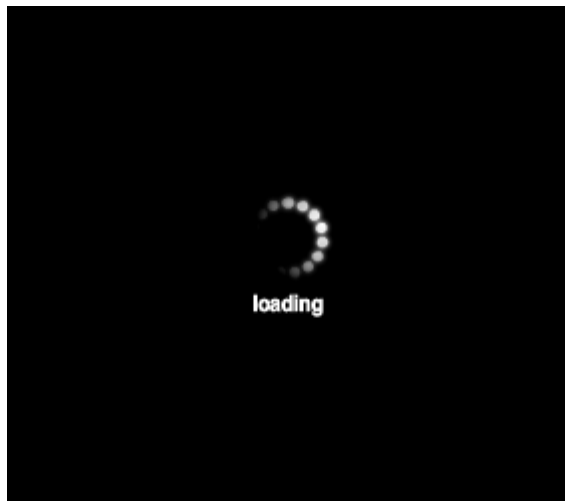


Mentor knows best: Virginia holds off CU

Buffaloes' bid for quality win comes up short

By Joshua Linden Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 01/02/2010 06:46:50 PM MST



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coach Debbie Ryan in the late 1980s -- said she hoped her own squad gained some confidence in knowing it can compete with a top-25 opponent.

But she certainly wasn't declaring any moral victories.

"I look at this as a team we were prepared to play, and we had the opportunity to win," McConnell-Miller said. "I don't think any of them are going to walk away and feel like if we had won we would have stolen one."

The loss was the second to Virginia in two years for the Buffs. The Cavs (10-3) beat CU 77-43 in Charlottesville last season, but met a much tougher foe this time around, Ryan said.

"It's really bittersweet," Ryan, who has 709 career wins, said of beating one of her many former pupils in the coaching profession. "It's so hard because she's trying to establish herself nationally, and we were sort of like the stepping stone for them."

Colorado led 34-33 with 18:42 to play after five straight points from center Coutney Dunn. But the Buffs went the next 8:46 without a field goal as Virginia took control with a 13-1 run.

"Against a team that good and against a team that has (preseason All-American guard) Monica Wright, with the ball in her hands as much as she does, it's difficult to come back from that," McConnell-Miller said. "But I thought we fought hard."

Backup guard Bianca Smith had another big game from long range for the Buffs. She hit three straight 3-pointers to break CU out of its scoring drought and spur a 15-6 run that cut Virginia's lead to 52-50 on a fourth trey.

But the aforementioned Wright played the part of All-American. Out of a timeout, the 5-foot-11 senior scored five straight points. After sitting with foul trouble for much of the first half, she scored 18 of her team-high 24 points in the second.

"She's the real deal," said CU guard Alyssa Fressle, who was charged with guarding Wright. "She really is. She can shoot it, and she can post up. She can drive. She's the toughest opponent I've had to guard for sure. She just made shots in the

Aside from a couple of bumps on the road, this season has been pretty much smooth sailing for the Colorado women's basketball team.

On Saturday, reality bit the up-and-coming Buffs at home.

Hoping to propel themselves into Big 12 play with a signature win against a top-25 opponent, the Buffs fought hard but couldn't match the Virginia Cavaliers for all 40 minutes.

Ahead by two with 5:45 to play, the No. 23 Cavs pulled away for a 74-59 victory in front of 2,846 at the Coors Events Center.

The loss was the 9-3 Buffs' first of the season at home and extended CU's losing streak against ranked opponents to 13 dating back to the 2007-08 season.

After beating up on a recent slate of inferior opponents, CU head coach Kathy McConnell-Miller -- who played at Virginia for

second half."

The Buffs, who had scored 80 or more points in five straight games at home, struggled to get clean shots all night, shooting just 38 percent from the field.

They stayed in the game thanks to tough defense and their hot 3-point shooting. They were 10-for-25 from behind the arc, with five of their first six field goals coming from long range.

Smith led the way with 23 points, including six 3 pointers. Brittany Spears, who was held to four points against the Cavs last season, added 20 points and eight rebounds.

