

Sophomore Chucky Jeffery recorded 19 points and 12 rebounds against the Highlanders.
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



03/17/2011 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

Bufs Squander Big Lead, But Hold Off Highlanders

BOULDER - Colorado scored 71 points Thursday night but came up short on style points. No matter. UC-Riverside checked in with 62 and immediately checked out of the WNIT.

"I'm happy we got the win, but we were definitely not as sharp as we could have been," said CU Coach Linda Lappe, who gets to bring her team back to the Coors Events Center on Monday (7 p.m.) to face future Pac-12 opponent California in the second round of the 64-team tournament.

"We're excited," Lappe continued. "It doesn't matter how you do it. You survive and advance and play as many games as you can."

BUFFALO EXTRAS



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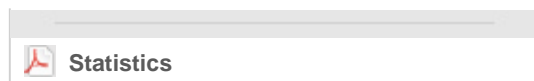
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So the Buffs (16-15) survived at the expense of the Highlanders (19-13). Rusty from not having played in nine days and bothered by UC-Riverside's motion offense, CU allowed a 19-point second-half lead to be trimmed to two before regaining its composure and restoring a double-digit advantage in the final 1:36.



Senior Brittany Spears and sophomore Chucky Jeffery each had a double-double to lead the Buffs. Spears scored 18 points and grabbed 12 rebounds, while Jeffery added 19 and 12.

"It feels good . . . it wasn't the prettiest thing, but it feels good to get a win," said Jeffery, who scored eight of CU last 11 points, including four-of-six free throws in the final 1:48.

On two occasions when the Highlanders had cut the Buffs' lead to two - 58-56 and 60-58 - Jeffery responded with baskets to keep the Big West Conference visitors at bay. Her biggest shot - about a 15-foot jumper - came at the 3:38 mark with the shot clock ticking toward zero.

"I thought Jeffery made a really tough shot to put them up by four," UC-Riverside Coach John Margaritis said. "We closed the gap, but they made a couple of shots and we didn't - and it changed the game."

Sophomore Meagan Malcolm-Peck, who scored five of her seven points in the second half (she also had three rebounds, three assists and two steals), said despite the Buffs losing their large lead, they never lost confidence.

"We were all confident, even when they made that run," she said. "It was like, 'OK guys get it back together because we're not losing this one.'"

Full-court pressure helped UC-Riverside cut into CU's 19-point advantage. The Buffs, however, claimed they had seen more troublesome presses in the Big 12 Conference and that they were blame for the bulk of their 21 turnovers.

Lappe pointed to ball-pressure by Highlanders' guard Tre'Shonti Nottingham, who had three of her team's 10 steals: "She's very quick and did a nice job . . . but down the stretch, in the last two minutes, we did a better job of handling it than early on."

Lappe said playing Cal, which disposed of Cal Poly 74-60 Thursday night, "would give us a preview (of the Pac-12)," but added, "We're excited whoever we play . . . we're happy for a home game and happy to be playing on Monday."

Added Jeffery: "I don't really think the opponent matters, because we're still going to come out and have a game plan that we'll follow, and we're going to play our game."

The Buffs held a six-point halftime lead despite hitting only two field goals in the game's first 10 minutes. But they compensated for that 2-for-17 shooting from the field by going five-of-six from the free throw line during that frigid span.

The biggest lead the Highlanders could manage during the Buffs' cold snap was 9-5.

Over the half's final 10 minutes, CU heated up enough to forge its six-point halftime lead. A Jeffery

jumper at the 9:33 mark pushed the Buffs up 14-13, and CU increased its lead to 23-28 and 25-20 before UC-Riverside pulled to within a point (25-24).

But Spears answered with her third trey of the half, and Jeffery added a layup in the final minute to put the Buffs up 30-24 at the break. Spears finished the half with nine points, Jeffery seven.

CU wound up shooting 44.0 percent from the field (22-of-50) to UC-Riverside's 34.5 percent (20-of-58). The Buffs outrebounded the Highlanders 49-29 and outscored them 22-18 in the paint and 32-21 off the bench.

CU scored the first five points of the second half - another Spears trey, a Jeffery layup - and took its first double-figure lead, 35-24. But that was merely the beginning.

In the half's first 6:08, the Buffs outscored the Highlanders 18-5 to open their 19-point lead (48-29). But CU couldn't hold it. UC-Riverside closed to close to 54-45 on a three-pointer by Rhey Nabors, then to 54-47 on a layup by Alyssa Morris with 7:38 to play.

Just over 2 minutes later, Nottingham's trey brought the Highlanders to 58-54, and a pair of free throws by Morris closed the gap to 58-56 with 4:39 remaining.

