



# Buff spikers knock off No. 2 Huskers

## It's second time in 3 years that Buffs hand Nebraska first defeat

By Ryan Thorburn

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Pi'i Aiu obviously knows something his peers in the Big 12 and around the country can't figure out: How to beat a seemingly perfect Nebraska volleyball team.

Not surprisingly, Colorado's head coach wasn't about to share the information after the Buffs stunned the No. 2 and previously unbeaten Cornhuskers 25-19, 27-25, 18-25, 25-16 on Wednesday night in front of predominantly red-clad crowd of 2,817 at the Coors Events Center.

"I don't know," Aiu said when asked how his team has been able to solve the Huskers when they're at the height of their powers. "But we've got to keep doing it."

Two years ago, CU upset Nebraska in a five-set classic that ended up being the only blemish on the Huskers' record en route to an NCAA championship. This time Big Red arrived in Boulder with a perfect 20-0 record (11-0 in the Big 12) and having swept its last eight opponents.

"It's definitely rewarding when a win like tonight happens," said CU senior Amber Sutherland, who fought back from a serious shoulder injury to get back in the lineup this season. "This whole week we kind of knew what Nebraska was and focused on our play rather than really keying on what they did."

The Buffs lost the first three points of the match before settling in. Kaitlyn Burkett gave the home team its first lead (10-9), and Sutherland had three key kills to get CU off to a 1-0 lead.

The pivotal moment in the match came with Nebraska leading 23-17 in the second set before an improbable rally by the Buffs. CU reeled off the next seven points and seized a 2-0 lead after back-to-back kills by Emilee Sisco broke a 25-25 tie.

"I think it's all about determination and heart," Sutherland said. "In set two we came back and fought. A lot of teams when they're down, it's easy to fold. That's something this team has always had ever since I've been on it is a lot of heart. When we give our full 100 percent we can do anything."

Nebraska scored the first seven points of the third set and cruised to a 25-18 win. Despite the predictable change in momentum, the Buffs' confidence never wavered.

"It would have been a different story if we weren't down 0-7. We ended up losing that game by seven points," senior Alex Buth noted. "We still played consistent even though we were down and I just think that shows what our character is as a team. We do believe in ourselves and have so much heart."

The Buffs benefited from several questionable calls in the fourth set and sealed the signature win

without too much of a fight from talented Huskers, who had only been pushed to four sets five times all season with no five-set matches.

"We played a consistent game and we took advantage of them being off their game," said Buth, who had the clinching point in the 2006 upset of Nebraska. "Two years ago we were neck and neck and both playing well and it ended in a fifth game and it was way more climactic. This year we were almost expecting to win."

The Huskers -- who are 81-5 on the road in Big 12 play over the nine seasons under head coach John Cook and 90-4 in conference play dating back to the 2003 season -- still lead the all-time series 45-7 and have won 20 of the last 22 meetings.

These lopsided numbers made the victory even sweeter for the Buffs as they watched the hordes Nebraska fans leave their arena cloaked in disappointment.

"It's always special when you beat a program like Nebraska. I think they're a great program, their tradition is excellent, they're always good ... yeah, it's special," Aiu said. "We're going to use it to recruit and we're going to use it to fire our kids up for the rest of the season and just hopefully energize the Buffs fans and the program."

CU, led by Sisco's 17 kills, improved to 12-9 overall and 6-6 in the Big 12.

"We looked at them obviously as great team and as a team that it was going to take a lot of heart, a lot of energy and a lot of playing good to beat," Sisco said. "But we didn't see them as unbeatable by any means. This is very rewarding."



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