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Buff's boot naysayers

Marshall remains on defense as CU displays NCAA worthiness

By Justin Williams
Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — The University of Colorado women's soccer team heard the complaints. Some Buffaloes even agreed with them.

But Friday, thanks to a 2-0 win over visiting Hawaii, Colorado proved the controversy surrounding its NCAA Tournament bid was unwarranted.

"I think we should definitely be in the tournament," CU sophomore Nikki Marshall said after her team's first-round win. "I think we're better than a lot of the teams out there. I don't know if we deserve to be in the tournament after our season, but I think we played well today and we showed that we're here and we're going to work hard."



Colorado's Gianna DeSaverio (11) knocks the ball into the goal during the first half of Friday's first-round NCAA Tournament match against Hawaii at Pentup Field in Boulder.

Lewis Geyer/Times-Call

With the win, Colorado advanced to the Sweet 16. It will host Portland at 1 p.m. Sunday.

The Buffs ended the regular season at 9-7-4, and they heard plenty of grumbling from around the nation when they weren't only given a spot in the 32-team tourney, but then were chosen to host the first two rounds at Prentup Field.

But Colorado put all that behind it Friday after getting past Western Athletic Conference champion Hawaii.

The Buffs took a 1-0 lead in the 11th minute when, following a corner kick, Michaela DeJesus sent a ball to Gianna DeSaverio in front of the net for an easy head-in goal.

Colorado then used its conditioning — and, as Hawaii coach Pinsoom Tenzing pointed out, the altitude — to its advantage in the second half. Mel Hicks gave the Buffs a 2-0 lead when she knocked one in from the box when nearly everyone on the field thought she was offside.

"We came out flat; altitude may have had something to do with it," Tenzing said. "We're an extremely well-conditioned team, but we didn't look it on the field today."

The Buffs looked slightly different, too.

Marshall — a Skyline High School product who is tied for third on CU's all-time scoring list — played then entire game at defender. A natural-born forward, she has played back in both of CU's postseason games, beginning with last weekend's shootout loss to Texas in the first round of the Big 12 Tournament. Texas went on to win the conference title.

Marshall, who is on pace to shatter most of the CU women's soccer team's offensive records, said she didn't bat an eye when coach Bill Hempen notified her of the switch.

"Wherever I need to play to get us wins, even if I'm on the bench, as long as I'm here and I'm with my team, it doesn't matter where I play," Marshall said. "I love playing, so I'll do what I have to do."

DeSaverio said it's been a good move for Colorado, which hasn't allowed a goal since Marshall made the move.

"It's hard, because she's one of our best attackers, but she's one of our best defenders, too, so you have to put her somewhere," DeSaverio said. "I think we have a lot of great attackers, and right now, we need someone in the back that we can depend on, and she's definitely the person we look to for that."

Marshall found herself in the middle of Hawaii's best scoring opportunity Friday.

The Buffs survived a one-minute flurry in front of their net near the end of the first half when Hawaii's Taryn Fukuroku had two big chances. Fukuroku knocked shots off CU keeper Kara Linder's hands and then off the right post before the Buffs finally were able to clear the ball.

"I think it would have changed the whole game," Fukuroku said. "We would have probably had more life back in our team, tying it up late in the first half."

Marshall agreed.

"I didn't know whether to step or to go, and then I stepped too late," she said. "It was just a disaster. We got so lucky. They should have scored."

Marshall said she's not sure whether the move to defense is permanent or not, but it looks to be that way for at least the remainder of this season.

"I have to have a totally different mindset. I have to be so much more composed. I can't just go," said Marshall, who spent the summer on defense with the junior national team. "We have some amazing attacking girls, so I don't really need to be up there. We scored two goals today, and I wasn't there, so obviously I'm not that big of an influence."

"Maybe (it will be permanent). I look at our recruits that are coming in, and there's a lot more attacking girls still. So I don't know. But I'm content playing defense. That's fine with me."

Wherever she plays, the Buffs will need every ounce of talent on the field against Portland (16-3-0), which blanked Denver, 5-0, on Sunday in Boulder.



CU gives Hawaii the boot

Bufs advance with shutout

By Joshua Lindenstien
Saturday, November 17, 2007

If there was any question about whether the Colorado soccer team should have gotten a berth into the NCAA tournament, the Buffs certainly delivered an affirmative answer on Friday.

CU, the seventh seed from the Big 12 Conference, blanked Western Athletic Conference champion Hawaii 2-0 in the first round on a perfect fall day at Prentup Field.

Gianna DeSaverio's and Mel Hicks' Buffalo goals were the first two scored against the Rainbow Wahine in six matches. The high-octane Hawaii squad, playing in the NCAA tournament for the first time, had outscored its last five opponents by a combined 19-0 and had been shut out just two other times on the season.

