



Colorado ties No. 20 Florida in opener

Freshman Russell scores lone goal in her CU debut

By Kyle McDaniel Camera Sports Writer
Saturday, August 23, 2008

A big weight was lifted off Kate Russell's shoulders Friday.

The Colorado freshman midfielder and former Silver Creek standout scored the first goal of her college career in her first game as a Buff, and it turned out to be team's only goal against No. 20 Florida at Prentup Field. But it was also enough to give the Buffs a tie against the Gators in both teams' season opener.

"It settled me down," Russell said. "I was like, 'Oh, this isn't so different (from high school).'"

Russell, who was one of three freshman starters for the Buffs, scored on a rebound in the first half after a Colorado corner kick.

CU struggled, however, after Russell gave the Buffs the early lead.

Colorado maintained good possession for about the first 10 minutes of the game, but Florida answered less than three minutes after the Buffs scored.

Former Smoky Hill standout Ameera Abdullah put the ball on the far post -- past Colorado junior keeper Kara Linder to tie the match at 1-1.

Colorado coach Bill Hempen said the Gators started to play with more intensity right after his team scored, which led to the equalizer.

"We did everything the opposite of what we had been doing to get the goal," Hempen said. "We didn't possess. They came out a little bit more, put a little bit more pressure on us and that made us kind of step back a little bit. We didn't handle that very well."

Abdullah's goal was the only shot the Gators managed to put on the net.

Colorado defender Michelle Wenino, who played with Abdullah at Smoky Hill, said the Buffs played solid defense despite giving up the goal.

"It's great defense," Wenino said. "It's good because we're just getting used to each other in the back since this is our first game. I think we did pretty well overall, you know, to hold them just to one shot."

Both Florida and Colorado had great scoring chances in the second half, but neither team was able to capitalize, which sent the game into the two overtime periods.

Florida had a goal taken back with 15 minutes left to play when a player was called offside on a free kick.

And Colorado's best chance to get another goal happened just after halftime. Forward Gianna DeSaverio had only the keeper to beat on that attempt but couldn't put the ball away.

Wenino, a senior and one of the team captains, said it was good for the younger players to experience the intensity of playing in a double-overtime game against one of the top teams in the country.

"It is great intensity level to start at because this is a good team," Wenino said. "Playing as much as we can against good teams is what we need."

Coach Hempen agreed, but the Buffs will have only one day to rest before playing in-state rival Denver at Prentup Field at 3 p.m. on Sunday.

"It will be interesting," Hempen said. "It's one thing to play a double overtime game and then have a week to rest. Now, they've got to do it all over again on Sunday."



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