



Booters prepare for No. 1 Stanford

By Joshua Lindenstein

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Busting out of goal scoring slumps in soccer can be an arduous enough task sometimes. Trying to do so with the No. 1 team in the country coming to town seems just plain daunting.

The Colorado Buffaloes, however, aren't ones to shy away from elite competition in the nonconference portion of their season, slump or no slump. It's why they're more excited about the opportunity that lies before them than they are intimidated or left dwelling on their recent scoring woes.

The Buffs (2-1-3) open their Colorado Soccer Classic by hosting top-ranked Stanford (6-0-0) at 4 p.m. Friday at Prentup Field having not scored a goal in the last three games. CU hosts Drake at 1 p.m. Sunday, while Denver plays Drake at 2 p.m. Friday and Stanford at 11 a.m. Sunday.

"It would be awesome (to get a win), especially against Stanford, because we'd like to prove that we're as good as some of these teams we play," forward Nikki Marshall said. "We're not showing it right now, but I really do think Colorado has the potential to be a top-10 program this year. So it would be awesome to break out against Stanford."

The Buffs have registered scoreless ties against No. 25 BYU and New Mexico around a 4-0 loss to No. 7 Virginia over the past 12 days.

Colorado coach Bill Hempen said the unlucky timing of his team's drought doesn't affect how he looks at his non-league scheduling, which he generally uses to challenge the squad in preparation for Big 12 Conference play.

The season has been an up-and-down one so far for the Buffs. They've had games against smaller opponents like Fairfield in which they had ample scoring chances, only to struggle to put the ball away. They've also had outings like a win over Utah in which they had relatively few chances but scored four goals.

"We've pretty much proven that it doesn't matter who the opponent is," Hempen said. "We could be eating high on the hog or we could be in an incredible drought."

Not that the scoring problems haven't taken their toll on the Buffs' psyche.

"A win would definitely help our morale," goalkeeper Kirstin Radlinski said. "Some goals would help our morale."

Stanford has four victories over ranked opponents already this season, including a 2-1 decision over Virginia. But Hempen said the Buffs have focused more on their own game plan this week than the opponent itself.

He's also tried not to overemphasize the need to score. Marshall, in fact, will start in the defense against Stanford, partly to match her with Stanford's speed up front and partly to take some pressure off of her as CU's leading scorer.

"I think she's putting herself under so much pressure to be our goal scorer that she's not even scoring," Hempen said.

Hempen indicated that there's a fine line to walk as a coach when trying to end a scoring drought.

"You try not to emphasize it as much in training because they're already thinking about it, and you don't want to add more pressure," he said.

"I can't complain about the kids' effort. It's keeping that effort with little reward scoring-wise that's going to be the most difficult thing. But that shouldn't be an issue certainly this weekend."

Linksters taking on alumni

Six members of the CU men's golf team will take on six team alumni this afternoon in the annual Fowler Cup at Boulder Country Club.

Ben Portie, Scott Petersen, Barry Jennings, Derek O'Neill, Kevin Bolles and John Hamer comprise the alumni squad.

Each player will play two nine-hole match play matches, with 12 points total up for grabs.

Netters to open fall slate

The CU tennis team opens the fall portion of its schedule with the University of New Mexico Invitational Friday to Sunday.

There are no team scores kept in the fall. All of the Buffs, rather, will play singles or doubles in one of three different individual draws.

The Buffs return everyone except for graduated senior Martina Sedivec, though coach Nicole Kenneally said last year's No. 1 singles player, Monica Milewski, will play only doubles this weekend.



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CU gets a shot at the Cardinal

By ELIOT DEMPSEY Colorado Daily Sports Editor
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It's not often that a team gets a chance to play the No. 1 program in the land, but that opportunity awaits the University of Colorado women's soccer team on Friday.

No. 1 Stanford will visit Boulder this weekend to play in the 2007 Colorado Soccer Classic, where they will face the Buffaloes on Friday at 4 p.m. at Prentup Field.

Such a talented team could have found a better time to visit the Flatirons, as the Buffs have been in a scoring drought as of late, having not scored a goal in the last three matches.

The Cardinal, on the other hand, are 6-0 and most recently defeated No. 12 Rutgers 4-1 last Sunday.

If Colorado plays with the relaxed attitude of junior midfielder Alex Cousins, however, they should have no problem with the nerves that would usually come with such a challenge.

"I never even really know who we are going to play. I have played against national players and with national players like Nikki, I just know they are a good team," said Cousins. "One thing I do know is they have a lot of speed, and one thing we can't do is just dump balls up there, especially if Nikki Marshall isn't up there."

Marshall, who will be seeing time on the back line instead of her usual forward spot, played on the U.S. U-20 National team at the Pan-Am Games this summer with Stanford's Kelley O'Hara.

Marshall will play at times both up front and on the back line to try and keep Stanford away from the goal and to help keep their speed in check, according to Buffs coach Bill Hempen.

"Nikki is in the back because she is putting herself under so much pressure to be our goal scorer that she is not even scoring. Stanford is quite fast up front, and we are trying to match speed for speed in the back," said Hempen. "Michelle (Wenino) is pretty darn quick, Nikki is quick and Kym Lowry is quick. You've got to defend speed."

Hempen said that he anticipates seeing Stanford in a 4-3-3 formation and that they are an attack oriented team. He said O'Hara is a really good player, and that he expects her to be handful on the pitch.

Marshall, who has had plenty of experience playing with and against talented teams after her summer National team experience, is going into the Stanford game with a focused mindset.

"I think really, if I pass on to my teammates that every game is just another game. It's not, 'This is the best team in the nation, we have to play different,'" said Marshall. "We go out and play hard every single game, no matter who we play. Every week is a new week and every game is a new game."

Maturity and work ethic can only get you so far though, and sooner or later the Buffs are going to have to find a way to put the ball in the net and break the scoring drought.

"I don't want to sound too much like Dan Hawkins, but analytically, It's like a batter in a batting slump or a receiver who drops everything thrown his way," said Hempen. "All of a sudden you are working a little bit harder and you are pressing and that doesn't work, so you try and get them to relax. I'm trying to get the kids to see the ball going in, or visualize scoring, or whatever. Slow down, it's not panic time."

It's not yet time to push the panic button, but there is no doubting the opportunity that presents itself with

the No. 1 ranked team in the nation at the Buffs disposal. A win against them could propel the Buffs back into the rankings and into the national picture.

"We are in a slump right now, scoring wise. I just don't think that we have found our chemistry yet up front, I think it will come and when that day comes it will be glorious," said Marshall.

Friday could be a glorious day.

Prior to kickoff of CU vs. Stanford, Denver will face Drake at 2 p.m. on Friday. Matches resume on Sunday with Denver vs. Stanford at 11 a.m. and CU facing Drake at 1 p.m.