

CU women make it back-to-back blowout wins

Bufs follow Southern Utah rout by crushing San Jose State

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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Brittany Spears 20, San Jose State 13.

That was all you needed to know at halftime.

For the second consecutive game, Colorado ambushed a turnover-prone opponent early and cruised to a blowout victory at the Coors Events Center.

The Buffs built a 46-13 edge by the intermission and settled for an 86-50 win over the sloppy Spartans on Tuesday night.

A little over 72 hours earlier, CU jumped out to leads of 24-0, 40-2 and 53-11 (halftime score) en route to an 88-36 thrashing of Southern Utah.

"There are a couple things we're doing differently," CU head coach Kathy McConnell-Miller said when asked about the more aggressive approach at the start of the last two games. "Throughout the week we're throwing more concepts at them without them knowing, and the day of the game we're resting them more."

The Buffs are now 8-2 overall and 7-0 at home with the next four games to be played in the cozy confines of the Coors Events Center.

"They like being at home, they've got energy, and defensively they've been on the same page," McConnell-Miller said.

Spears finished with a season-high 28 points in 26 minutes. Bianca Smith added 25 points, including 17 in the first half.

CU shot 47 percent from the field (31-for-66) and 88.9 percent (16-for-18) at the free-throw line with 10 different players scoring. The Buffs also scored 28 points off 26 San Jose State turnovers and had an 18-4 advantage in fast-break points and a 32-20 edge in bench scoring.

"I think my teammates are able to find me on the floor and are allowing me to get open shots," said Smith, who came off the bench again after getting her first start of the season against Southern Utah. "I think it helps to come off the bench just to get a feel for the game and a feel for what's going on with the defense and how they're playing. It allows me to put myself in position to help the team."

The 24 combined points allowed in the two first halves of the previous two games is the fewest in program history. CU allowed 18 first-half points to San Diego and then nine first-half points to Bowling Green in back-to-back games during the 2001-02 season.

CU shot 45.9 percent (17-for-37) in the first half and only allowed five field goals for San Jose State (5-for-24, 20.8 percent) while scoring 21 points off 19 turnovers by the Spartans.

Spears was 10-for-15 from the field with eight rebounds. Smith made six of CU's eight 3-pointers. Freshmen Meagan Malcolm-Peck (10 rebounds) and Chucky Jeffery (eight points, seven rebounds) also chipped in.

"I thought we handled their sets, which concerned me very much coming into the game because they like to penetrate a lot and that wasn't one of our strengths," McConnell-Miller said. "We were able to use a lot of combinations on the floor and with the exception of Spears and Bianca, I thought it was fairly balanced."

San Jose State (286) and Southern Utah (331) were buried deep in the RPI rankings as of Tuesday. CU will return to action on Dec. 30 against Grambling State, which had an RPI of 318, at the Coors Events Center.

"Having home games increases our confidence, builds momentum and builds are fan base," said McConnell-Miller, who noted that most Big 12 teams play the bulk of their non-conference games at home.

Notable

Kelly Jo Mullaney was questionable with a sprained ankle, but the junior guard played 13 minutes and scored one point on and 0-for-3 night from the field. ... Courtney Dunn returned to the starting lineup after being held out of the Southern Utah game for disciplinary reasons. The senior forward/center had eight points and three rebounds in 19 minutes. ... Spears has 1,204 career points, the 17th player to eclipse 1,200. ... The Buffs will take some time off before returning to practice on Dec. 27.

Colorado 86,

San Jose State 50

SAN JOSE ST. (36)

Player MIN FG FT Rb A PF PT

Hall 21 2-5 1-2 3 0 2 5

Ridge 37 2-7 0-0 8 2 0 4

Shavers 32 5-20 6-9 2 2 3 16

Sumler 36 2-8 1-2 10 2 3 5

Finnegan 17 0-1 0-0 5 0 2 0

Bradley 12 1-4 2-2 4 1 0 4

Brown 15 0-1 0-0 0 2 3 0

Atoe 8 1-2 0-0 1 0 2 2

Hamilton 3 0-0 0-0 0 0 0 0

Marez 19 7-13 0-0 2 0 3 14

Totals 200 20-61 10-15 40 9 18 50

3-Point Goals: 0-2 (Shavers 0-7, Ridge 0-2, Marez 0-2, Atoe 0-1)..

Team Rebounds: 5.

Blocked Shots: 2 (Shavers, Finnegan).

Turnovers: 26 (Sumler 8, Ridge 4, Shavers 4, Bradley 2, Atoe 2, Marez 2, Hall, Finnegan, Brown, team).

Steals: 9 (Sumler 3, Shavers 2, Hall, Ridge, Atoe, Marez).

Technical Fouls: None.

