

# Easy looks disappearing for Buffs' Spears

## Players stay late to take extra shots after lopsided loss to Baylor

**By Joshua Linden**stein Camera Sports Writer  
Boulder Daily Camera

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Well after practice had ended Tuesday for most of the Colorado women's basketball team, Bianca Smith finally walked off the floor.

"Any time you go 0-for, that gets you some extra shooting," the senior said, referring to her rough outing against Baylor on Saturday.

Smith wasn't alone. CU leading scorer Brittany Spears and center Courtney Dunn were also popping shot after shot after practice.

The experienced trio struggled, to say the least, in a 76-42 road loss to Baylor. Smith went 0 for 13 from the field. Spears was 3 for 14. Dunn had the best night at 3 for 9, but her long-range shooting has suffered this season.

With center Brittney Griner sagging off Dunn in the paint, Baylor's perimeter defenders were free to smother Smith and Spears, knowing they had a 6-foot-8 security blanket behind them if they got beat off the dribble.

Coach Kathy McConnell-Miller said the extra shooting in the days since the game has been intended simply to help the players get back in the mode of making baskets.

"We believe every time they shoot it, it's going in," McConnell-Miller said as her team wrapped up its preparations for today's 7 p.m. home game against 14th-ranked Texas at the Coors Events Center. "They've just got to regain that confidence and momentum."

For Spears in particular, the Baylor game merely continued what she called the toughest scoring stretch she's ever had.

While it's not uncommon for offensive numbers to dip slightly for many players around the Big 12 Conference once they get to league play, Spears' scoring has taken a significant hit.

After putting in 19.8 points per game in 13 non-conference games, Spears has averaged just 13.3 per game in eight Big 12 contests. Her field goal percentage -- 46 percent in non-conference play -- has dipped to 31 percent in league play.

And as Spears has gone, so have the Buffs, who are 2-6 and averaging just 60 points per outing in league action.

"If we were winning, it would be a different story," Spears said. "But since we're not winning, it's real frustrating."

Spears, who led the Buffs with 18.3 points per game last season, averaged 17.5 in Big 12 games.

McConnell-Miller said she believes Spears has simply become more of a marked woman this season by opponents who are now well aware of her talents. And it's taking some adjustment by Spears to work harder to get open and learn where she can get better shots in the flow of the offense.

"She's not getting as many easy looks as she's gotten in the past," McConnell-Miller said.

Spears has done her best to take the drought in stride.

Despite being 15th in scoring in Big 12 play, she remains among the top five in rebounding and steals. And she's eighth in blocked shots.

"I can have off nights (shooting), but I can still play defense," Spears said. "I can still get rebounds and block shots. There's no excuse for that."

It's that blue-collar outlook that has McConnell-Miller hopeful that it's merely a matter of time before Spears' scoring returns to normal.

"I personally think this is the hardest she's worked these last three games," the coach said. "Every possession, every time she's been on the floor, she has battled. Although her shot's not falling, I have not seen that affect her work ethic and her effort and her hustle plays."

"The only thing that's suffering right now is her point production, and we need that."

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## CU women's preview: vs. Texas

Camera staff

Posted: 02/10/2010 12:02:49 AM MST

**TODAY:** Colorado (12-9, 2-6 Big 12) hosts 14th-ranked Texas (16-6, 5-3) in a 3:30 p.m. game at the Coors Events Center.

**BROADCAST: Television:** FSN Rocky Mountain with Tom Helmer (play-by-play), Ceal Barry (color) and Marc Stout (sidelines). **Radio:** KKZN (760 AM) with Mike Rice (play-by-play) and Carol Callan (color).

**STORYLINES:** Colorado has lost four straight and six of its last seven. ... Texas enters riding a three-game win streak that includes victories over ranked foes Oklahoma and Baylor. ... All 10 Longhorns players get in on the action for the squad that likes to trap and pressure. No player averages more than 30 minutes per game and all average at least 11. ... CU's last win over Texas came two years ago in Boulder and snapped an eight-game skid against the Longhorns.

**KEY STAT:** CU has lost 17 straight against ranked opponents.

**COACHES:** Kathy McConnell-Miller is 64-80 in her fifth year at CU and 155-168 overall. Gail Goestenors is 59-31 in her third season at Texas and 455-130 overall.

### PROBABLE STARTERS:

**Colorado --** G Chucky Jeffery, 5-10, Fr., 10.1 ppg, 5.5 rpg, 3.5 apg; G Alyssa Fressle, 5-10, So., 6.2 ppg, 2.5 rpg, 2.3 apg; F Brittany Spears, 6-1, Jr., 17.3 ppg, 8.6 rpg, 2.4 spg; F Meagan Malcolm-Peck, 6-2, Fr., 6.5 ppg, 4.4 rpg; C Courtney Dunn, 6-4, Sr., 6.8 ppg, 4.9 rpg.

**Texas --** G Ashleigh Fontenette, 5-8, So., 10.2 ppg, 3.7 rpg, 3.4 apg; G Brittainey Raven, 6-0, Sr., 15.6 ppg, 4.9 rpg, 2.7 apg; G Kathleen Nash, 6-2, Jr., 12.7 ppg, 7.4 rpg; Earnesia Williams, 6-1, Sr., 6.5 ppg, 3.9 ppg; C Ashley Gayle, 6-4, So., 6.4 ppg, 6.3 rpg, 3.0 bpg.