"I think definitely we should be in the tournament," said CU forward Nikki Marshall, who was playing defense for the second straight game. "I think we're better than a lot of teams out there. I don't know if we deserve to be in the tournament after our season. But I think we played well today, and we showed that we're here and we're going to work hard."

The victory advances the Buffs (10-7-4) to the second round of the tournament for the fourth year in a row where they'll face the third-ranked Portland Pilots (16-3-0) at 1 p.m. Sunday at Prentup (television on FSN).

CU coach Bill Hempen admitted this week that his team may have gotten a "mulligan" by getting into the tournament as the Big 12's seventh-place team.

"But then we go out and did a pretty solid job against the winner of the WAC," Hempen said. "That's pretty good for our conference. We want to show that the conference deserves us and more the next time so that, who knows, the Texas Techs, they get a shot when they're looking for teams."

Colorado asserted itself right from the start on Friday.

Hicks had a shot from close range saved by Hawaii keeper Kori Lu in the ninth minute.

But two minutes later, DeSaverio put the Buffs on top. Amber Bettenhausen passed a corner kick to Michaela DeJesus near the 18-yard line, and DeJesus lobbed it into the box where DeSaverio easily headed it into the right corner.

"She hit a great ball," DeSaverio said. "It wasn't very hard to finish."

Hawaii (15-5-2) had a golden opportunity to tie the match in the 30th minute. But Taryn Fukuroku's first shot was turned back by CU goalie Kara Linder. Her second, off of a melee for the rebound, looked to be good but bounced off the right post.

"We were lucky, and sometimes this time of year you've got to be lucky," Hempen said. "That post, I'll probably go wax that thing."

The missed chance seemed to deflate the Rainbow Wahine, who to that point were playing a 50-50 match with the Buffs. After two shots on goal the first half, Hawaii mustered no really dangerous scoring chances in the second half.

"I couldn't believe it," Fukuroku said. "It just hit the post and bounced right back out. I think it would have changed the whole game. We would have probably had more of a life back in our team."

Hicks gave the Buffs a cushion in the 51st minute when she fired past Hawaii back up goalie Nicole McClure.

CU outdid Hawaii 6-2 on shots on goal, and Linder saved both that she faced. The shutout was the second in a row and 10th of the season posted by the Buffs.

"I think our three defenders were just outstanding today at limiting them, because they had some players that had some game and could get in behind us," Hempen said. "But we just never really let them in it."



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Woelk: Buffs not ready for the end

By Neill Woelk

Saturday, November 17, 2007

Not bad for a team that one week ago figured its season was over.

Any way you slice it, the Colorado soccer team put a nice validation stamp on its fifth consecutive NCAA bid Friday, serving up a 2-0 win over WAC champion Hawaii in front of about 1,000 fans at Prentup Field.

Go ahead and add at least another 90 minutes on the season's clock.

Of course, the Buffs' reward is a Sunday afternoon matchup with No. 3 Portland. The Pilots, still unhappy about having to hit the road instead of hosting the first two rounds of the tournament, took their frustrations out on Denver, thumping the Pioneers 5-0 in Friday's second game.

The Pilots don't figure to be in any better mood on Sunday as they continue their quest for a third national title.

The Buffs promise to show up.

"We just know it's not over yet," said Buff senior Allison Kidd. "Everyone was so excited to get a second chance, we're going to make the most of it."

Kidd knows a thing or two about second chances. And third chances. And fourth chances.

On Oct. 13, Kidd suffered a torn ACL in her left knee against Texas A&M. Instead of having surgery that would end her season and likely her career, she chose to attempt to come back and play.

Friday morning, she played against Hawaii.

"I just wanted to feel like I'm contributing," Kidd said.

Actually, to say Kidd tore her ACL might be a stretch. Said CU coach Bill Hempen, "She doesn't have an ACL in that knee anymore."

This year's injury was actually the third time in her career that Kidd has been diagnosed with a torn ACL in her left knee. She's also had one torn ACL in her right knee, a broken foot and more than one concussion in her time at CU.

Yet she's not ready for this season, her last as a Buff, to be over.

"When I came here, the girls before us had started something," Kidd said. "This program has been to the

NCAA Tournament five straight years now. It's not so much that you come to expect it, but you feel like it's up to you to continue what they started.

"When we came in, the program was in great shape. We have to leave it the same way."

Friday's win upped CU's all-time NCAA Tournament record to 4-4-1 under Hempen. Last year, Hempen's squad advanced to the Sweet 16, the farthest into the tournament the Buffs have ever advanced.

Sunday, they could match that with an upset win over Portland.

"We'll just keep working," Kidd said. "We're not ready for the year to be over. Not yet."



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