Virginia also struggled shooting for much of the game, but hit 18 of 22 free throws and won the rebounding battle 43-30.

"I think it shows that we are a tough team and that we can hang with an ACC opponent or a top 25 team," Smith said of the Buffs' performance. "I think a lot of people are going to look at this score and get the wrong impression and not understand how close we were to winning this game. I think we're going to use this for fuel not only for Yale (on Monday) but going into this Big 12 season."

Notable

The Buffs' 59 points were their fewest of the season. ... Colorado fell to 0-3 all-time against Virginia. ... Jayna Hartig, who played in four Colorado state championship games for ThunderRidge High, got the start at forward for UVA.

Virginia 74, CU 59

VIRGINIA (74)

Player MIN FG FT Rb A PF PT

Hartig 6 0-0 0-0 2 2 0 0

Crosby 1 0-1 0-0 1 0 0 0

Egwu 19 3-5 3-4 4 0 2 9

Moorer 29 0-8 4-4 3 2 4 4

Wright 27 10-19 3-4 7 1 5 24

Edwards 36 3-8 5-6 9 0 2 14

Kellum 30 1-3 6-8 4 4 3 8

Gerson 16 2-3 0-0 1 1 2 5

McCall 10 1-1 2-2 1 1 1 4

Edwards 1 0-0 0-0 0 0 0 0

Shine 25 2-6 2-2 7 1 1 6

Totals 200 22-54 5-9 12 12 10 74

3-Point Goals: 5-9 (Edwards 3-5, Gerson 1-1, Wright 1-1, Moorer 0-2).

Blocked Shots: 1 (Shine).

Turnovers: 11 (Wright 4, Gerson 2, Shine, McCall, Pellum, Egwu, Moorer).

Steals: 10 (Moorer 3, Wright 3, Pellum, 2, McCall, Shine).

Technical Fouls: None.

COLORADO (59)

Player MIN FG FT Rb A PF PT

M. Mcm-Pk 35 0-4 0-0 6 0 4 0

Spears 39 5-15 7-10 8 2 3 20

Dunn 20 2-6 1-1 3 0 5 5

Fressle 34 2-3 0-2 1 5 3 5

Jeffery 32 2-9 1-1 4 3 5 6

Smith 29 7-12 3-3 3 1 2 23

Houston 2 0-2 0-1 1 0 0 0

Mullaney 8 0-1 0-0 1 0 0 0

Dale 1 0-0 0-0 0 0 0 0

Totals 200 18-52 12-18 27 11 22 59

3-Point Goals: 11-30 (Smith 6-11, Spears 3-9, Fressle 1-1, Jeffery 1-2, [M.Malcolm](#)-Peck 0-3, Houston 0-1).

Blocked Shots: 4 ([M.Malcolm](#)-Peck 4).

Turnovers: 16 (Jeffery 6, Smith 4, Spears 3, [M.Malcolm](#)-Peck 2, Dunn).

Steals: 6 (M. Malcolm-Peck 2, Spears 2, Fressle, Jeffery).

Technical Fouls: None.

Virginia 31 43 -- 74

Colorado 29 30 -- 59

Officials -- Lisa Mattingly, Billy Smith, Maj Forsberg.

Attendance -- 2,846.

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THE DENVER POST

women's basketball

Virginia hands Buffs women first home loss of season

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 01/03/2010 01:00:00 AM MST



CU's Alyssa Fressle, bottom, tries to send a loose ball to teammate Brittany Spears, who tries to gather it in behind Virginia's Paulisha Kellum. (Matt McClain, Special to The Denver Post)

team to post a signature victory as Big 12 Conference play approaches.

The Buffaloes sought their first victory over a ranked team in almost two years and had No. 23 Virginia at the Coors Events Center. And CU players were eager to get coach Kathy McConnell-Miller bragging rights over her alma mater and her mentor Debbie Ryan, the longtime leader of the Cavaliers.