Jeffery and Morris traded baskets, keeping CU ahead by a pair (60-58) before the Buffs got back-to-back field goals from Jeffery and Malcolm-Peck to extend the lead to 64-58 with 3 minutes left.

When Britney Blythe's pair of free throws made it 66-58 with 2:08 to play, the Buffs could breathe easier. CU added five-of-seven free throws in the final 1:48 and was on its way to the second round.

"It feels really good," Spears said. "We worked hard in the preseason for this, so it's nice to get the win in the postseason."

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SHOW MENU



CU women hold off UC Riverside in WNIT

Bufs next play at home on Monday

By Joshua Linden Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 03/17/2011 09:25:30 PM MDT



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The Colorado Buffaloes had to shake off three years of postseason rust, not to mention nine-days-worth since playing any game.

But they found a way to win in the first round of the Women's National Invitation Tournament on Thursday night at the Coors Events Center.

After watching a no-quit UC Riverside erase most of a 19-point second-half deficit, the Buffs came through when they needed to for a 71-62 triumph on their home floor.

The postseason victory was the first for the Buffs since they topped Texas Christian in the WNIT quarterfinals in 2008. Now, it's on to a second-round matchup at home with future Pac-12 Conference foe California on Monday night.

Riverside's season ended with a record of 19-13.

"We're excited," first-year CU coach Linda Lappe said. "At this point it doesn't matter how you do it, it's survive and advance. You're trying to stay alive and play as many games as you possibly can. So any win at this time of the year, any win in March is very special."

How the Buffs did it on Thursday was bumpy at times.

CU (16-15) hit 1 of its first 14 shots from the field to fall behind 9-5 early. After building a 48-29 lead after the intermission, the Buffs struggled against Riverside's defensive pressure as the Highlanders of the Big West Conference shaved CU's lead to two with under five minutes to play.

Chucky Jeffery twice hits shots to keep Riverside from getting any closer. The second came on a 15-footer from the left wing as the shot clock expired to make it 62-58 with 3:38 left.

Fellow sophomore Meagan Malcolm-Peck followed with a layup on a pass from Spears on the next possession. And Britney Blythe drained two free throws at the 2:08 mark to make it 66-58 and give the Buffs just the breathing room they needed.

"It wasn't the prettiest thing, a little rusty, but it feels good to get a win," Jeffery said.

Jeffery and senior forward Brittany Spears led the way. Jeffery notched 19 points and 12 rebounds, while Spears turned in an 18-point, 12-rebound night and sparked the Buffs' second-half run with a trey from the top of the key to start the period.

"We worked hard in preseason for this so we wanted to get a win in postseason," Spears said.

A 7-0 spurt in the second half put the Buffs up 17-13, and they never trailed again. But the Buffs still led by only six at halftime after shooting 39 percent.

"It wasn't nerves," Spears said of the Buffs' first postseason game since her freshman year. "I think it was more rustiness

because we haven't played in such a long time, and we had to get back our game."

A free throw by Rachel Hargis with 13:52 to go made it 48-29, and it appeared the Buffs would cruise. But the Highlanders -- who have been to the NCAA tournament three times in the past six seasons -- started making it tough for the Buffs to get shots thanks largely to tight ball pressure from point guard Tre'Shonti Nottingham.

Nottingham's 3-pointer at the 5:10 mark made it 58-54 CU, and Alyssa Morris made it 58-56 with two free throws moments later.

"We did a couple of things to give us an opportunity," Riverside coach John Margaritis said. "We closed the gap, but they made a couple of shots and we didn't. And it changed the game."

While offense was sluggish for much of the night, the CU defense held Riverside to 34.5-percent shooting. And a Highlander squad that came in with four players averaging double-digit scoring was led by Morris's 12 points. Nottingham, who was leading the team coming in at 13.6 per outing, scored just nine on 2-for-11 shooting.

Malcolm-Peck added seven points, three rebounds, two assists and two steals for the Buffs. Chelsea Dale and Julie Seabrook had six points each.

"We were definitely not as sharp as we could have been, as we need to be moving forward," Lappe said. "But I liked our grit and determination down the stretch to pull it out."

Colorado 71, UC Riverside 62 UC RIVERSIDE (62)

MIN FG 3PT FT Rb PF TP

Neabors, Rheyra 23 2-4 2-4 4-6 4 2 10

Neabors, Rhaya 34 3-11 1-5 1-2 3 4 8

Hadley 9 1-4 0-1 0-2 1 3 2

Morris 35 4-10 0-3 4-5 7 3 12

Nttnghm 33 2-11 1-3 4-4 4 4 9

Palmer 9 1-1 0-0 0-0 0 1 2

Anderson 15 3-5 1-1 0-0 1 4 7

Waddell 30 3-9 1-6 3-5 5 3 10

Lewis 10 1-2 0-0 0-0 1 1 2

Armstrong 2 0-1 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Washington 0+ 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Totals 200 20-58 6-23 16-24 29 25 62

Assists (14): Rheyra Neabors, Rhaya Neabors, Hadley, Morris 2, Nottingham 4, Anderson 2, Waddell, Lewis, Armstrong.

