



Senior Brittany Spears scored 36 points in her final career game.  
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



03/27/2011 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

## Trojans, Cold Second Half Doom Buffs In WNIT

**BOULDER** - Colorado saw its payback plan for Southern California (and its 2010-11 basketball season) put on ice Sunday afternoon at the Coors Events Center.

CU went for almost 10 1/2 minutes between field goals to start the second half, enabling the Trojans to overcome a five-point deficit and eliminate the Buffaloes 87-70 in the WNIT quarterfinals.

The Trojans, who defeated the Buffs 68-54 in December in the Women of Troy Tournament and lead the series 4-2 against their future Pac-12 Conference partner, advance to the WNIT semifinals against Illinois State.

After having won six of its previous eight games, CU ended its season at 18-16 under first-year coach Linda Lappe.

"Well obviously this one kind of hurts," Lappe said. "I'm so proud of our team and what we were able to accomplish this season. It goes far beyond getting to the WNIT and getting 18 wins, and winning three games in the WNIT. It goes way further than just that. It's a credit to our players for believing and

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responding and continuing to fight and be tough. We started off the season talking about Colorado Pride and what that meant to be a Colorado player. These guys really understand that now and they understand what that means. I'm proud of our seniors and I'm proud of our entire team for everything that we've been able to do; we just didn't have quite enough (Sunday)."

Trailing by 14 points after their uncharacteristic cold spell, the Buffs rallied behind career-leading scorer Brittany Spears to cut the Trojans' lead to 69-62 in the final 3:47.

But that was as close as they would get.

Spears, playing her final game at the Events Center, tied her career-high with 36 points. She finished her CU career with a school-record 2,185 points, and with 652 points this season she moved into second place in seasonal scoring at CU. Spears entered the afternoon having averaged 23.5 points in the past eight games.

The Buffs had only one other player in double figures - sophomore Chucky Jeffery with 13.

USC's Ashley Corral, a 5-foot-9 junior guard and the school's career-leading three-point shooter, missed only one of her eight three-point attempts and finished with a career-best 32 points. Three of her teammates reached double figures - Jacki Gemelos with 20, and Cassie Harberts and Kari LaPlante with 10 each.

The Trojans (23-12) bashed the Buffs on the boards, out-rebounding them 46-26, and hit 10 of their 13 three-point attempts while CU was 6-for-26 from behind the arc. USC's 87 points was a season high.

"It seemed like every time we started to make a run and needed a stop, we got a stop and then gave them an offensive rebound," Lappe said. "We're a very good rebounding team so for us to get out-rebounded by 20. That hurts and we couldn't overcome that."

The Buffs held the advantage for most of the first half - but never by more than four points. They took the lead for the first time (6-4) on a Brittany Wilson jump shot with 16:51 before intermission, then increased it to 9-5 on Wilson's three-pointer on the next possession.

USC never allowed CU to pull away, reclaiming a one-point advantage (14-13) 4 minutes later. The Trojans' biggest first-half lead was two points on five occasions, but they trailed by two (36-34) at halftime.

USC held a seven-rebound advantage (19-12) in the first 20 minutes and hit the same amount of three-pointers (four) as CU - but in only half as many tries (six). The Buffs committed only three first-half turnovers (nine for the game), while forcing the Trojans into eight (12 total). Both teams ended the half shooting 13-of-28 from the field (46.4 percent), but CU's 10-for-28 shooting in the second half dropped its percentage to 41.1 for the afternoon (23-of-56).

Spears' 16 points led all first-half scorers, while Corral, hitting all four of her field goals (including three treys), had 11 for USC. She was just warming up, while the Buffs were headed for the ice box.

Spears started the second half with a three-pointer, giving CU its largest lead of the afternoon, 39-34. But USC responded with an 8-0 run - Corral capped it with another three - and went ahead 42-39 with 16:47 remaining.

And the Trojans, who outscored the Buffs 53-34 in the second half, didn't stop there.

With Spears' trey the only CU field goal in the second half's first 10:11, USC was able to extend its run to 19-8 and went comfortably ahead 53-44 with 11:53 to play. The Buffs finally got their second field goal of the half with 9:49 left on another Spears trey, but by then the Trojans had surged ahead 60-46.

CU pulled to within seven points (69-62) with 3:47 to play on three free throws by Spears, but the threat - and the Buffs' season - ended there.

