



*This season, CU sophomore Alec Burks (10) knows the demands of success in the Big 12 Conference.
Photo Courtesy: Tony Harman*



01/07/2011 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

Brooks: Is CU Now A Better Match For Mizzou?

BOULDER - This could be interesting. About time, you say, because for most of the past three seasons Colorado-Missouri basketball games have been as captivating as watching your bumper rust.

No. 8 Missouri visits CU's Coors Events Center Saturday morning (11:30 a.m.), and if form from the six most recent games holds, the Tigers' 40-minute assault will leave the Buffs breathless and winless in a Big 12 Conference opener for the 14th consecutive season.

But there are indications - which we'll get to in a minute - of that unsightly form coming undone this time around.

In the Buffs' now-defunct Jeff Bzdelik era, Mizzou defeated CU in six consecutive regular season games, with the first - a 66-62 Tigers win at Coors - the closest of the bunch. Toss out that one and MU's average margin of victory in the remaining five games was just shy of 24 points.

BUFFALO EXTRAS

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That four-point loss in Game 1 might have offered false hope, and it certainly belied what was to come. On the return trip to Columbia in Bzdelik's first year, Mizzou defeated CU, 63-50. In his second season in Columbia, the Buffs were clubbed, 107-62. The Buffs got no closer than another 13-point loss (66-53) for the remainder of Bzdelik's relatively brief stay in Boulder.

CU mostly running a deliberate, patient offense didn't match up well with MU's constant running and all-out pressure. When the Buffs fell behind, Bzdelik's style usually made it difficult to catch up. It was a little like expecting a run-oriented offense in football to rally from three TDs back in the fourth quarter.

The Tigers' part of the equation - the up-tempo offense and pressure defense - hasn't changed. The Buffs' part has. Bzdelik is at Wake Forest, and his Princeton offense has a new zip code. New CU Coach Tad Boyle wants his team to "get up and down" whenever possible, then use its motion offense in the half-court.

Boyle's players appear to have bought in and are finding more than a glimmer of hope in the change.

"In the Princeton (offense) everything is set," sophomore guard Alec Burks said. "Everybody knows what you are about to do, so they can trap more. In this motion (offense), you don't know where we are going to be, so it's hard for them to do that."

The contrast between Bzdelik's and Boyle's offensive styles is obvious, and there's a pretty noticeable contrast in their defensive philosophies as well. Boyle and his staff have labored through non-conference play to get the Buffs on the same page offensively and instill more man-to-man defensive principles. With the exception of Wednesday night's somnolent win against Western New Mexico, which saw CU record a paltry 12 assists on 36 baskets, the Buffs have been effectively sharing the ball for most of the past three weeks.

Offensively, that's key. Boyle likes his team's scoring abilities - four to five players regularly reach double figures - and likes the overall matchup with Mizzou.

"They are a talented team; you don't get into the top ten by accident," Boyle said. "They have good players, they're deep, they're well coached, they're a good basketball team. But with that being said I think we matchup with them very well in terms of our personnel. What it comes down to in conference play is who is executing at the higher level and who is guarding and rebounding at the higher level."

Atop CU's to-do list for Saturday is handling Mizzou's pressure. Over four seasons, MU Coach Mike Anderson has constructed his team to deliver it, but he has strongly hinted that his fifth team might be his deepest and most talented.

"I think we're going in the right direction . . . we've taken some baby steps each game," Anderson said. "Early in the year, we were trying to beat people with our offense; the last four or five games our defense has picked up."

"Guys are getting an idea of the intensity level it takes and understanding their roles . . . understanding the style we play. Sometimes all the talent doesn't mesh, but things are starting to come to pass."

That last sentence might constitute an overly modest assessment by Anderson. With one senior on the current roster, his team is 14-1, the only loss coming in overtime to now-No. 13 Georgetown (111-102). The Tigers are averaging 86.4 points a game (fifth nationally), allowing 67.3, and forcing an average of 20.1 turnovers. But they're only outrebounding their opponents by a two boards a game.

MU doesn't have a Baylor-sized front line; it's built more along the lines of CU, which allows Boyle to feel decent about matchups in personnel. The Buffs' offense - it averages 84.3 points (seventh nationally) - also provides Boyle with good vibes.

