



Bufs fall short vs. Pilots

Colorado ousted in second round of NCAA tourney

By Chris Shelton

Monday, November 19, 2007

Nikki Marshall wasn't satisfied with the Colorado soccer team's showing in the regular season, but Sunday's performance provided some consolation.

Although the Buffs weren't able to solve third-ranked Portland's defense, Colorado put forth a respectable showing in a 1-0 loss before 1,977 at Prentup Field in the second round of the NCAA tournament.

Portland posted its ninth shutout in its last 10 matches.

"Coming out of tough conference play, our season wasn't awesome," said Marshall, an All-American last year. "Getting into the NAAs was a surprise for us. We felt like we deserved the opportunity, but we had to prove it on the field and I feel like we did (Sunday). We showed we can play with the best."

One slip by CU's defense was all Portland (17-3) needed to end Colorado's season at 10-8-4.

Portland forward Michelle Enyeart stole the ball from CU defender Michelle Wenino in the Buffs' own end. Enyeart crossed the ball to teammate Sophie Schmidt, who was open in front of CU's net. Schmidt put it away in the 60th minute.

The Pilots built numerous other chances, tallying 16 shots — seven on goal. But CU's defense held firm and hoped the offense would catch a break. The Buffs didn't, however, as they were held to two shots overall — none on goal.

"I feel so bad for (Wenino) because she's been so good for us all year long, and she's taking it personal," CU coach Bill Hempen said. "But when you don't get a lot of shots, ... you can't fault the defense. They held pretty solid."

Colorado was able to possess the ball, building attacks from the back. But the Buffs' maneuvering up field came to an abrupt halt anytime they came near Portland's penalty box.

"We had the first and second passes and we were getting it to the outside," said CU midfielder Nikki Keller. "But getting it into the box, that was what we struggled with. And they were pretty compact in there so it was hard to force it in there."

The Buffs were denied a second consecutive trip to the Sweet 16.

But the likelihood of a sixth consecutive NCAA appearance next year should be high. The Buffs lose

only two seniors, with first-team All-Big 12 players Wenino and Marshall returning.

Inconsistency marked CU's season, which saw 14 freshmen and eight sophomores on the roster.

The Buffs began with only two wins in their first seven matches and began Big 12 play 3-4. They were also bounced out of the Big 12 tournament in the first round.

"We went through a couple of rough spots, but I'm proud to say we ended up in the second round of the NCAA tournament from where we first started off," CU goalie Kara Linder said. "We've come a long way."



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women's ncaa soccer tournament

Schmidt's goal all Pilots need to end CU's season

By Theresa Smith
Special to The Denver Post

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CU junior defender Michelle Wenino is inconsolable after the Buffs fell to the University of Portland on Sunday.
(Post / Brian Brainerd)

BOULDER — It was a testament to the University of Colorado women's soccer team that it survived lengthy bouts of Portland's dominance without allowing a goal.

Yet the slightest Buffalo mistake was all the second-ranked Pilots needed to cash in Sunday at Prentup Field.

A misplayed ball by CU's Michelle Wenino led to a steal by Portland's Michelle Enyeart, whose crossing pass set up Sophie Schmidt's kick past diving CU keeper Kara Linder for the lone goal of the second-round NCAA Tournament match.

The 1-0 loss ended CU's season at 10-8-4 and sent the Pilots (17-3-0) into the third round with their 10th straight win. They will next face Tennessee.

Considering the pedigree of Portland, the 2002 and 2005 NCAA champion, and CU's bubble status in the 64-team field after a sixth-place finish in the Big 12, the Buffs' defense was amazing.

Portland, which scored five goals in an opening-round victory over the University of Denver on Friday and has outscored opponents 45-9, did not score until the 61st minute.

"They've always been a very skillful, very calculating team," CU coach Bill Hempen said.

"You make one error. I feel so bad for No. 3 (Wenino) because she's been so good for us all year long, and she's taking it personally. But when you don't get off a lot of shots - we did not have a shot on goal - you can't fault the defense."

Portland dominated possession with accurate short passing and the ability to post up Buffs defenders, control the long ball and dish to cutting teammates. The Pilots were more

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physical in terms of slide tackling, and Keelin Winters, a freshman from Regis High in Aurora, dominated the heading battles in the midfield.