"We're just ready for next year," Jeffery said. "It does hurt to (the seniors) go; we had a great team. Our mentality is different; I know mine is from last year. It even hurts the younger players on our team, but I think we're just excited to

see what comes next with the younger ones coming in and we're going to be anxious to see what comes next."

**Contact: BG.Brooks@Colorado.EDU**

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# Lappe's CU Buffs fall to Southern Cal

## CU women's season ends in WNIT quarterfinals

By Joshua Lindenstone, Camera Sports Writer  
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 03/27/2011 03:22:33 PM MDT



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Only the most optimistic of Buffaloes fans would have predicted the Colorado women's basketball team to be playing deep into March when the season began.

On Sunday, the Buffs' postseason fun finally ended.

Sharp-shooting guard Ashley Corral and the future Pac-12 rival USC Trojans ran away from CU in the second half for an 87-70 win in the WNIT quarterfinals at the Coors Events Center.

CU all-time leading scorer Brittany Spears capped her brilliant career by tying her personal best with 36 points in front of 1,834 in attendance. But the performance wasn't enough to overcome a talented USC squad led by Corral, who came off the bench and drained 7 of 8 from 3-point range and 10 of 15 from the field overall on her way to a career-high 32 points.

USC (23-12) advanced to play at Illinois State in Wednesday's semifinals.

The Buffs -- picked to finish last in the Big 12 Conference this year by the league's coaches -- finished with a record of 18-16 in coach Linda Lappe's first season at the helm at her alma mater.

"Obviously this one kind of hurts," an emotional Lappe said. "But as I told them in the locker room, we're so proud of our team and what we were able to accomplish this season.

"We just didn't quite have enough tonight. USC was a good team. They shot lights out. Corral was unbelievably hot and we just didn't have an answer for her."

For a bit more than a half Sunday, the Buffs -- who hadn't lost when leading at the intermission all season -- looked poised to move on to the semis.

Spears opened the second half with a 3-pointer that made it 39-34 and seemed to ramp back up the momentum CU had built just before halftime.

But USC outscored the Buffs 26-7 over the next 9:34 to go up 60-46.

Corral -- the Trojans' all-time leader in 3-pointers made -- scored 21 of her points in the second half, helping USC build its lead and then keeping the Buffs at bay as they tried to rally.

The closest CU got after USC surged ahead was 69-62 on a trio of free throws by Brittany Spears with 3:47 left. Corral coolly answered with her final trey of the day to spark a 10-2 run that put the game away for good.

Corral, a junior, made her first six 3-point attempts and also made 5 of 6 free throws.

"(Corral) wouldn't let us die," said USC coach Michael Cooper, a longtime former WNBA coach and former NBA assistant and player. "Most of the plays were drawn up for her and she was able to deliver."

It wasn't just Corral's shooting that doomed the Buffs.

USC went 10 for 13 from 3-point range as a team and shot 47 percent for the game to hang more points on the Buffs than CU had allowed all season. Jacki Gemelos scored 20 points, and Cassie Harberts and Kari LaPlante added 10 apiece.

The Trojans, who out-sized the Buffs at every position, also won the rebounding battle 46-26, an area in which CU usually shines. Fourteen of those boards came on the offensive end for USC and led to 18 second-chance points.

"It seemed like every time we were starting to make a run and we needed a stop, we got a stop and then gave up an offensive rebound," Lappe said.

In some ways, the game played out similarly to the teams' Dec. 18 meeting in Los Angeles when CU trailed by just three at the half and felt in position to win only to see USC pull away in the second.

Spears scored 16 of her points in the first 20 minutes, and the Buffs led most of the frame. Chucky Jeffery's layup with 1:03 before the break made it 36-32 Buffs before Gemelos closed the gap with a layup.

"It felt different because at the beginning of the year we just gave up," Jeffery said. "I don't think we gave up one time tonight. We just did what we could to keep fighting back."

The Trojans were simply too good. And CU, which had been rolling offensively in the postseason, struggled to make shots in the second half and went 6 for 26 from 3-point range for the game.

Jeffery scored 13 points, but no other Buff scored more than Meagan Malcolm-Peck's seven.

"It sucks to end this way, but I have faith in my team that's going on and I know they're going to keep fighting," said senior Britney Blythe, who scored five points to aid in a 13-for-28 first-half shooting effort for the Buffs. "I feel like we're walking out and I know we have made great strides."