Trouble was, Colorado (9-3) discovered in the 74-59 loss that it's next-to-impossible to keep an All-America candidate down for long. Virginia's Monica Wright, a 5-foot-11 senior guard, was hounded by CU sophomore Alyssa Fressle and had just six points at halftime. Wright

CU Basketball

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BOULDER — Stars appeared ready to align Saturday for the Colorado women's basketball

finished with a game-high 24, and the Buffs lost at home for the first time this season.

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THE DENVER POST

"She's the real deal," Fressle said of Wright. "She can shoot it. She can post up. And she can drive."

With Wright finally finding a rhythm, Virginia (10-3) gained some separation with a 13-1 run to make it 46-35 with 11:14 left. Wright scored seven points in the flurry, mostly off quick, first-step moves along the baseline.

CU tri-captain Bianca Smith, a senior guard, tried single-handedly to keep the Buffs within reach. She sank four 3-pointers within a span of four minutes, the last reducing the deficit to 52-50 with 5:50 to go.

But Wright, who entered the game averaging 21 points, answered. She buried a 3-pointer to stop the bleeding and knocked down a 17-footer after a CU turnover. Case closed.

"We felt pretty good coming into this game," McConnell-Miller said. "We felt pretty confident, we liked the matchups. (But) Virginia is a very good team."

The Buffs are about to face a slew of good teams. After a Monday tuneup against Yale, Colorado's Big 12 schedule begins with a Saturday home game against Missouri.

"People are going to look at this score and not understand how close we were to winning the game," said CU's Smith, who led the Buffs with 23 points. "I think it showed we can hang with an ACC team or a top-25 team."

CU lost 77-43 at Virginia last season.

"It is really bittersweet," Ryan said of defeating her former pupil. "It's so hard because (McConnell-Miller) is trying to establish her program, and we could have been a steppingstone for them."

VIRGINIA (10-3)

Hartig 0-0 0-0 0, Crosby 0-1 0-0 0, Egwu 3-5 3-4 9, Moorer 0-8 4-4 4, Wright 10-19 3-4 24, W.Edwards 3-8 5-6 14, Kellum 1-3 6-8 8, Gerson 2-3 0-0 5, McCall 1-1 2-2 4, B.Edwards 0-0 0-0 0, Shine 2-6 2-2 6. **Totals 22-54 25-30 74.**

COLORADO (9-3)

M.Malcolm-Peck 0-4 0-0 0, Spears 5-15 7-10 20, Dunn 2-6 1-1 5, Fressle 2-3 0-2 5, Jeffery 2-9 1-1 6, Smith 7-12 3-3 23, Houston 0-2 0-1 0, Dale 0-0 0-0 0, Mullaney 0-1 0-0 0. **Totals 18-52 12-18 59. Virginia 31-29. 3-point goals — Virginia 5-9 (W.Edwards 3-5, Gerson 1-1, Wright 1-1, Moorer 0-2), Colorado 11-30 (Smith 6-11, Spears 3-9, Fressle 1-1, Jeffery 1-2, Houston 0-1, M.Malcolm-Peck 0-3, Dunn 0-3). Fouled out — Dunn, Jeffery, Wright. Rebounds — Virginia 43 (W.Edwards 9), Colorado 30 (Spears 8). Assists — Virginia 12 (Kellum 4), Colorado 11 (Fressle 5). Total fouls — Virginia 20, Colorado 22. A — 2,846.**

Halftime —

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CU women hang tough, but fall to No. 23 Virginia

By Patrick Ridgell
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BOULDER — The Colorado women's basketball program still has a ways to go.

Such a conclusion from Saturday's 74-59 loss to No. 23 Virginia is inevitable, seeing as Virginia was the opponent CU said would serve as a barometer as non-conference plays nears its end.

The Buffs (9-3) loaded their non-conference schedule with a several home games against not-so-great opponents so they could set rotations, build confidence and win a bunch of games. Those objectives have been met. They finish that portion of the year Monday when Yale visits.

But Saturday, a top team came to Boulder and exposed weaknesses.

CU coach Kathy McConnell-Miller lost to her mentor and former college coach, Virginia's Debbie Ryan. CU also lost its 13th straight game to a ranked team. While McConnell-Miller said she wanted her players to take pride in their performance, she said her main point to them was about their opponent.

