

CU Buffs to host WNIT game Thursday

By Joshua Lindenstein Camera Sports Writer
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The Coors Events Center keeps adding show times.

One night after the Colorado men's basketball team learned it would host a first-round National Invitation Tournament game, the CU women landed a home game in the first round of the WNIT.

The Buffaloes -- whose last postseason tourney appearance was a WNIT semifinal run in 2008 -- will host the University of California Riverside at 7 p.m. on Thursday.

The WNIT bracket was released late Monday night after the women's NCAA tourney field was set.

The Buffs (15-15) have been idle since falling to Kansas in the first round of the Big 12 Conference tournament seven days ago.

"We've definitely had to be patient," first-year CU coach Linda Lappe said in a phone interview. "It is very nice to know that we're in and who we're going to be playing and where. Now it's just about going and taking care of business."

Seven Big 12 teams -- Baylor, Texas A&M, Oklahoma, Kansas State, Iowa State, Texas and Texas Tech -- made the NCAA bracket. Kansas, Oklahoma State and CU all earned WNIT berths, leaving only Missouri and Nebraska out of postseason play.

The Buffs' fate seemed relatively secure after they won three of their final four regular season games to ensure a .500 season -- the baseline for eligibility in the WNIT and a nearly guaranteed berth for a team coming out of a powerful conference like the Big 12.

What wasn't a sure thing, however, was whether they'd be hosting in the first round or not. CU officials submitted a proposal to the WNIT recently in hopes of earning at least one home game for the Buffs.

"I feel like it's been a long time since we've played in the Events Center," said Lappe, whose squad closed out the regular season at home against Baylor on March 5. "It's good for our players to have another game at home. You've got to thank our administration for doing what they did to help make that happen."

If Colorado wins Thursday, a potential Pac-12 preview showdown with the California Bears looms in the second round. Cal plays at Cal Poly on Thursday.

Second-round games are Saturday, Sunday or Monday. Locations aren't solidified for each round until opponents are determined and depend partially on the attendance teams draw in previous rounds.

In UC Riverside, CU faces a squad that went 19-12 and finished third in the Big West Conference with an 11-5 mark.

The Highlanders were an NCAA tournament qualifier a year ago, falling to Stanford in the first round. They are in the postseason for the third year in a row after losing to Creighton in the first round of the WNIT in 2009.

"Every team now is going to be good," Lappe said. "They made it to the postseason for a reason. So you just have to be ready and prepared."

WNIT ticket info

Tickets go on sale at 8:30 a.m. today at the CU ticket office, with prices ranging from \$9-\$16 per seat.

Season ticket holders will have until 5 p.m. today to claim their seats before they are released to the general public. The ticket office will send an email to season ticket holders at 8 a.m. today explaining the process. Season ticket holders who don't receive an email should call 303-492-5858.

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