

# CU Buff women face another marquee player

## Griffin averages double-double for No. 6 Huskers

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

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The Colorado women's basketball team has endured its share of big individual performances by opponents lately.

Iowa State's Alison Lacey poured in 32 points against CU. Oklahoma State's Andrea Riley scored 26. And Kansas' Danielle McCray scored 29 on Wednesday.

That's life in the Big 12, where seemingly every team has a marquee player capable of garnering national honors.

That person Saturday is versatile forward Kelsey Griffin, whose sixth-ranked Nebraska Cornhuskers square off with the Buffaloes at 3:30 p.m. at the Coors Events Center.

For Brittany Spears -- CU's version of that elite player -- squaring off against many of the top players in the nation is one of the inspiring things about playing in the Big 12.

"There's always a star on every team, a go-to player on every team," Spears said earlier this week. "The teams you play and the people you play, it's the top competition, so you can't take a day off."

The onslaught of stars has been particularly brutal lately for the Buffs. After Griffin comes Baylor freshman phenom Brittney Griner. That will complete a six-game stretch in which CU faces seven of the league's top eight scorers. Spears is fifth.

The 6-foot-2 Griffin enters Saturday's game third in the conference in scoring at 19.1 points per game and first in rebounding at 10.4. The fifth-year senior missed last season with an injury and doesn't have the size of Griner or former OU center Courtney Paris. But she's been dominating nonetheless, hitting 61 percent from the field.

"She's very skilled," CU coach Kathy McConnell-Miller said. "She can put it on the floor. She's very good around the basket. She can face up, she can play with her back to the basket. She's just very dangerous because of her versatility around the rim."

Griffin's biggest claim to fame, though, might be that she's the leader of one of two undefeated teams left in the country.

After being picked by Big 12 coaches to finish sixth in the conference in the preseason, the Huskers enter today's game at 18-0 overall and 5-0 in league play. They're outscoring opponents by an average of 79-54, and they routed Texas Tech by 42 in Lubbock this week.

The biggest reason for the Huskers' emergence, McConnell-Miller said, is their experience.

NU starts three seniors, a junior and a freshman. All four of those upperclassmen have played integral roles their entire careers, and all four average double-digit scoring -- including 6-2 senior forward Cory Montgomery at 13.0 points per game.

"They're just jelling and their chemistry is very good on the floor," McConnell-Miller said.

Colorado (12-7, 2-4) entered league play also looking poised to prove the coaches' pick of 11th wrong. But while there's been flashes of such improvement, things haven't been so clear-cut for the Buffs.

Since a momentum-boosting win at Kansas State, they've dropped two in a row with performances that featured long lapses in their play.

But Spears said the Buffs are still in a good place mentally.

"We all knew that preseason wasn't going to be the same as the (Big 12) season, so everyone's mindset is still the same," Spears said. "We're still believing that we can win every time we step on the floor."

The Buffs beat NU 75-73 in Boulder last season on a late shot by Spears before losing in Lincoln later in the season.

But -- thanks in large part to Griffin's return to the lineup -- this is a different Husker team than the one that came to Boulder a year ago. At 18-0, the Huskers bring much more than just rival status this season.

"It's an opportunity I think for us to be a confidence builder, to get off this losing streak, to beat a ranked team, to win at home, to get that momentum," CU guard Bianca Smith said. "I think there's so many opportunities in this game, not necessarily just a big game but an opportunity."

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## CU women's preview vs. Nebraska

Camera staff  
Boulder Daily Camera

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**TODAY:** Colorado (12-7, 2-4 Big 12) hosts sixth-ranked Nebraska (18-0, 5-0) 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 Alanna Rizzo (sidelines). **Radio:** KKZN (760 AM) with Mike Rice (play-by-play) and Carol Callan (color).

**STORYLINES:** Colorado has lost two in a row, including a 75-64 setback at Kansas on Wednesday. ... The Buffs will be looking to avoid their first three-game skid of the season. ... CU beat Nebraska 75-73 in Boulder last season after rallying from a 14-point first-half deficit. ... Nebraska enters as one of just two undefeated teams left in the country along with No. 1 Connecticut.

**KEY STAT:** Nebraska's 18-0 record is the best start to a season in Big 12 history.

**COACHES:** Kathy McConnell-Miller is 64-78 in her fifth year at CU and 155-166 overall. Connie Yori is 139-97 in her eighth year at Nebraska and 335-227 overall.