"They're playing some pretty good basketball," Anderson observed. "They're scoring, playing a lot freer (than last season) . . . they're used to each other (and) they're putting the ball in the hole. We've got a task in front of us."

But Boyle knows it won't be much of a task if the Buffs don't conjure up enough defense to complement their offense and rush the boards en masse.

Confirmation won't come until mid-afternoon on Saturday, but Burks appears to have gotten the memo. His first season in the Big 12 was productive enough to earn him CU's first freshman-of-the-year award, but it taught him something more valuable:

"You've got to fight, you've got to grind, and you've got to be tough. You've got to rebound, and you've got to play 'D.' It's not for kids; it's a grown man's league. I learned that last year. We've got to play hard every night, every game, and don't take anybody lightly. We'll be fine if we do that."

If Burks & Co. do it Saturday . . . hey, it could be interesting.

KEEP IT REAL, KEEP IT UGLY - As a CU player, first-year Buffs coach Linda Lappe never lost to Texas A&M. But that was the pre-Gary Blair Era. When Blair took over in 2003, A&M took off.

Year in and out now, the Aggies reside among the elite teams in women's college basketball. They've ascended through athleticism, physical play and full-court, full-time pressure.

Said Lappe: "I love their mental approach, the way they attack the game."

Blair's teams seldom rest, and this one is no different. A&M is averaging 83 points a game, yielding 53 and forcing nearly 26 turnovers. The No. 7 Aggies are 12-1, with their only loss a three-point decision (61-58) at then-No. 5 Duke, which since has climbed to No. 3.

Size-wise, Lappe believes her Buffs (9-4) match up reasonably well with the Aggies for Saturday's Big 12 opener in College Station, Texas. But the key is matching their intensity and remaining disciplined against their pressure.

"That's what they do," Lappe said. "They're very quick, very fast. They get up and pressure you the full length of the court for a full 40 minutes - they don't care what the score or situation is. They're up and pressuring. They're hard-wing denial, they're trying to get you to speed up your offense. We've got to do a great job of taking things as they come and really executing without getting in a rush and letting them dictate how fast we move."

"We've got to stay disciplined for 40 minutes. We want it to be an ugly game; they want to get up and down and have the game in the 90s or 100s. We want it to be as low scoring as we can possibly make it."

Added sophomore CU point guard Chucky Jeffery: "They've got speed, quickness and they use full-court pressure almost the full 40 minutes of the game. They like running in transition. They're fast and like to get to the hoop. We'll have to try and slow the game down and have good transition defense."

Jeffery got her first look at Blair's team last season and came away impressed.

"Texas A&M was probably the team that gave us the most pressure, the hardest time," she said. "But we've practicing on that and trying to find a way to keep the game at our tempo and not speed it up."

"This week we've been practicing passing, looking the ball in and being strong with our passing, being tough. I think we'll be able to handle the pressure real well."

They'll have to in order to stay competitive. The Buffs are averaging just over 20 turnovers, but in their four most recent games they've committed 24, 22, 15 and 26. Those numbers must decrease Saturday.

Jeffery calls the A&M trip "a great test for us at the beginning of the conference. Having played against them, I understand pretty much how the game is going to go from their perspective. I just have to be smart as a point guard and know we want to play our game - not theirs."

Contact: BG.Brooks@Colorado.EDU

SHOW MENU



Chip on shoulder may help CU Buffs' Hargis

Freshman center will face tall task in Big 12 play

By Joshua Lindenstein Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:01/07/2011 07:45:03 PM MST

Ask Colorado strength and conditioning coach James Hardy which women's basketball player made the biggest strides in the weight room over the offseason, and it doesn't take him long to single out freshman Rachel Hargis.

Upon further pondering, Hardy even notes that Hargis will make larger gains once this season is over and she gets a full offseason of collegiate training.

The tale of Hargis' work in the weight room mirrors that of her exploits on the court. A 6-foot-4 center from Robinson, Texas, Hargis arrived in Boulder as a raw talent who has been improving ever since. But she's also come nowhere near her potential.