"CU did a good job packing it in," said Winters, daughter of former NBA player and head coach Brian Winters. "Our whole midfield stepped up and did a good job countering their defense."

Portland peeled off seven first-half shots, including three on goal, and lofted four corner kicks, but CU did not yield.

Hempen, whose squad was outshot 16-2, preached an aggressive attack, but his young players couldn't string together a series of passes.

"It seemed like if we could connect the second or the third pass, we could never connect on the fourth one that would get us into a danger zone," he said. "That's a credit to them. Their defense is no slouch."

With all starters returning next season, CU plans to build on a feisty finish to what sophomore standout Nikki Marshall termed a "mediocre" season.

"We're not happy about the loss today, especially it being so close ... but we played as a team and we can walk away proud," junior midfielder Nikki Keller said.

Portland (17-3-0) 0 1 - 1

Colorado (10-8-4) 0 0 - 0

Scoring - Portland, Sophie Schmidt (Michelle Enyeart), 61st minute.

Shots - Colorado 1-1-2, Portland 7-9-16. Saves - Colorado (Linder) 3-3-6; Portland (Davis) 0-0-0.

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Buffs' season ends in NCAA tournament

By Patrick Ridgell
 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Colorado soccer coach Bill Hempen wants his team to be mentioned in the same breath with Portland. To anyone who saw the teams play Sunday at Prentup Field, it's obvious why.

Portland defeated the Buffs, 1-0, before 1,977 people, the second-largest crowd for CU soccer ever at Prentup. Portland won by the slimmest of margins, but the Pilots dominated. They controlled play most of the afternoon, and they held the Buffs to two shots, none on goal.

Portland's goal came in the 61st minute. Michelle Enyeart crossed to Sophie Schmidt, who buried a shot past CU goalkeeper Kara Linder.

On the play, Enyeart capitalized on a mistake by CU defender Michelle Wenino. Linder kept CU within a goal with two acrobatic saves in the second half, and the defense made few mistakes. But one was too many.

"You make one error, and I feel bad for my No. 3," CU coach Bill Hempen said about Wenino. "She's been so good for us, all year long, and she's taking it personal."

"We can't fault the defense."

Portland (16-3), ranked No. 3 in most polls entering this weekend, won its 10th straight game and advances to the Sweet 16. The Pilots took the hard road, winning two games in Colorado over the weekend, including a 5-0 defeat of Denver on Friday. They are accustomed to these heights — this is their 15th NCAA Tournament appearance in 16 years, and they won the national title in 2002 and 2005.

Meanwhile, the Buffs (10-7-4) hoped to extend an up-and-down season and reach their second Sweet 16 in as many years.

"They were very aggressive," Schmidt said. "They fought us tooth and nail to the end."

The Buffs might consider that a fitting epitaph for a season that leading-scorer Nikki Marshall, a former Skyline High star, described as "mediocre" following Sunday's loss. CU beat Hawaii, 2-0, on Friday to reach the tournament's second round. But the Buffs, making their fifth straight trip to the NAACAs, were unable to sustain success as they have in previous seasons.

Marshall said CU did not play to its potential until the first round of the Big 12 Tournament, when it tied Texas, 0-0, before losing on penalty kicks. Hence her frustration Sunday, and her eagerness to look to 2008.

"When you come off a mediocre season, the next year is motivation to just pick it up and play much better," she said. "We have a young team right now and our junior class (has) huge leaders. It's going to be huge for us. Today we showed we can play against the best."



CU's Nikki Marshall, a Skyline High graduate, gets sandwiched by Portland's Keelin Winters, left, and Elli Reed during their second-round NCAA playoff game at Prentup Field in Boulder on Sunday. **Times-Call/Lewis Geyer**

Hempen used "difficult" to describe 2007, and cited CU's inability to post a winning streak of more than three games as a big reason why. Hempen and his players acknowledged others believed they didn't deserve to host NCAA games. The coach said some Buffs hanged their heads, like those opinions mattered.

Hempen saw things different on Sunday.

"We certainly represented Division I soccer pretty well today," he said.