



CU booters aim for new heights again

Bufs return eight starters, 13 letterwinners

By Ryan Thorburn
Thursday, August 9, 2007

Can you top that?

Every year Bill Hempen challenges his team to improve on the previous team's accomplishments. Last season the Colorado soccer program, which has made four consecutive appearances in the NCAA Tournament, reached new heights again with its first run into the Sweet 16.

That puts a lot of internal pressure on the 2007 Buffs who want very much to at least join Elite Eight company.

"A lot of expectations go into a season after a season like we had a year ago. Some of them are realistic, some are not," Hempen said at his team's media day at the Dal Ward Center. "As you get to NCAA Tournaments and Sweet 16's it gets harder and harder."

Talent is no longer an issue at CU thanks to some impressive recruiting over the last seven years. Hempen's main task will be solving an interesting chemistry experiment as the Buffs return 13 letterwinners (including eight starters) and also welcoming the largest freshman class (15) in the program's 12-year history.

"How the older kids accept those coming in will be an interesting dynamic," Hempen said.

Brittany Dornseif believes the players understand how the cycle of CU soccer life is supposed to work. For example, the senior defender was groomed by Laura Munnelly — who led the 2006 team with 2,256 minutes played — and now she wants to pass down everything she has learned to whoever ends up becoming her young, new partner in the backfield for the sake of winning.

"I think a lot of our success last year was because it wasn't about superstars," said Dornseif, who hopes to recover from a foot stress fracture in time for the opener on Aug. 31 at Denver. The Buffs beat the Pioneers in the second round of the 2006 NCAA Tournament. "It was everyone working for each other. ... And our expectations got higher as the season went on."

The Buffs do have a rising superstar in sophomore Nikki Marshall, who played on the U-20 national team at the Pan American Games in Rio de Janeiro this summer. After leading the Big 12 and setting a CU single-season scoring record with 37 points (17 goals, three assists) as a freshman, the talented forward played a lot as a defender for the U.S. squad.

"What's that going to mean for us? We've got a player who has played against the best players in the world, so nothing is going to be a surprise for her," Hempen said. "After playing defender she's going to

be a better foe, because now she knows what defensive players are thinking."

The Buffs, who finished 12th in the final NSCAA poll for the 2006 season, will begin two-a-days on Aug. 15 with thoughts of cracking the top 10.

Notable

The Buffs' schedule features no fewer than eight teams that qualified for the NCAA Tournament last year, including a trip to Virginia on Sept. 14 for a matchup against another Sweet 16 team from 2006. ... CU has a 17-3-1 home record since Prentup Field became the program's official home turf in 2005. ... Fourteen of the 20 players on the roster are from Colorado.

CU soccer schedule

Home games in all caps

Aug. 31 — at Denver, 4:30 p.m.

Sept. 2 — Air Force, at Denver, 11 a.m.

Sept. 6 — UTAH, 4 p.m.

Sept. 8 — BYU, 4 p.m.

Sept. 14 — at Virginia, 5 p.m.

Sept. 16 — New Mexico, at Virginia, 9 a.m.

Sept. 21 — STANFORD, 4 p.m.

Sept. 23 — DRAKE, 1 p.m.

Sept. 25 — at Wyoming, 4 p.m.

Sept. 28 — TEXAS TECH, 4 p.m.

Oct. 5 — NEBRASKA, 4 p.m.

Oct. 7 — IOWA STATE, 1 p.m.

Oct. 12 — at Baylor, 6 p.m.

Oct. 14 — at Texas A&M, Noon

Oct. 19 — KANSAS, 3 p.m.

Oct. 21 — MISSOURI, 1 p.m.

Oct. 26 — at Oklahoma, 6 p.m.

Oct. 28 — at Oklahoma State, Noon

Nov. 2 — at Texas, 6 p.m.



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