"We felt good coming, confident, we liked the match-ups," she said. "I just think my message to the team is Virginia is a very good team.

"We challenged them and we battled and there was one stretch in the second half where they went on that run. ... Against a team that good and with Monica Wright with the ball in her hands as much as she does, it's difficult to come back from that."

Virginia used a 13-1 run in the second half to build an 11-point lead. CU fought back with a 15-6 surge, during which reserve guard Bianca Smith hit four 3s.

With her team's lead at two, Wright scored Virginia's next five points with a 3 and a jumper sandwiched around a turnover by CU's Brittany Spears to prop its lead back to seven points. CU didn't cut it to fewer than four again.

"A lot of people are going to look at the score and get the wrong impression and not understand how close we were to winning this game," Smith said.

The weaknesses Virginia found included CU's bench. Virginia's reserves outscored CU's 37-23.



CU's Chucky Jeffrey, left, and Meagan Malcolm-Peck steal the ball from Virginia's Monica Wright during the first half Saturday at the Coors Events Center in Boulder. **Lewis Geyer/Times-Call**

Virginia 74, Colorado 59

VIRGINIA — Hartig 0-0 0-0 0, Crosby 0-1 0-0 0, Egwu 3-5 3-4 9, Moorer 0-8 4-4 4, Wright 10-19 3-4 24, W.Edwards 3-8 5-6 14, Kellum 1-3 6-8 8, Gerson 2-3 0-0 5, McCall 1-1 2-2 4, B.Edwards 0-0 0-0 0, Shine 2-6 2-2 6. Totals 22-54 25-30 74.

COLORADO — M.Malcolm-Peck 0-4 0-0 0, Spears 5-15 7-10 20, Dunn 2-6 1-1 5, Fressle 2-3 0-2 5, Jeffery 2-9 1-1 6, Smith 7-12 3-3 23, Houston 0-2 0-1 0, Dale 0-0 0-0 0, Mullaney 0-1 0-0 0. Totals 18-52 12-18 59.

Halftime—Virginia 31-29. 3-Point Goals—Virginia 5-9 (W.Edwards 3-5, Gerson 1-1, Wright 1-1, Moorer 0-2), Colorado 11-30 (Smith 6-11, Spears 3-9, Fressle 1-1, Jeffery 1-2, Houston 0-1, M.Malcolm-Peck 0-3, Dunn 0-3). Fouled Out—Dunn, Jeffery, Wright. Rebounds—Virginia 43 (W.Edwards 9), Colorado 30 (Spears 8). Assists—Virginia 12 (Kellum 4), Colorado 11 (Fressle 5). Total Fouls—Virginia 20, Colorado 22. A—2,846.

All of CU's bench points came by Smith, who scored 15 points after halftime. McConnell-Miller said fatigue set in and she should have played more reserves more minutes in the first half.

Virginia lost its starting point guard, China Crosby, for the day to a sprained MCL in the second minute. Its guards still forced CU freshman guard Chucky Jeffery into committing six turnovers and sophomore Alyssa Fressle into five. Many came against the Cavaliers' press.

CU freshman Meagan Malcolm-Peck did not score. McConnell-Miller said the freshmen need to learn from this experience.

CU shot 34.6 percent. It entered averaging 74.7 points and shooting 44.7 from the field. McConnell-Miller said Virginia denied entry passes, pressured the wings and stopped backdoor passes.

"Typically, teams allow us to run our offense; they have played off of us," McConnell-Miller said.

"It was a little bit of a struggle for us to get into our sets."

Virginia outrebounded the Buffs 43-30, an advantage that grew in the second half as CU center Courtney Dunn battled foul trouble and eventually fouled out. McConnell-Miller did not play any of her reserve post players.

The Buffs say they were close. That might be true. Close just wasn't good enough.

"I don't think anyone is going to look at it and consider it a moral victory because we stayed with (Virginia)," McConnell-Miller said.

Read Patrick Ridgell's [CU sports blog](#). He can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.