#### **USC 87, Colorado 70 USC (87)**

#### **MIN FG 3PT FT Rb PF TP**

Marinacci 34 2-6 0-0 2-2 5 4 6

Harberts 31 2-9 0-0 6-8 8 3 10

LaPlante 26 5-7 0-0 0-0 7 4 10

Gilbreath 34 3-10 0-1 3-4 8 1 9

Gemelos 36 7-14 3-4 3-4 6 3 20

Brown 8 0-1 0-0 0-0 0 1 1

Corral 31 10-15 7-8 5-6 7 1 32

**Totals 200 29-62 10-13 19-24 46 17 87**

**Assists (12):** Marinacci 3, Harberts, Gilbreath 3, Gemelos 3, Corral 2.

**Steals (4):** Marinacci, Harberts 2, Corral.

**Turnovers (12):** Marinacci 3, Harberts 3, LaPlante, Gilbreath, Gemelos 3, Brown.

**Blocked shots (0)**

**COLORADO (70)****MIN FG 3PT FT Rb PF TP**

Seabrook 24 0-1 0-1 0-0 6 2 0

Spears 33 11-24 4-12 10-11 6 2 36

Blythe 25 2-4 1-3 0-0 1 1 5

B. Wilson 27 2-10 1-4 1-2 1 5 6

[M.Miclm](#)-Pck 31 1-4 0-3 5-6 3 1 7

A. Wilson 4 1-1 0-0 1-2 1 1 3

Dale 8 0-0 0-0 0-0 1 0 0

Jeffery 29 6-12 0-3 1-2 2 4 13

Hargis 19 0-0 0-0 0-0 4 1 0

**Totals 200 23-56 6-26 18-23 26 17 70****Assists (12):** Seabrook, Blythe 4, B. Wilson 2, Malcolm-Peck, Dale, Jeffery 3.**Steals (3):** Spears, Jeffery, Hargis.**Turnovers (9):** Spears, Blythe, B. Wilson 3, Dale, Jeffery, Team 2.**Blocked shots (4):** Seabrook, Spears, B. Wilson, Jeffery.**Halftime score:** Colorado 36, USC 34.**Technical fouls** -- None.**Attendance** -- 1,834.

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# RINGO: Buffs lose more than game as Spears exits

By **Kyle Ringo** Camera Sports Writer  
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 03/27/2011 10:45:39 PM MDT



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Brittany Spears spent the final minute of her career in the Colorado women's basketball program sandwiched between fellow seniors Britney Blythe and Chelsea Dale on the bench Sunday fighting a different battle than those she has grown accustomed to over the past four years.

This one was with herself.

The Buffs were about to lose in the quarterfinals of the National Invitation Tournament to the USC Trojans, a program that coincidentally handed Spears the first loss of her college career back in November of 2007.

In all the hours on the court since, all the practices, all the film sessions, all the flights, buses, hotels, tutors, classes, all the teammates who have come and gone, all the weights and running, all the bumps and bruises, Spears had learned to fight through losses and tough times. Knowing there would be another game next week or next year helped.

But there she was Sunday, eyes fixated on the ball everywhere it went just like she was a freshman again waiting for her coach to call her name. Only this time, she understood there was no next game to look forward to, no buffer between her and the finish line. She had reached it but suddenly didn't really want to cross it.

She fought back tears as those last 60 seconds ticked away only to release them in streams when the final horn sounded.

She tucked half her face inside her No. 22 jersey in her best effort to remain composed while she congratulated the Trojans. By the time she huddled with her teammates at center court, pretty much all of them had tears in their eyes, too.

There was nothing unusual about the scene. Teams cry together when seasons end. The finality of it is difficult, knowing the same collection of players and coaches will never compete together in the same way again.

But there was an added dimension to the Buffs' sad Sunday. Not only was the program losing three respected seniors, it was losing its heart and soul with the departure of Spears, who quite simply is one of the very best in the program's history.

She is the program's all-time leading scorer. She leaves CU having started every game of her career, a tribute to her toughness and determination and how much the game really means to her.

She added to her impressive statistical accomplishments Sunday with 36 points and six rebounds. It tied her career-best point total and fell two points short of tying the program record for points in a game. It was the highest point total of the season by a Buff.

There is no doubt, Spears left it all on the floor.

Those facts tell you only that Spears is an excellent basketball player, and that is certainly how she will be remembered over the years in Boulder, but coach Linda Lappe hopes Spears gets even more credit than that.