### PROBABLE STARTERS:

**Colorado --** G Chucky Jeffery, 5-10, Fr., 10.0 ppg, 5.2 rpg, 3.3 apg; G Alyssa Fressle, 5-10, So., 6.5 ppg, 2.6 rpg, 2.5 apg; F Brittany Spears, 6-1, Jr., 18.1 ppg, 8.7 rpg, 2.6 spg; F Meagan Malcolm-Peck, 6-2, Fr., 6.6 ppg, 4.7 rpg; C Courtney Dunn, 6-4, Sr., 6.4 ppg, 5.0 rpg.

**Nebraska --** G Lindsey Moore, 5-9, Fr., 4.7 ppg, 4.4 apg; G Yvonne Turner, 5-8, Sr., 12.2 ppg, 4.1 rpg; G Dominique Kelley, 5-7, Jr., 11.8 ppg, 4.4 rpg; F Kelsey Griffin, 6-2, Sr., 19.1 ppg, 10.4 rpg; F Cory Montgomery, 6-2, Sr., 13.0 ppg, 5.1 rpg.

**SERIES:** CU leads 39-26 all-time and 25-5 in Boulder, though NU has won three of the last four at the Coors Events Center.

**UP NEXT:** The Buffs travel to face Baylor at 6:30 p.m. Feb. 6.

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## Youth versus experience

Bufs face undefeated Huskers

By Marlee Horn on January 30, 2010

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*Bianca Smith is a senior. Her year was originally incorrect in the photo caption. 1/30/10; 15:18*

Teams can gain experience, but it can't be taught or learned.

The Colorado Buffaloes, who are 12-7 overall, 2-4 in the Big 12 Conference, look to rebound from a two-game losing streak when they meet undefeated Nebraska (18-0, 5-0) at 3:30 p.m. Saturday at the Coors Events Center.

Head coach Kathy McConnell-Miller says the team still needs to improve upon its consistency, but the players are starting to correct other areas of their game themselves, saying they are beginning to identify their mistakes and address them when they enter a huddle.

However, it will take much more than identifying errors for the Buffs to get the win.

Beyond an impressive record, the No. 6 Huskers are stacked with Big 12 experience. Seniors Kelsey Griffin, Cory Montgomery and Yvonne Turner headline the roster, and junior Dominique Kelley and freshman Lindsey Moore go beyond their supporting roles.

"There's two things: the experience and the fact that they have been playing and basically starting their entire careers in the Big 12 since their freshman year," McConnell-Miller said. "Their chemistry is good and they are very experienced."

McConnell-Miller believes the combination of the seniors' experience and Moore's legitimacy as a point guard make things come together for the Huskers.

"They've got a really good point guard that can allow Turner and Dominique to play their natural positions, which is scorers and shooters and playmakers," McConnell-Miller said.

But the Buffs have their own team chemistry, which they hope will give them the upset.



Senior guard Bianca Smith takes a 3-pointer for the Buffs against Nebraska on Jan. 31, 2009. Smith sank seven 3-pointers, matching her previous school record in a 75-73 win last year at Coors Events Center. (CU Independent file/Molly Maher)

"I think chemistry on the floor is big," McConnell-Miller said. "It's understanding where your teammates need to be, leading them, putting them in a position to score, taking care of them within the flow of the offense and defense, and really understanding what our needs are."

Along with teamwork comes leadership, and senior guard Bianca Smith, the lone senior on the team, is prepared to put her mental toughness against Nebraska's seniors.

"I'm going to have to be there for the younger ones who haven't played against the type of caliber team that Nebraska is," Smith said. "We just have to stay positive, stay confident."

While Smith is prepared to direct her team, other players must fit into this equation as well.

"I think it's important that your seniors are good leaders," McConnell-Miller said, "but you have to have the players that are on the floor that have the ball in their hands be strong leaders as well."

One Buff who's used to having the ball in her hands shows her leadership with a less direct approach.

"I think Brittany Spears leads by example," McConnell-Miller said. "She just plays and takes care of business and rebounds and shoots it and scores. She's a very silent leader. She's just a no-nonsense type player. She'd rather show you how than tell you how."

Spears, who leads the team averaging 18.1 points per game, credits her impressive stats and quiet leadership to playing hard and staying positive on the court. Spears knows how difficult the league is and just how important teamwork is to get the win.

"This is Big 12, you've got to play together," Spears said. "One person can't win by themselves. We've got to just play together and just keep fighting. Something good will happen if we keep working hard."

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