



CU tennis team begins Big 12 on 5-0 run

By Ryan Thorburn
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BOULDER, Colo. — Who says Colorado wasn't a part of March madness?

At least on the tennis courts it was a magical month for the Buffs.

After a humbling 7-0 loss to Denver on Feb. 28 dropped CU's record to an uninspiring 4-5, Nicole Kenneally's balanced team regrouped for conference play and went perfect in five March matches.

This is the first time in the program's history that it has started Big 12 play 5-0.

"I think we really looked into ourselves," Kenneally said. "There was a lot of conversation between myself and the players after the DU match and we improved on some different areas. They really bought into significance of the small things. This game is not just about hitting tennis balls. I think they're more aware of that now."

Last Sunday inside the Millennium Hotel Harvest House bubble the Buffs defeated Texas Tech 6-1.

CU's home match against No. 4 Baylor was postponed until April 22 due to last week's blizzard. The showdown with the Bears will now take place in Austin, Texas -- where the Big 12 championships will begin a day later -- instead of in Boulder.

"We were indifferent about it," junior Melisa Esposito said of not being able to face the Big 12 favorite during CU's March march. "We wanted to play them in our home facility, but it gave us more time to get ready for Texas Tech."

Esposito is 5-0 in her individual singles matches since Big 12 play began to improve her overall record to 20-10.

The Buffs clinched a key point against the Red Raiders when Esposito and Camila Belassi upset the nation's No. 43 ranked tandem of Samantha van der Drift and Kelsy Garland, 8-4 at the No. 1 doubles spot.

"Melissa is 5-0 but it has really been a team effort," Kenneally said.

CU has swept the doubles point in three straight matches and is 7-1 this season when clinching the doubles point.

Franziska Jendrian recorded her 25th Big 12 doubles victory, tying for third overall at CU, and also captured her school-record 75th doubles victory.

And the doubles teams of Ania Anuszkiewicz/Jendrian and Michala Hedelund Jensen/Abbie Probert improved to 4-1 in Big 12 play.

"There's nothing specific that has changed," Esposito said. "We played well earlier in the season and had a lot of close matches. I just think we realize how important each match is. ...

"It does keep building, but every match is its own entity."

The Buffs will play at Texas on Friday and at Texas A&M on Sunday. The Longhorns are 6-0 in conference play and the Aggies are 5-1.

"They're probably looking at it as, 'We've got an undefeated team coming to town,'" Kenneally said of the next two Big 12 foes. "We're actually a better road team. As far as experience goes, we have four freshman traveling. It has more to do with the chemistry of traveling group and what they bring and how they come together when we're on the road."

CU's next home match will be on April 17 against Iowa State.



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