



Senior guard Britney Blythe hopes to increase her three-point shooting output.
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



12/29/2010 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

Brooks: After LA, Lappe's Buffs Ready To Turn Page

BOULDER - Aside from a hard screen here or a sweet steal there, some trips are best forgotten. The Colorado women's basketball team just returned from one.

That's not entirely true; it's been almost two weeks since the Buffaloes deplaned after the Women of Troy Tournament in Los Angeles. Or maybe Lost Angeles . . . it was that kind of trip.

After 68-54 and 70-50 losses to host Southern California and Dayton, respectively, CU coach Linda Lappe and her players used part of Christmas break to inventory areas where improvement is critical before Big 12 Conference play begins on Jan. 8.

Lappe was philosophical about the pair of defeats in LA - the first time this season her team has lost back-to-back games.

"We learned a lot from that tournament in terms of taking it to the next level - what we need to do to get better, to compete," Lappe said. "USC was a Big 12-caliber team, and Dayton was very, very good. They were 25-7 last year and made the (NCAA) tournament. We played two very good teams but didn't perform like we wanted to in either game. But we learned a lot and have to continue to get better."

BUFFALO EXTRAS

[→ Buy Tickets](#)

[→ Colorado Basketball Notes](#)

Maybe the hardest lessons administered to the Buffs in each game came on offense. Their 50 points against Dayton was a season low and came a day after they'd only scored four more against the tourney's host team. Their field goal percentage in the consolation game was of the rub-your-eyes-and-take-another-look variety - 26 percent.

And their turnovers - 24 and 22 - were totals that Lappe might be able to live with in mid-November, but not late December.

As a result, much of the practice time during the post-Christmas break has been spent "focusing on offense - movement, passing, fundamentals . . . we weren't very good in those (in LA)," Lappe said. "Our turnovers were way too many at this point of the season. I don't mind that many in the first few games, but now you should be down to about 10 or 12.

"We have to become better passers, make sure we're not traveling. We just have to do a lot of the little things and take care of the fundamental details . . . our players have to have the confidence of being able to kick to a teammate and know they're going to score or do something positive with the ball, put their teammates in position to be successful. That's the other thing; a lot of times we don't allow teammates to be successful. We have to be better there."

Senior guard Britney Blythe theorized that the Buffs unconsciously sped things up on the offensive end and discarded their fundamentals. "We were in a rush," she said. "When that happens and we're shooting like 30 percent from the field, even if we do get stops it doesn't matter.

"We held both teams to 70 points or under and coach Lappe says we should be able to win those games - or at least be close. We weren't. We need to run our offense by slowing down, being patient and doing the little things. I think those are going to help us."

Decent defense undoubtedly was the best available silver lining for Blythe and the Buffs. "We need to keep working hard on defense . . . we can play 'D' - that's what we can do," Blythe said.

Lappe agreed: "We have to keep our defensive intensity. We can't let that slide while we focus on offense. If we let that slide we're in trouble."

Blythe is among the perimeter shooters that Lappe wants her inside players to look for when they have the opportunity to "kick" the ball outside. Blythe averages 4.4 points but can be an effective three-point shooter, as she was earlier this season.

She entered the USC tournament ranked 14th in the Big 12 in three-pointers made (1.3 a game), with 12 of her 14 field goals made from behind the arc. But in two games in LA, she hit only one trey (vs. Dayton) in nine attempts - not the kind of productivity she and her coach want.

"She has a role and knows it," Lappe said. "She's not going to be our leading scorer or rebounder . . . she has to knock down her open three; that's the thing she was doing early in the season that she has to get back to doing. When the shot's there she has to be ready to step in and nail it. She doesn't take many bad shots, she doesn't force things. She might only get three (attempts) during a game, but of those three she's got to knock a couple down."

Blythe, of San Mateo, Calif., conceded that she needs to "look for my shot a little bit more . . . we've talked about that. If I'm a little more aggressive (offensively) it's going to open things up a little more for Chucky (Jeffery) and (Brittany) Spears. People have their eyes on them."

Lappe counts on Blythe just as heavily on the defensive end, usually assigning her to defend an opponent's top wing player. "She takes a lot of pride in her defense," said Lappe, adding that Blythe also is one of the Buffs' best communicators at both ends of the floor. "I think our team listens to her . . . she's positive, but also knows when we need a little extra oomph and she gives that as well. Between her and Julie (Seabrook) they're our best two communicators. When she doesn't do it, we definitely miss it. The challenge is for her to make that very consistent."

Before opening Big 12 play at Texas A&M, CU has home games against Colgate (Thursday, 7 p.m.) and North Dakota (Jan. 4). Blythe believes most remnants of the lost weekend in Los Angeles have been flushed and the Buffs are ready to move on.

"We can't really harp on those losses," she said. "It was great competition; both of those teams were in the NCAA Tournament, so it's a mindset of taking what we did wrong, our mistakes, and improving. It's time to go forward, it's time to play in the Big 12."

Contact: BG.Brooks@Colorado.EDU

SHOW MENU

