



No. 21 Ram volleyballers overpower Buffaloes in four sets

By Alan Pearce

Wednesday, September 10, 2008

Despite being inconsistent at the outside hitter position, Colorado State continued to roll Wednesday night with a closely fought 3-1 volleyball victory against the previously undefeated University of Colorado.

The Rams, ranked 21st in the nation, barely edged the Buffaloes in the first two sets, showing greater power and clutch play. CSU senior Mekana Barnes was a big factor early and late in the Rams' 25-23, 25-23, 19-25, 25-16 win before a crowd of 1,218 fans at the Coors Events Center.

Barnes, a 6-foot All-American middle blocker, piled up 15 kills and hit .360 as the Rams improved to 6-1.

"This is a good way to start our weekend," Barnes said. "We have some big teams coming in (North Carolina on Friday and No. 8 Florida on Saturday) and this helped us get ready."

CSU's Jacque Davisson had nine kills and Jaime Strauss seven. Rams coach Tom Hilbert also called on sophomore Danielle Minch late in the match, and she responded with five kills, a solo block and two block assists. Her blocking was outstanding considering her limited playing time and the fact outside hitters don't get many blocking opportunities.

"If one person is not able to get a kill, then we have other people who can fill in," Barnes said.

The Rams ended up outhitting the Buffaloes, .179 to .144 but passed better and were more physical in crucial situations.

CU, which was off to its best start in school history, was cruising in the second game before blowing a 21-16 lead.

The Buffaloes had a hitting edge of .360 to .281 in that game but couldn't withstand Davisson's serving run of six points to close it out.

"I had challenged Jacque a little bit because sometimes she serves a little too 'fluffy,'" CSU coach Tom Hilbert said. "She changed that and served tough the rest of the match."

CU coach Pi'i Aiu said the Buffaloes' collapse in the second game centered around one thing.

"We had seven poor passes in a row, I think," he said. "I think both teams played outrageous defense."

The Buffaloes' middles were strong. Lauren Schaefer hit .400 with nine kills, while Schylur Edelman (a teammate of Minch's at Sterling High), racked up 13 kills and seven block assists.

Colorado State (6-1)25 25 19 25

Colorado (6-1)23 23 25 16

CSU - Jaime Strauss (.000, 7 kills, 3 digs, 2 block assists), Ashley Fornstrom (.500, 2K, 13D, 45 assists, 1 solo block, 6BA), Mekana Barnes (.360, 15K, 3SB, 6BA), Katelyn Steffan (.269, 11K, 3 aces, 1D, 5BA), Jacque Davisson (.105, 9K, 2A, 11D), Tessa Nelson (.143, 3K, 1D, 2BA), Katelin Batten (14D), Danielle Minch (.125, 5K, 1SB, 2BA), Audrey Hemmings (8D).

CU - Emilee Sisco (.000, 7K, 1Ac, 2D, 3BA), Schylur Edelman (.179, 13K, 2D, 1SB, 7BA), Lauren Schaefer (.400, 9K, 1SB, 3BA), Alex Buth (.174, 7K, 3As, 1Ac, 8D, 6BA), Amber Sutherland (.061, 11K, 8D, 1BA), Kaitlyn Burkett (.111, 3K, 40As, 2Ac, 6D, 2BA), Callie Webster (2As, 22D), Ashley VenHorst (4D).

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Rams cool off Buffs in CU's home opener

Aiu's team gives up 21-16 lead in second game

By Ryan Thorburn
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Old habits die hard.

The Colorado volleyball team, after winning a total of six games last season, appeared to have turned the page on the nightmarish 2007 campaign as it entered Tuesday night's home opener with a 6-0 record, the best start in the program's proud history.

But after the Buffs' disheartening 23-25, 23-25, 25-19, 16-25 loss to No. 21 Colorado State on the new floor at the Coors Events Center, Pi'i Aiu was having some ugly flashbacks.

CU's longtime head coach watched helplessly as his team squandered a 21-16 lead in game two with a chance to even the match against their ranked rivals.

"We lost 11 five-game matches last year, and this is basically the same team. So, yeah, I think that's a concern for us and it has been for over a year now," Aiu said. "I think we have to learn to finish matches. The problem we're having right now ... under pressure we've got to learn to make plays.

"Physically I think we can play the game. And physically I think we can play with a lot of teams in the country. But mentally we've just got to be a little tougher. ...

"It's kind of scary because we've got five seniors starting for us. If it's not going to come now, when is it?"

The Buffs -- who don't have time to dwell on their first defeat of the season with No. 8 Florida up next on the CU Invitational schedule at 6:30 p.m. today -- were led by sophomore middle blocker Schylur Edelman's 13 kills and eight blocks.

Unfortunately for Alex Buth, Lauren Schaefer, Amber Sutherland and the rest of the senior class this was the fifth consecutive loss to CSU. The last time Aiu's team beat the Rams was on Sept. 10, 2002.

"They're a great team but they're very, very beatable," Buth said. "We definitely should have come out and given them everything we have and we didn't give everything we had tonight."

CSU standout Mekana Barnes completed her team's comeback in the second game with two kills as the visitors scored the final six points. She also dominated the decisive fourth game and finished with a match-high 15 kills.

"Any player like that, when they're on fire it's kind of hard to get them out of that rhythm," Sutherland

said. "She did a great job and we just have to do a better job of taking care of our side."

The Buffs were able to regroup and win the third game. However, the finishing touch Aiu is desperately looking for was nowhere to be found after the short-lived shift in momentum.

"That's definitely on us. That's a mental thing we need to work through," Edelman said. "We have to be better next time."

The Rams (6-1) will host North Carolina on Friday and Florida on Saturday at Moby Arena.

"It's an exciting thing to go back to Fort Collins and say we beat CU last night," said fiery Rams outside hitter Jacque Davisson, who spiked a ball into the cheap seats out of frustration during CU's one shining moment in game three. "It's definitely a pride thing and very exciting."

The Buffs (6-1) will have to play their best match of the season to hang with the Gators (5-0). CU will finish the competitive three-game home stand against North Carolina on Saturday.

"What we talked about post-game was Florida. CSU is behind us, it's done," Aiu said. "We did everything we could do, there are things we can take from this match and learn. But if we're thinking about CSU when we walk in here (today), we're going to get thumped."



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