

CU's Hargis asserts herself

Minutes rising as Buff progresses through freshman season

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Posted: 02/10/2011 11:15:16 AM MST

The stat line didn't jump off the box score: six points, eight rebounds, one assist, one block.

One teammate scored 26 points and another just missed a triple-double after all.

But the Colorado women's basketball team's win over Nebraska on Sunday marked a breakthrough moment for freshman center Rachel Hargis.

The 6-foot-4 Robinson, Texas, product notched career highs for points, rebounds and minutes played (26). But she also asserted herself on the court like she hadn't before in a Buffaloes uniform, holding ground in the lane on defense and making aggressive moves with the basketball on offense.

"I think I just stopped thinking about everything and just played, and stuff was happening the right way," Hargis said after Wednesday's practice as the Buffs prepared for Saturday's home game against Texas Tech. "And it just gave me more confidence."

Whereas freshman guard Brittany Wilson was able to come in and play a significant role for the Buffs almost from the season's opening tip, Hargis' progression has been more gradual.

She's averaging just 15 minutes per outing and had three games in a row early in Big 12 play in which she played 10 minutes or fewer. But lately her playing time has increased as her coaches and teammates have gotten more confidence in her. Against Kansas last week, she played 25 minutes before topping that against NU.

CU coach Linda Lappe said the comfort factor has been big for Hargis, knowing now where she's supposed to be on both offense and defense. And assistant coaches Jennie Baranczyk and Jonas Chatterton have spent ample time with Hargis working on her offensive moves.

"She's been just continuing to get more playing time and more playing time because she's doing the things that we need her to do," Lappe said.

On Sunday, those things weren't flashy, but they did look as though they came naturally, which is a good sign for the front-court light Buffs.

Things like backing down a more experienced Catheryn Redmon from 12 feet out to score CU's first points of the game. Catching and scoring in stride on a blink-of-an-eye pass across the lane from Chucky Jeffery. And driving to the low block and kicking out to Wilson in the corner for an open 3 pointer.

"I feel like it's just been building up," Hargis said. "The last two away games I had pretty good games, and then I think it all just came together for the Nebraska game. I feel like it's just going to keep building from there, so I'm excited to play again."

Concussion roulette

With a bye spot in the schedule Wednesday, Lappe gave her players Monday and Tuesday off to rest up and kick the sickness that has attacked some of the team lately.

When practice resumed Wednesday, however, senior starting guard Chelsea Dale was sidelined with a concussion after getting tripped up and hitting her head on the floor against Nebraska.

Dale is expected to return to action by Saturday. But she is the fourth Buff who has missed practice or game time with a concussion this season, joining junior forward Julie Seabrook, sophomore guard Chucky Jeffery and freshman guard Ashley Wilson.

Lappe said she didn't think the Buffs have been burned by any freakish odds. Rather, greater awareness of head injuries in recent years has led to more diagnoses.

Scheduling puzzle

Lappe said that the Buffs' 2011-12 non-conference schedule is starting to take shape as director of operations Tracy Tripp puts the final pieces together.

There are still a couple of slots to fill, and contracts have to be signed to make things official.

But Lappe said some highlights would include continuing the series with in-state rivals Colorado State and Denver, a road trip to Illinois, Wisconsin coming to Boulder for the Omni Hotels Classic, and a trip to Texas-San Antonio's tournament.

Thinking pink

Saturday's 4 p.m. clash with Texas Tech at the Coors Events Center will be the Buffs' Pink Zone game for breast cancer awareness as teams across the country participate in the WBCA's Feb. 11-20 initiative.

Everyone wearing pink gets \$1 admission, and the first 400 fans will receive a pair of pink Crocs shoes.

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