

# Pieces falling into place for CU women's basketball team

## Spears leading way with hot hand

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Brittany Spears got her head coach into some minor trouble with the staff during the offseason at the Coors Events Center for not shutting the lights off in the cavernous gym after some of her famous late-night workouts.

Kathy McConnell-Miller's star player is now shooting lights out to begin the 2009-10 season after putting in all of the hard work to take her already impressive overall game to the next level.

Spears scored 28 points on 10-for-15 shooting to lead Colorado to an 86-50 victory over San Jose State on Tuesday night. The junior guard is third in the Big 12 in scoring (20.2 ppg) and rebounding (9.2 rpg) while shooting a team-best 47.4 percent from the field.

"Yeah, I think it's paying off," Spears said of the thousands of shots she put up when no one was looking over the summer. "I'm getting more open shots."

Spears has been a go-to girl in McConnell-Miller's offense since her freshman season. CU's relatively easy non-conference schedule, which includes 11 home games, was designed to develop some more confidence and depth around the program's super star.

"I definitely feel like we have one of the best players in the Big 12 and one of the best shooters in the Big 12," McConnell-Miller said. "We also have more pieces than we've had in the past."

Bianca Smith came off the bench and scored 25 points against the Spartans. The senior sharpshooter was 6-for-13 from behind the arc with three steals in only 17 minutes of work.

Freshman forward Meagan Malcolm-Peck had 10 rebounds, freshman point guard Chucky Jeffrey had eight points and seven rebounds, and senior forward/center Courtney Dunn added eight points and three rebounds in 19 minutes during CU's latest blowout victory.

Alyssa Fressle is a quality defender capable of putting points on the board when necessary. Kelly Jo Mullaney and Whitney Houston bring experience off the bench. And Julie Seabrook and Brenna Malcolm-Peck have the talent to be important cogs in the rotation throughout the season.

"I'm much more confident because I have the experience of two years," said Spears, who already has 1,204 career points. "Plus our bench is better than the past two years."

The Buffs are now 8-2 overall and 7-0 at home. With the final three non-conference games and the Big 12 opener scheduled for the Coors Events Center, there is a realistic opportunity for this team to be 12-2, 1-0 entering the Jan. 9 game at Texas Tech.

Two years ago, Jackie McFarland carried CU to the Final Four of the WNIT. But is this McConnell-Miller's best team?

"I just know I like a heck of a lot about this team," the Buffs' fifth-year head coach said. "The fact that every time I look at the bench I've got three of them looking at me going, 'Can I go in?'"

"That's a very positive sign. We haven't had players, regardless of the score, aching to get back in and not wanting to come off the floor. Their passion and their love for playing, you have to love."

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