"She's one of those post players that I think even by the time she's late in her sophomore year to junior year she's going to be a totally different player than she is now," CU coach Linda Lappe said this week.

What the next two months have in store is sure to season any freshman. The learning curve gets K2-steep starting today with the opening of Big 12 Conference play -- the Buffaloes (9-4) play at No. 7 Texas A&M (12-1) at 6 p.m. And as the only true post player on CU's roster, Hargis figures to see plenty of action in a league full of talented frontcourts.

To her credit, Hargis knows she has a long way to go before she's mentioned alongside the likes of A&M's Danielle Adams and Baylor's Brittney Griner. "Everything" is how she describes the areas in which she needs to improve. But she's also not intimidated.

Hargis, who grew up a Baylor fan just outside of Waco, has watched Big 12 basketball since she was a young girl. She's played in high school against some of the league's post players. And she's watched them in college and knows many of their strengths.

"I know kind of what they do, so I'm ready to take them on," Hargis said.

Hargis also admits she's got a bit of a personal vendetta against the Texas schools in particular for not recruiting her more in high school. That fire to prove herself against the Big 12's best has helped fuel a renewed energy in Hargis since the Buffs returned from their holiday break.

Lappe said Hargis has been a totally different player the last two weeks in practice, more physical, more confident and more aggressive on offense.

"She's got a little bit of a mean streak in her, which is good," said Lappe, who points out that it's when Hargis becomes passive that she struggles on the court and gets pushed around.

There will be plenty of bumps along the way for Hargis. Her numbers so far have been modest, even against CU's relatively light slate of non-conference foes.

Hargis is averaging 15.1 minutes, 2.6 points and 2.5 rebounds per outing. She has had two of her better performances recently, though, grabbing seven rebounds in a win over Colgate and then turning in six boards in a triumph over North Dakota.

Hargis played at least 20 minutes in both of those victories, even seeing some time on the court alongside junior forward Julie Seabrook.

Reinforcements are on the way in the form of Clackamas, Ore., standout center Jen Reese, who has signed to play with

the Buffs next season. But for now Hargis and Seabrook are CU's only real options inside.

The Buffs have struggled against the Big 12 the last two years largely because they didn't have the personnel to counter teams inside. That left few driving lanes for slashers like Brittany Spears and Chucky Jeffery, and led to many forced outside shots as the shot clock wound down. Lappe said the combination of Hargis and Seabrook on the floor together will likely be used more in Big 12 play this season to help even out such mismatches.

The idea is one Seabrook is thrilled about given that she grew up playing more of a forward role than that of center, a position she's been asked to play more recently.

"It's exciting for me," said the 6-3 Seabrook, a solid outside shooter who likes to work the high-low game with another post on the floor.

More of a defensive stalwart in high school, where she helped led her team to a 3A state title as a junior, Hargis has been working hard to improve the offensive side of her game. And Seabrook said Hargis has been good at absorbing information from coaches and older players.

And the strength? Hargis still has plenty of room for improvement there, too. But Seabrook said the freshman is quickly becoming one of the team's strongest players, especially when it comes to boxing out.

"I know I'm going to be facing a lot of big girls, bigger than me," Hargis said. "I've been working on it. I don't look that strong but I'm stronger than most people think."

TODAY: The Colorado Buffaloes (9-4) play on the road against No. 7 Texas A&M (12-1) in a 6 p.m. game at Reed Arena.

BROADCAST: No television. Radio on KKZN (760 AM) with Mike Rice (play-by-play) and Carol Callan (color).

STORYLINES: Tonight's game is the Big 12 Conference opener for both teams. ... CU went 3-13 in league play and finished 11th in the Big 12 last season. ... The game also marks CU coach Linda Lappe's first game as a coach in the conference and kicks off the Buffs' final season in the league before moving to the Pac-12 next season. ... CU has won two games in a row. ... Texas A&M's lone loss was a one-point setback against No. 3 Duke.

KEY STAT: Big 12 teams went a combined 133-30 in non-conference games, including a 99-4 clip at home.

COACHES: Linda Lappe is 9-4 in her first season at CU and 59-40 overall. Gary Blair is 167-75 in his eighth season at A&M and 575-238 overall.

