym Lowry each added one. And Hicks and Michaela DeJesus dished out two assists apiece.

All of that came after Ralphie, CU's live Buffalo mascot, made a special-appearance trot around the field before the game that included a hair-raising yet harmless swerve toward the Nebraska bench.

The four goals matched the season-high for CU and eclipsed the number the team had scored in its past seven matches combined.

After being shut out in four straight matches, the Buffs rebounded with a 1-0 overtime win over Drake and a 2-0 win over Wyoming. But the Buffs continued to struggle and were shut out again last week against Texas Tech.

"It wasn't quite there yet and it showed against Texas Tech," Marshall said. "We should have beat that team. We didn't finish and that's all it came down to."

"I feel like everything just kind of came together today."

The Buffs were distraught after the loss to Texas Tech and were instructed to bring a bucket to practice the next morning — they might need it. Although no players were actually worked to the point of vomiting during the week, the message got through.

"(Coach Bill Hempen) worked us into the ground and we needed it," Marshall said. "We can't come out and play nonchalant."

The players painted the blue bucket black and gold, signed it and had it sitting behind their bench against NU as a sort of badge of honor after their tough week.

"It was a little bit of a motivator," Hicks said. "I think it's definitely going to be around with us for the season, just a reminder that we need to battle every practice and every game."

With a new sense of focus, the Buffs, who improved to 5-3-3 overall and 1-1-0 in Big 12 Conference play, came out firing.

Hicks was the catalyst for the Buffs' first three goals, the first of which came in the 11th minute. The freshman from Federal Way, Wash., crossed the ball toward DeJesus, whose shot was batted into the air by Husker keeper Jessica Mills. But Keller was there to head home the rebound.

Marshall one-timed a cross from Hicks to the back of the net two minutes later for the next score, and Lowry ran a give-and-go with Hicks to make it 3-0 in the 21st minute. Marshall capped the scoring in the 33rd minute with a rifle past Mills to the far post.

"I just felt a chemistry," Hicks said. "Everyone was working off each other and it just felt awesome."

Nebraska (4-4-3, 1-2-0) got four shots on goal in the second half to the Buffs' one but the deficit was too much to overcome. CU goalie Kara Linder, who's from Lincoln, made all four saves. Nebraska had one goal, by Carly Peetz off of a corner kick, waived off for interference.

"Our girls, they played hard," NU coach John Walker said. "But Colorado was sharper."

After a stretch in which nothing seemed to go right for his squad, Walker's counterpart was just happy to see the Buffs execute and get a sound victory.

And as for the bucket?

"They won't need it (today)," Hempen said proudly.



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