

Lappe's CU squad must steal road wins

Bufs visit Texas today looking for first win outside of Boulder

By Joshua Linden Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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Coach Linda Lappe pulled the Colorado women's basketball team into a meeting Friday and laid out the facts.

If the Buffaloes are going to achieve their biggest goals -- finishing in the top half of the Big 12 Conference and reaching postseason play among them -- do or die time begins now.

And with six of the final 10 regular season games on the road, one of the underlying messages is that the Buffs (11-8, 2-4 Big 12) need to start winning away from the Coors Events Center. No longer can CU simply hold serve at home and consider any road wins that might come a nice little bonus.

"Regardless if it's home or away, we have to get these," senior guard Britney Blythe said after Saturday morning's practice. "So I think a lot of us are really trying to channel in and make away home."

The Buffs, who have yet to win away from home this season, have a serious test today with a 1 p.m. game at Texas (13-7, 2-4). Not only are the Longhorns a perennial league power, but the Frank Erwin Center figures to be especially electric as UT honors the 25th anniversary of its 1986 national championship team -- a squad that notched the first perfect season in NCAA history.

"Road games are important and we've given up a couple at home, so now we have to steal a couple on the road," Lappe said.

Whether it's Lappe or her players, the one theme Buffaloes all seem to be stressing lately is focus. And things like slow starts or extended offensive lapses often prove insurmountable in a hostile environment.

But Lappe said her team also is still getting used to what it's even like to play on the road.

The Buffs played just two true road games in non-conference play, one of which was against in-state rival Denver. Along with a neutral-site game against Dayton and two Big 12 road games, the Buffs are 0-5 away from Boulder this season.

Lappe said the Buffs are clicking better now as a team than they were in December when they fell to Dayton and Southern Cal at USC's tournament. But the Buffs felt like a loss 12 days ago at Oklahoma State was one that got away.

"I think it's just experience on the road and getting used to the travel and getting used to what the arenas are like and getting used to life on the road," Lappe said, noting the youth on her team. "And we just haven't had a whole lot of experience with that."

One thing that could help the Buffs get healthy both on the road and offensively today is a Texas defense that is allowing a conference-worst 68.4 points per game. CU has gone up against several of the Big 12's defensive best lately and struggled to score points as a result.

Granted, six of the Longhorns' seven losses have come against ranked foes, and Lappe points out that UT is good at mixing in a variety of looks on the defensive end of the floor. But the Longhorns' win at Texas Tech on Wednesday was also the first quality win they've had over a major-conference foe this season.

"It's a chance for us to attack and get points in the paint," CU leading scorer Brittany Spears said.

Of course, the Buffs will have to also keep up their own defensive intensity as well.

If the Longhorns are challenged on defense, they are one of the Big 12's best on offense, scoring 81.9 points per game.

Four players average double-digit points -- led by freshman guard Chassidy Fussell, who is scoring 21.5 per game in Big 12 play.

Blythe, a 5-foot-9 guard who has been tasked with defending opponents' best scorers lately, said the approach against the 5-10 Fussell will have to mirror the team help-side tactics the Buffs used to hold Missouri's RaeShara Brown to 13 points two games ago.

"This freshman will try to go to the rack or she'll shoot it," Blythe said. "Whatever you give her she'll take."

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Women's basketball preview: Texas vs. Colorado

By **Rick Cantu**

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

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About Colorado

Colorado is coming off a 72-59 home loss to Kansas State on Wednesday. Senior forward Brittany Spears tied a CU record by starting her 112th straight game. She scored 13 points in defeat. ... The Buffaloes are led by first-year coach Linda Lappe. ... After missing two games with a concussion, Chucky Jeffery led the team with 19 points against K-State.

Tip-ins

UT freshman Chassidy Fussell averages a team-best 21.5 points in Big 12 Conference games. ... Junior Ashley Gayle recorded six blocks total against Oklahoma State and Texas Tech to increase her career total to 250, tying her for second-best in Texas history and is fifth-best all-time in the Big 12.

Projected starters

TEXAS

No. Player Pos. Ht. Cl. Pts. Rbs.

32 Kristen Nash F 6-3 Sr. 5.0 3.6

5 Kathleen Nash G 6-2 Sr. 15.3 8.5

11 Chelsea Bass G 5-10 Fr. 7.3 2.7

24 Chassidy Fussell G 5-10 Fr. 17.6 5.4

33 Ashleigh Fontenette G 5-8 Jr. 12.8 5.2

COLORADO

No. Player Pos. Ht. Cl. Pts. Rbs.

14 Meagan Malcolm-Peck F 6-2 Soph. 7.4 4.6

22 Brittany Spears F 6-1 Sr. 17.7 8.3

23 Chucky Jeffery G 5-10 Soph. 14.8 8.8

11 Brittany Wilson G 5-8 Fr. 8.2 3.9

4 Britney Blythe G 5-9 Sr. 3.6 1.6

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