

# CU women remain determined despite losses

## Bufs have lost 12 of 14 heading into today's regular-season finale

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

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Colorado women's basketball coach Kathy McConnell-Miller saw an encouraging spark of life from her team on Friday, and it came from a player on the sidelines.

Star forward Brittany Spears was held out of Friday's practice to get some extra rest after hitting her head hard in a loss to Kansas State on Wednesday.

That didn't, however, keep Spears from trying to talk her way onto the court.

"That's a very good sign when your best player, your leading scorer, does not like to be out of practice," said McConnell-Miller, who admitted after the KSU loss that losing can take a toll on a team's psyche after awhile.

The Buffs (13-15, 3-12 Big 12 Conference) have lost 12 of their last 14 games. But they say they're mindset is still in the right place heading into today's regular-season finale at 13th-ranked Iowa State (1 p.m., no TV).

CU is coming off of a demoralizing loss to Texas A&M and the loss to KSU, a squad the Buffs had beaten earlier this season. If they don't win today, they'll finish with a 3-13 mark in Big 12 play for the second season in a row.

"It wears on us a lot," freshman point guard Chucky Jeffery said. "But we come to practice every day and we still practice hard and intend to go out and play hard every game."

Senior guard Bianca Smith said the team's overall youth could be one reason for the squad's resiliency. Two freshmen and a sophomore are in the starting lineup, and everyone but Smith and senior Courtney Dunn returns next season.

"It's been up and down with this team," Smith said. "And I think it's because we're so young that people kind of seem to forget a 30-point loss and come out and play hard, or play extremely well against Nebraska and then come out and play extremely well at Missouri."

Smith said she believes the team is still focused, and has remained close-knit without the bickering or other splintering effects that can come with a long losing spell.

The senior also said that she doesn't believe recent questions about McConnell-Miller's job status have affected the team.

"I don't think anyone's worrying about it," Smith said. "That also credits the fact that we're a young team and they're not really into the paper and actually reading it. I haven't heard anything from anyone in the locker room about coach's job status."

Win or lose, McConnell-Miller said it's common for young players to struggle with focus as the length of a college season wears on them.

The coach said she and her staff have simply tried to keep practices short but competitively lately to minimize mental fatigue.

"You just continue to teach and improve on what you're good at and try to improve the areas where we struggle," she said.

Oddly enough, the young Buffs have played some of their best basketball on the road lately, including a competitive effort at Nebraska and an overtime win over Missouri.

The Buffs felt they let one slip away when they lost to Iowa State (22-6, 10-5) by six in January. Senior Alison Lacey lit up

the Buffs for 32 points in that contest, but she will miss her second straight game today as she recovers from a respiratory illness.

ISU lost at Oklahoma State on Wednesday without Lacey, but will be playing today to clinch the second seed in the Big 12 Tournament.

"We seem to be playing extremely well on the road for whatever reason," Smith said. "So this is a perfect opportunity for us in this last game to get a victory going into the tournament."

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## CU women's preview vs. Iowa State

Camera staff  
Boulder Daily Camera

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**TODAY:** The Buffs (13-15, 3-12 Big 12) host No. 13 Iowa State (22-6, 10-5) in a 1 p.m. game at Hilton Coliseum in Ames.

**BROADCAST: Television:** None. **Radio:** KKZN (760 AM) with Mike Rice (play-by-play) and Carol Callan (color).

**STORY LINES:** Colorado is coming off a 72-70 home loss against Kansas State. ... CU leading scorer sat out Friday's practice after hitting her head against KSU but is expected to be full-speed for today's game. ... ISU beat CU 68-62 in January. ... The Cyclones can clinch the No. 2 seed in the Big 12 tournament with a win.

**KEY STAT:** Iowa State leading scorer Alison Lacey will miss her second straight game as she recovers from a respiratory illness. She scored 32 points against CU in their January meeting.

**COACHES:** Kathy McConnell-Miller is 65-86 in her fifth year at CU and 156-174 overall. Bill Fennelly is 329-147 in his 15th year at ISU and 495-200 overall.

### PROBABLE STARTERS:

**Colorado --** G Chucky Jeffery, 5-10, Fr., 9.6 ppg, 5.0 rpg, 3.4 apg; G Alyssa Fressle, 5-10, So., 7.5 ppg, 2.8 rpg, 2.5 apg; F Brittany Spears, 6-1, Jr., 17.8 ppg, 8.2 rpg, 2.1 spg; F Meagan Malcolm-Peck, 6-2, Fr., 5.3 ppg, 3.6 rpg; C Courtney Dunn, 6-4, Sr., 6.1 ppg, 4.5 rpg.

**Iowa State --** G Chassidy Cole, 5-8, So., 2.2 ppg, 1.6 rpg; G Denae Stuckey, 5-8, Sr., 4.3 ppg, 6.1 rpg; G Kelsey Bolte, 6-1, Jr., 12.4 ppg, 4.7 rpg; F Chelsea Poppens, 6-2, Fr., 8.7 ppg, 7.0 rpg; C Anna Prins, 6-7, Fr., 8.9 ppg, 3.9 rpg.

**SERIES:** Colorado leads 36-28 overall but trails 14-12 and has lost five straight in Ames.

**UP NEXT:** Colorado begins Big 12 tournament play with a 6:30 p.m. game an Kansas City's Municipal Auditorium on Thursday against an opponent to be determined.

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