COLORADO (86)

Player MIN FG FT Rb A PF PT

M. MclmPck 24 2-5 0-0 10 3 1 4

Spears 26 10-15 6-7 8 2 1 28

Dunn 19 4-8 0-0 3 1 3 8

Fressle 21 3-6 0-0 1 4 2 6

Jeffrey 29 2-6 4-4 7 1 3 8

Smith 17 8-15 3-3 1 0 0 25

Houston 12 1-4 0-0 0 3 1 2

Blythe 5 0-1 0-0 0 1 0 0

Seabrook 8 0-0 0-0 2 0 0 0

Dale 8 0-2 2-2 2 0 0 2

[B.MclmPck](#) 13 1-1 0-0 2 1 0 2

Mullaney 13 0-3 1-2 0 1 1 1

Bailey 1 0-0 0-0 1 0 0 0

MacFarlane 4 0-0 0-0 0 0 1 0

Totals 200 31-66 16-18 39 17 13 86

3-Point Goals: 8-24 (Smith 6-13, Spears 2-4, M. Malcolm-Peck 0-1, Fressle 0-1, Dale 0-1, Mullaney 0-1).

Team Rebounds: 2.

Blocked Shots: 5 (M. Malcolm-Peck 3, MacFarlane 2).

Turnovers: 17 (Jeffery 5, Spears 3, Fressle 2, M. Malcolm-Peck, Dunn, Smith, Seabrook, Dale, Bailey, team).

Steals: 13 (M. Malcolm-Peck 4, Spears 3, Smith 3, Jeffery, Houston, Mullaney).

Technical Fouls: None.

San Jose State 13 37 -- 50

Colorado 46 40 -- 86

Officials: Jones, Price, Larson.

Attendance: 2,783.

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Feeling right at home

CU women win another, finding groove in Boulder

By Patrick Ridgell
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BOULDER — Kathy McConnell-Miller has figured something out.

Following the Colorado women's basketball team's 86-50 defeat of San Jose State on Tuesday night, the Buffs' coach said CU's home-heavy scheduling is playing a role in the program's early success. The Buffs are off to an 8-2 start and are in the middle of six straight games at home, during which the coach plans to establish rotations and learn as much about her team as she can before Big 12 play starts.



CU freshman guard Chucky Jeffery jumps for a shot with San Jose's Shaunna Ridge on the defense during their game Tuesday at the Coors Events Center in Boulder.

Morgan Varon/Times-Call

Next up is Grambling State on Dec. 30. The Buffs will play 10 games in Boulder before Missouri visits Jan. 9 to open the Big 12 schedule.

This was not an accident.

"Look at the Big 12 schedules, and everybody plays nine, 10, 11 games at home," McConnell-Miller said. "It took me a little while to learn that about this league, but it's a reality.

"Having home games, it builds confidence, builds momentum and increases the fan base and builds excitement around the program and allows players to go to class and to continue to excel in the classroom."

The early RPIs of some of CU's visitors are low. San Jose State's is 286. Southern Utah, which CU beat Saturday, is at 331. Grambling State is at 318.

But the coach said these games are allowing her to find a rotation, set roles and discover more about her team than in her previous four seasons in Boulder. McConnell-Miller said she looks down her bench these days and sees three players raising their hands asking to enter the game. That's different than before, she says.

"We have depth; we need experience going into the Big 12," she said. "We've never had that luxury.

In past seasons, McConnell-Miller said she's had to play Brittany Spears 39 or 40 minutes in some games to win. That wasn't the case Tuesday.

Spears scored 28 points in 26 minutes for the Buffs. She had 20 in the first half, when CU jumped out to a 12-3 lead, increased it to 22-5 and then 46-13 at halftime.

Spears became the 17th player in program history to exceed 1,200 points Tuesday. She now has 1,204. Her 28 points was a high for any Buff this season. McConnell-Miller said Spears has developed into one of the Big 12's best players.

But that wasn't her main point.

“We have more pieces than we’ve had in the past,” McConnell-Miller said.

Bianca Smith had 25 for CU, 17 before halftime. She continues to come off the bench and perform well.

McConnell-Miller said she inserts Smith, whom she called one of the Big 12’s best shooters, about five or six minutes into a game and can see her take advantage of opponents who are a little tired.

“I can get a feel for the game (coming off the bench) and see what’s going on and the other team’s defense and how they’re playing,” said Smith, who shot 6-for-13 on 3s.

No other Buff scored in double figures, but CU used 14 players. It shot 47 percent from the floor.

San Jose State (3-8) committed 26 turnovers.

CU has scored more than 80 points in four straight home games for the first time since 2001-02.

CU has allowed 24 points, the fewest in program history, in its past two first halves. Its previous low was 27 over two first halves in 2001-02 against San Diego and Bowling Green.

Read Patrick Ridgell’s CU sports blog at www.timescall.com/blogs/ridgell. He can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.