PROBABLE STARTERS: **Colorado** -- G Chucky Jeffery, 5-10, So., 15.2 ppg, 9.2 rpg, 4.8 apg; G Britney Blythe, 5-9, Sr., 3.7 ppg, 1.7 rpg, 1.4 apg; G Brittany Wilson, 5-8, Fr., 7.2 ppg, 3.5 rpg, 1.4 spg; F Brittany Spears, 6-1, Sr., 17.3 ppg, 7.8 rpg, 1.8 spg; F Julie Seabrook, 6-3, Jr., 7.2 ppg, 5.5 rpg. **Texas A&M** -- G Sydney Colson, 5-8, Sr., 6.5 ppg, 1.5 rpg, 5.4 apg; G Sydney Carter, 5-6 Jr., 9.8 ppg, 2.7 rpg, 3.8 apg; G Tyra White, 6-0, Jr., 13.8 ppg, 3.8 rpg 2.2 apg; F Adaora Elonu, 6-1, Jr., 10.2 ppg, 6.3 rpg, 1.8 spg; C Danielle Adams, 6-1, Sr., 22.6 ppg, 8.2 rpg, 1.5 bpg.

SERIES: Colorado leads 10-8. But A&M has won the last seven in a row, including a 95-61 romp in Boulder last season.

UP NEXT: The Buffs host Kansas at 7 p.m. Wednesday.

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Big 12 women's basketball preview capsules

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

Posted: 01/08/2011 12:09:32 AM MST

Here is the Camera's team-by-team look at the Big 12 in order of predicted finish:

Baylor (13-1)

Head coach: Kim Mulkey (11th season, 276-77).

AP ranking: 1.

Preseason Big 12 coaches poll: 1.

Best win: 65-54 over No. 5 Tennessee.

Worst loss: 65-64 to No. 2 Connecticut (only loss).

Outlook: Despite the loss of one starting guard to a torn ACL early in the season and another who left the team just before the season began, the Bears are loaded and have already picked up three wins over top-15 teams.

CU on: March 5 in Boulder.

Texas A&M (12-1)

Head coach: Gary Blair (8th year, 167-75).

AP ranking: 7.

Preseason Big 12 coaches poll: 2.

Best win: 67-49 over Michigan.

Worst loss: 61-58 at No. 3 Duke (only loss).

Outlook: The Aggies haven't beaten a ranked foe yet, but they've been crushing almost everyone in their path. Six-foot-1 post player Danielle Adams is a force inside, leading the league at 22.6 points per game.

CU on: Today in College Station.

Oklahoma (10-3)

Head coach: Sherri Coale (15th year, 322-146).

AP ranking: 19.

Preseason Big 12 coaches poll: 3.

Best win: 84-66 over Fresno State.

Worst loss: 76-69 at TCU.

Outlook: The Sooners have slipped up against some good opponents so far. But guard Whitney Hand is back after missing 13 months with a knee injury, and the Sooners have been to two straight Final Fours.

CU on: Feb. 23 in Boulder.

Iowa State (12-2)

Head coach: Bill Fennelly (16th year, 344-151).

AP ranking: 17.

Preseason Big 12 coaches poll: 5.

Best win: 60-47 over Michigan.

Worst loss: 62-40 at No. 21 Iowa.

Outlook: Sharp-shooting guard Alison Lacey is no longer around, but the Cyclones have enough size and versatility to challenge at the top of the league.

CU on: Jan. 15 in Boulder; Feb. 19 in Ames.

Texas (11-3)

Head coach: Gail Goestenkors (4th year, 76-39).

AP ranking: 22.

Preseason Big 12 coaches poll: 4.

Best win: 82-68 over Idaho State.

Worst loss: 71-57 at No. 11 Michigan State.

Outlook: Texas is scoring a league-best 86.9 points per game and has shown it can play with tough opponents. Now the Longhorns have to start beating them.

CU on: Jan. 30 in Austin.

Kansas (13-1)

Head coach: Bonnie Henrickson (7th year, 109-96).

AP ranking: Receiving votes.

Preseason Big 12 coaches poll: 6.

Best win: 79-57 over Alabama.

Worst loss: 75-67 at Michigan (only loss).

