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Chemistry and communication

Women's basketball looks to fuse them together this season

By Marlee Horn on November 10, 2009

Editor's note: Welcome to the CU Independent's five-day season preview of Colorado Buffaloes basketball. Each day, we will delve into the world of CU basketball leading up to the men's season-opener against Arkansas-Pine Bluff. On Day 2, we will take a look at the women's basketball team.

The Colorado Buffaloes women's basketball team knows it takes chemistry and communication to have a good season. This comes together when the frontcourt and backcourt work in sync.

Head coach Kathy McConnell-Miller sees the importance of players on both sides of the court and understands the skills these players need to have.



McConnell-Miller said she likes her centers and forwards to understand positioning and know how to post up and face up. These skills take consistent progression from the time a player is a freshman. Once they start fully asserting these skills, they become high-post shooters and drivers.

Eventually, they acquire the comfort level of being able to shoot a three-point shot and play with their backs to the basket.

"I think as far as your frontcourt, you want some pretty talented players that have some good hands and size," McConnell-Miller said. "They've got the ability to score in one-on-one situations."

As far as the backcourt is concerned, McConnell-Miller said she is looking for players with a good feel for tempo, time and score during the game.

"In your backcourt, you like to have some players that can really stretch the defense – that can shoot the basketball," McConnell-Miller said. "You like to have a player that can read the defenses and adjust accordingly."

When it comes to the defensive end, sophomore guard Alyssa Fressle said the team is working on getting in the passing lanes and preparing for rebounds.

Fressle said she hopes to show her offseason preparation work on improving her shot, footwork and defense will translate into the skills her coach described.

Fressle also said team speed will be a key part of their game as well.

“This year we’re really going to push the ball more and be a lot quicker on both offensive and defensive ends,” Fressle said.

Putting more pressure on opposing teams’ offenses will help the Buffs score with more ease, she said.

But it takes more to make a good backcourt player. Just like with frontcourt, it takes skill progression.

McConnell-Miller said it takes a lot of work, but once a point guard reaches the level where she can handle the ball well and have the ability to get to the rim and finish, then she is something special — a great defender. This also takes using screens to get open and being able to conduct single one-on-one coverage.

“The backcourt begins with your point guard,” McConnell-Miller said. “I think that is very hard to develop because their mentality needs to be something that they’ve had when they were a player in the very young years of their playing life. So it’s hard at this level to train somebody to be a point guard. It’s something that is a skill that is learned over a period of time.”

Just as important as it is for the frontcourts and backcourts to be strong, the interaction between the two have to be strong as well.

“If you’re not talking and working together, then you’re not going to be successful because you’re not going to be on the same page,” junior forward Brittany Spears explained. “It’s very important for all of us to be together on the same page.”

Good chemistry is key to communication.

When chemistry is put to use, everything comes together. The Buffs look to put five players on the floor who gives them the best opportunity to play hard, score and win.

“I think building chemistry on the floor is one of the most important things,” McConnell-Miller said. “That chemistry needs to carry over to the locker room and the bus. It needs to carry over to the team meetings and their apartments and dorm rooms.”

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