**SERIES:** Texas leads 14-4, including a 5-2 edge in Boulder.

**UP NEXT:** The Buffs travel to face No. 12 Oklahoma at 1 p.m. Saturday.



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## Today's CU women's Game

*By Patrick Ridgell*  
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No. 14 Texas (16-6, 5-3) at Colorado women (12-9, 2-6)

**When/Where:** 7 p.m. tonight at the Coors Events Center in Boulder

**TV/Radio:** FSN/KKZN 760 AM

**The series:** Texas leads 14-4 and has won nine of the past 10 meetings.

**Leading scorers:** Texas — Brittainey Raven (15.6 points per game); CU — Brittany Spears (17.3 points per game)

**Notes:** Texas is the third of four ranked teams CU faces in a row. The Buffs have lost their past 14 to opponents ranked in both the AP and WBCA polls, as Texas is. The Buffs have lost four in a row and six of seven. ... CU averages 69 points per game and shoots 41 percent from the field. In its eight league games, those numbers are 60 points per game and 37 percent from the field. ... Texas has won five of its past six and three straight. It averages 77.5 points per game, second best in the Big 12, and allows 65.6 points per game, second most in the Big 12.

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## Down but not out

Women's basketball hopes to break losing streak

*By Marlee Horn on February 10, 2010*

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Right now, life is tough for the Buffs. The Colorado women's basketball team has lost four straight games (six of the last seven) and 17 straight games against a ranked opponent.

Saturday's battle against Baylor pushed the Buffaloes down to 12-9 overall, 2-6 in Big 12 Conference play. The team's 42 points were a season low, and its 23.6 percent shooting from the field was its worst since spring 2005. The team did have one season high—17 turnovers in the first half.

Head coach Kathy McConnell-Miller said that while the team might have been hit hard by the loss, she still has the same amount of respect for her players as she did at the beginning of the season.

"Although we make adjustments, although we raise the bar, although we care about wins and losses, they've got to know we feel the same way about them after a loss as a win," McConnell-Miller said.

After such a tough loss, the young team will need to do a fair amount of regrouping to put everything back into perspective. That's exactly what they hope to do as they face another ranked opponent.

The Buffaloes will host No. 14 Texas at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 10 at the Coors Events Center.

McConnell-Miller describes the Longhorns as a big, athletic and experienced team, but the Buffs don't seem too intimidated.

Senior guard Bianca Smith said she believes that Saturday's "humiliating" loss has instilled a sense of feistiness in the players.

"I think we're hungry for a win," Smith said. "However we can get it and whoever we can beat, that's irrelevant. We just want a 'W,' and I think this is the perfect time, on our home floor, versus a team who we've always played well against, since I've been here."



Junior guard Bianca Smith takes one of her 10 three pointers for the Buffs on Jan. 31, 2009. Smith sunk 21 points from behind the arc, matching her previous school record for three pointers. With a last-second basket from Sophomore forward Brittany Spears, CU defeated the Nebraska Cornhuskers 75-73 at Coors Events Center. (CU Independent file/Molly Maher)

Smith said she doesn't even seem to mind that Texas is a ranked team.

"You can't let the numbers beside a team's name get to you or else you'll be beaten before you even play," Smith said. "We don't look at that. We just go in and face every team like they're no different from the next."

Apart from playing with a good attitude, McConnell-Miller she she also wants her players, especially veterans Smith, junior forward Brittany Spears and senior center Courtney Dunn, to refocus and take shots in their normal flow so they can get more open looks.

Dunn, who says she has come to realize her place on the team, earning her first two career double-doubles this season, is ready to do just that.

"My focus has been more on post play," Dunn said. "The years before I was more of a wannabe guard and just wanted to focus on my 3-point shot, so that took me away from the basket."

She said that by finding her place in the post, she is able to score more from being closer to the basket. However, she also points out that it isn't always easy to get in the paint. She says that a deeper concentration on the game, drives, and fouls will help the team play better.

"Instead of taking ourselves out if we're not scoring, [we need to] find ways to score instead of just settling for jump shots," Dunn said.

When the team does settle for shots or gets beaten up by a loss, Dunn says she tries to be there to help the team regroup. While she says it is hard to call herself a leader, she also knows how her reassuring voice can help the team.

"I really don't care about scoring," Dunn said. "I want to be a leader. I try and put my voice in sometimes and just be the calm one because a lot of our teammates can get a little rowdy and not refocus... If that's what a leader does, I guess those would be my leadership skills."

McConnell-Miller lauds this type of attitude because, in addition to continual improvement, the team needs to look deeper to see what is most important.

After a pause, McConnell-Miller said, "You've heard the expression treat both imposters the same: winning and losing. That's what we're doing. We need to maintain that same focus, mentality, commitment after wins and after losses."

Whether CU gets a win or a loss on Wednesday, Smith said she will remind her teammates that the season is young, and they still have plenty of time to show their skills.

"There's still a lot of games left, and we have to stay positive and recognize that we still have an opportunity," Smith said. "It's not passed us by yet."

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