"She really helped lead our team to where we ended up this season," Lappe said. "More so than just points, more so than all of that stuff, the work that she has put in here in the gym, shooting baskets and getting better on a daily basis. Not a lot of people are willing to put in that sort of work."

"She has put a lot of effort and a lot of work into Colorado basketball and I think that is the biggest thing she is going to leave behind. Not only her scoring and being able to hit good shots and doing all of those things, but I think this year she has really developed as a leader and her teammates look to her and she gave everybody confidence. Not every person and not every player can do that. She kind of kept us going through a lot of the year."

Sure, the Buffs lost a lot of games during Spears' career and she never played in the NCAA Tournament. Perhaps some will view her career as less impressive than say the years Shelley Sheetz or Tera Bjorklund spent here.

I'm left to wonder what might have been if Spears had better coaching during her first three seasons in Boulder? I wondered Sunday if she had ever regretted her decision to play in Boulder considering all the hurdles she faced here that might not have been in her way elsewhere.

"I'm happy I came here and I'm more happy that coach Lappe came here my senior year," Spears said. "She made me a better person, a better basketball player. She coached me. She pushed me harder. I'm so thankful that they made a change and got a new coaching staff cause I don't think we would be here if coach Lappe wasn't here. I'm blessed that she was here to be able to push stuff out of me and make me a better player."

Spears is as soft spoken as they come, especially considering she is the star of her team. She is also a class act. See her on campus in the summer or fall, she says hello. She stops to talk. She might be big time, but she doesn't act like it.

It's safe to say Spears has a nice professional career waiting for her in Europe if she doesn't first get a chance in the WNBA. It's also safe to say she has every intention of continuing to play the game she loves.

"I just want to continue to play basketball for somebody," she said.

Let's hope she gets a chance and runs with it just as she did four years ago here in Boulder. It would be a shame if her basketball story ended here when she still can't take her eyes off the ball.

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## USC not above WNIT this season

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

Posted: 03/27/2011 10:43:48 PM MDT



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The proud Southern California women's basketball team had gotten a bit of a reputation for not accepting WNIT bids in recent seasons, even when it was eligible.

But after watching his team pull away from Colorado for an 87-70 win in the WNIT quarterfinals at the Coors Events Center, USC coach Michael Cooper said he had no doubts about the value playing in the tournament this season would have for his team.

Like CU first-year coach Linda Lappe, Cooper has been tasked with trying to restore some luster to a program that made regular NCAA tourney appearances in the 1980s and 1990s before falling on hard times recently.

In his second season, he is rebuilding with a young squad that now has four more wins under its belt than it would have had it turned down the WNIT -- as the Trojans did last season after finishing third in the Pac-10 Conference.

Cooper said the then-senior-laden Trojans, who will be a Pac-12 rival for the Buffs next season, were in a "down mode" after getting snubbed by the NCAA tourney last year and that a lackluster performance in the WNIT could have done his program more harm than good.

"This year I think we have a relatively young team, and we need this postseason experience," said Cooper, whose team tied for fourth in the Pac-10 this year. "We need to know how to get out there and continue to play after a certain point in the year. This has definitely helped us a lot. We seem to be getting better as each game goes."

The Trojans play at Illinois State in the semifinals Wednesday, with a chance to play in Saturday's title game against Charlotte or Toledo on the line.

### Senior salute

With USC's win in hand late, Lappe began taking out her seniors one-by-one as the Trojans made trips to the free-throw line.

Forward Brittany Spears, who scored a career-high 36 points and averaged 24.9 over the last nine games, walked off the court for the final time to a standing ovation with 1:31 to play. Guard Britney Blythe and wing Chelsea Dale each got their own moments shortly thereafter.

### Sunday send-off

Bags packed to hit the road, the CU men's team was introduced at halftime to a standing ovation before leaving for New York and the NIT semifinals.

CU faces Alabama at 7 p.m. Tuesday at Madison Square Garden. The championship game is Thursday.

"I salute our team, I salute our players, I salute our coaching staff and, most importantly, I salute all of Buff nation and our fans," coach Tad Boyle said. "We're going to New York to bring a championship home."

### Fans in stands

After drawing just 1,771 fans for first and second-round WNIT wins combined, CU's attendance Sunday was 1,834.

CU drew 39,486 in 21 home games this season, an average of 1,880.

#### **Quotable**

CU coach Linda Lappe on USC's 10-for-13 shooting effort from 3-point range: "It doesn't matter if you're in the gym shooting by yourself. If you hit 10 of 13, you're going to think that's a pretty good night."