Steals (10): Rheyra Neabors, Rhaya Neabors 2, Morris 2, Nottingham 3, Palmer, Lewis.

Turnovers (14): Rheyra Neabors 4, Morris 2, Nottingham 3, Waddell 2, Lewis 2.

Blocked shots (0).

COLORADO (71)**MIN FG 3PT FT Rb PF TP**

Seabrook 17 1-2 0-0 4-7 5 4 6

Spears 27 6-14 4-9 2-3 12 2 18

Blythe 32 0-1 0-0 4-4 0 3 4

B. Wilson 16 1-7 0-1 2-2 3 1 4

MM-Peck 32 3-5 1-2 0-1 3 3 7

A. Wilson 17 1-1 0-0 0-0 2 1 2

Dale 17 2-4 1-3 1-1 1 4 6

Jeffery 28 7-13 0-0 5-10 12 2 19

Hargis 14 1-3 0-0 3-4 6 1 5

Totals 200 22-50 6-15 21-32 49 21 71**Assists (12):** Seabrook, Spears, Blythe, B. Wilson 2, Malcolm-Peck 3, Jeffery 4.**Steals (6):** Spears, B. Wilson 2, Malcolm-Peck 2, Jeffery.**Turnovers (21):** Seabrook, Spears, Blythe, B. Wilson 7, Malcolm-Peck 2, A. Wilson 2, Dale 2, Jeffery 4, Hargis.**Blocked shots (3):** Spears, Malcolm-Peck, Hargis.**Halftime score:** Colorado 30, UC Riverside 24.**Technical fouls** -- none.**Attendance** -- 851.

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Yet another Cal team coming to CU

By Joshua Lindenstein Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 03/18/2011 12:02:21 AM MDT

Now that the Big 12 is behind the Colorado Buffaloes in the three highest-profile sports of football and men's and women's basketball, the California Bears appear to be the official Pac-12 welcoming committee.

One night after the CU men's hoops team secured a second-round home game against the Bears in the NIT, the Buff women topped UC Riverside 71-62 at the Coors Events Center Thursday in the first round of the WNIT and will next host -- Cal.

The CU men's team hosts the Bears at 7:30 p.m. today, while the women will welcome Cal to Sox Walseth Court at 7 p.m. Monday. Oh, and Cal will be the Buffs' first Pac-12 foe in football next fall, too, even though the Sept. 10 clash won't technically count as a conference game.

"It's like a little preview of next year, a little taste of the Pac-12," CU sophomore guard Chucky Jeffery said after the women's triumph on the court Thursday.

Next year's Pac-12 lineup fared well Thursday in WNIT action aside from Arizona's loss at Utah State.

Cal beat Cal-Poly 74-60, and USC beat UC Santa Barbara by 3.

Cal-Poly and UCSB tied for the Big West regular season title before UC Davis won the league tourney. Riverside, who the Buffs beat, was third in the Big West.

There are three current Pac-10 teams -- Stanford, UCLA and Arizona State -- in the NCAA tournament, which starts Saturday. Utah, which will join the league next year with CU, won the Mountain West tourney and is also in the NCAA tourney.

Home sweet home

CU improved to 19-5 all-time in home postseason games.

The Buffs are now 27-18 overall in the postseason, including 5-2 in the WNIT.

The Buffs have never played on the road in the WNIT, a trend that will continue through at least Monday.

The winner of Monday's game faces the winner of the Wyoming-Oklahoma State matchup the same day. The site and date of the third-round contest won't be set until the opponents are determined.

Competing for fans

Thursday's attendance of 851 was the Buffs' worst at home of the season, but all of the hoops being played on the Front Range right now might have something to do with it.

CU's men hosted a first-round NIT game Wednesday and will host again tonight. There were also four men's NCAA tournament games at the Pepsi Center on Thursday.

Notable

CU senior forward Brittany Spears and Jeffery both recorded their ninth double-doubles of the season. ... Spears' 18 points gave her 560 for the season to give her the sixth-best single-season mark in school history. Spears also recorded her 108th career double-digit scoring game, tying Lisa Van Goor's school record from 1980-85. ... Colorado out-rebounded Riverside 49-29. ... The Buffs made (21) and attempted (32) season high free-throw marks.

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