Outlook: Sophomore Carolyn Davis and junior Aishah Sutherland give the Jayhawks two forwards averaging nearly double-doubles as KU tries to climb the conference ladder.

CU on: Wednesday in Boulder; Feb. 2 in Lawrence.

Kansas State (10-3)

Head coach: Deb Patterson (15th year, 289-167).

AP ranking: Not ranked.

Preseason Big 12 coaches poll: 9.

Best win: 64-53 over No. 18 St. John's.

Worst loss: 72-55 at Texas-San Antonio.

Outlook: The Wildcats are young but experienced. But any potential rise into the top half of the league is likely still a year away.

CU on: Jan. 26 in Boulder; Feb. 16 in Manhattan.

Nebraska (10-4)

Head coach: Connie Yori (9th year, 163-103).

AP ranking: Not ranked.

Preseason Big 12 coaches poll: 7.

Best win: 99-85 over Miami.

Worst loss: 67-61 at Indiana.

Outlook: A senior-laden lineup led NU to an undefeated regular season last year. The Huskers are looking much more human this season as they try to fit new pieces in place.

CU on: Feb. 6 in Boulder; March 2 in Lincoln.

Texas Tech (13-1)

Head coach: Kristy Curry (5th year, 79-63).

AP ranking: Receiving votes.

Preseason Big 12 coaches poll: 10.

Best win: 50-43 over Cal.

Worst loss: 76-68 at Penn State (only loss).

Outlook: The Lady Raiders aren't a flashy pick. But they're picking up wins the gritty way -- by holding their opponents to 50.3 points per game and leading the Big 12 in rebounding margin.

CU on: Feb. 12 in Boulder.

Oklahoma State (12-1)

Head coach: Kurt Budke (6th year, 106-69).

AP ranking: Receiving votes.

Preseason Big 12 coaches poll: 8.

Best win: 95-50 over Arkansas-Pine Bluff.

Worst loss: 73-45 vs. Duke (only loss).

Outlook: The Cowgirls are young (two seniors, one junior) and so far tough to read. They lead the Big 12 in scoring defense but have played only two teams with winning records, clobbering one and getting clobbered by the other.

CU on: Jan. 18 in Stillwater.

Colorado (9-4)

Head coach: Linda Lappe (1st year, 9-4).

AP ranking: Not ranked.

Preseason Big 12 coaches poll: 12.

Best win: 73-49 over Colorado State.

Worst loss: 70-69 at Denver.

Outlook: The Buffaloes are already playing more disciplined on offense and stingier on defense than last year. The question now is do they have the firepower to have a chance to win night in, night out in the toughest league in the country?

Missouri (8-6)

Head coach: Robin Pingeton (1st year, 8-6).

AP ranking: Not ranked.

Preseason Big 12 coaches poll: 11.

Best win: 54-45 over No. 15 Georgetown.

Worst loss: 81-73 at Eastern Illinois.

Outlook: Pingeton's rebuilding project is no less of a task than Linda Lappe's at CU. But the Tigers do have enough talent and experience to garner respect, as Georgetown found out.

CU on: Jan. 22 in Boulder; Feb. 26 in Columbia.

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JANUARY 7, 2011, 2:14 PM

Milestones to mark CU women's Big 12 opener

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

[Linda Lappe](#)^[1] will coach the 100th game in her career on Saturday. (Kathryn Scott Osler, [The Denver Post](#)^[2])

In addition to [Colorado](#)^[3]'s women's game Saturday night at No. 7 [Texas A&M](#)^[4] (12-1) being the final Big 12 opener for the [Buffaloes](#)^[5] (9-4), there are other milestone numbers to watch.

Saturday's game also will mark the 100th career game as a head coach for [CU](#)^[6]'s [Linda Lappe](#)^[1], who is in her first season at her alma mater. She stands 59-40 overall, including 50-36 in three seasons at [Metro State](#)^[7].

Also, [CU](#)^[6] senior forward Brittany Spears needs 17 points (her season average) to catch former Buffs All-American Shelley Sheetz for fourth place on the school's career scoring list.

Spears enters Saturday's game with 1,758 points. Sheetz tallied 1,775 from 1991-95.

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