#### **Notable**

USC's 53 points in the second half were the most against CU since Kansas State scored 56 in the first half on Jan. 14, 2006. ... The Buffs tied the 2007-08 WNIT semifinal team for the most home games played. Both teams went 15-6 at Coors. ... CU fell to 29-19 all-time in postseason play (7-3 WNIT) and 20-6 at home in the postseason. ... USC has now won four in a row against the Buffs.

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## USC ends CU women's season in WNIT quarterfinals

By Irv Moss

*The Denver Post*

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Updated: 03/27/2011 10:58:25 PM MDT

BOULDER — This one hurt.

First-year coach Linda Lappe summed it up in a few words after Southern California sent her University of Colorado Buffaloes packing Sunday in the Women's National Invitation Tournament.

Paced by a sensational, 32-point performance off the bench from junior guard Ashley Corral, the Trojans (23-12) advanced to the WNIT semifinals with a convincing 87-70 victory at the Coors Events Center.

The 5-foot-9 Corral hit 7-of-8 shots from 3-point range and scored 21 of her 32 points in the second half. The barrage helped USC pull away from a 36-34 halftime deficit and amass the most points scored against the Buffs all season. The Trojans hit 10-of-13 shots from long range — an otherworldly

76.9 percent.

"Ashley Corral was unbelievably hot, and we didn't have any answer," Lappe said. "I don't see many of those NCAA Tournament teams hitting 10-of-13 3s. It doesn't matter if you're in the gym by yourself. Anytime you hit 10-of-13, that's a pretty good night."

"I got some good looks; some were open and some weren't," Corral said. "When it's the postseason, you have to hit shots to go on, and going forward is the main goal. My teammates set great screens for me tonight."

The Buffaloes (18-16) had to think back to a disastrous first 10 minutes of the second half when their offense fell apart. Soon-to-be Pac-12 opponent USC, which also beat CU 68-54 in the regular season in Los Angeles, held a 26-10 scoring advantage and led 60-46 going into the final 10 minutes.

"We weren't boxing out and getting defensive rebounds," senior forward Brittany Spears said of the second-half meltdown. "We were giving up second-chance points."

The Trojans finished with 18 second-chance points, 13 in the second half. USC held a 46-26 edge in rebounds and a 14-4 advantage on the offensive boards.

"Offensive rebounding is just about effort," said USC coach Michael Cooper, a longtime Los Angeles Laker. "You have to make the effort to get there on the offensive board, and we have some players willing to do that."

Spears closed out her CU career with 36 points,

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tying her career high. She made 11-of-24 shots from the field but just 4-of-12 from 3-point range.

Lappe lauded her team for accomplishing more than most expected.

"This season goes beyond getting 18 victories and winning three games in the NIT," Lappe said. "It's more to our players and the way they responded and continued to fight throughout the season."

## USC (23-12)

Marinacci 2-6 2-2 6, Harberts 2-96-8 10, LaPlante 5-7 0-0 10, Gilbreath 3-10 3-4 9, Gemelos 7-14 3-4 20, Brown 0-1 0-0 0, Corral 10-15 5-6 32. **Totals 29-62 19-24 87.**

## COLORADO (18-16)

Seabrook 0-1 0-0 0, Spears 11-24 10-11 36, Blythe 2-4 0-0 5, B. Wilson 2-10 1-2 6, Malcolm-Peck 1-4 5-6 7, A. Wilson 1-1 1-2 3, Dale 0-0 0-0 0, Jeffery 6-12 1-2 13, Hargis 0-0 0-0 0. **Totals 23-56 18-23 70. Colorado 36-34. 3-point goals — USC 10-13 (Corral 7-8, Gemelos 3-4, Gilbreath 0-1), Colorado 6-26 (Spears 4-12, Blythe 1-3, B. Wilson 1-4, Seabrook 0-1, Malcolm-Peck 0-3, Jeffery 0-3). Fouled out — B. Wilson. Rebounds — USC 46 (Harberts 8, Gilbreath 8), Colorado 26 (Seabrook 6, Spears 6). Assists — USC 12 (Marinacci 3, Gilbreath 3, Gemelos 3), Colorado 12 (Blythe 4). Total fouls — USC 17, Colorado 17. A — 1,834.**

Halftime —

Irv Moss: 303-954-1296 or [imoss@denverpost.com](mailto:imoss@denverpost.com)

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