

Griner leads Baylor women over CU Buffs

Spears leads Buffs with 23 points on Senior Day

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

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For a few fast-paced minutes in the first half Saturday, the Colorado women's basketball team gave the 6,012 fans at the Coors Events Center plenty of reason to stand up and cheer.

Spotting a team with third-ranked Baylor's firepower an early 20-point lead, though, proved far too deep a hole to dig out of.

Looking every bit the part of juggernaut, the talented and deep Bears fended off CU's rally before halftime and pulled away for an 81-59 victory in the final regular season game for both teams.

Brittney Griner, the Bears' 6-foot-8 center, finished with 26 points, 13 rebounds, four blocks and three assists to help Baylor snap Colorado's three-game winning streak and dampen the Buffs' Senior Day.

Colorado (15-14, 6-10 Big 12 Conference) finished the regular season with its first winning campaign in three years despite the loss. Baylor, meanwhile, capped off its second Big 12 regular season title, finishing 28-2 overall and 15-1 in league play.

"I liked our resiliency and our fight in the first half," CU coach Linda Lappe said. "It just kind of took us a while to figure out that Baylor, they were still human beings. They were still going to make mistakes, and we could take advantage of some of those things."

Baylor scored on nine of its first 12 possessions to jump out to a 22-2 lead less than seven minutes into the game. The Bears led 13-0 before the Buffs got on the board with a 17-footer by forward Brittany Spears at the 16:17 mark.

"It was just us not hitting our shots," Spears said.

It looked like it would be an especially ugly afternoon for the Buffs when Baylor's Kimetria Hayden hit a 3-pointer to make it 30-10. But CU outscored Baylor 18-4 over the final 7:19 of the first half.

Twins Brittany and Ashley Wilson, Britney Blythe and Brittany Spears all hit 3-pointers during the run for the Buffs, who took advantage of a fatigued Baylor squad by pushing the pace. Spears' trey came from the top of the key, over Griner, to make it 34-28 Bears at the break.

"Fatigue set in and we quit guarding people," Baylor coach Kim Mulkey said. "In the second half we had better ball pressure from our guards. We just started back over what we started the game doing."

The Buffs still trailed just 43-35 in the second half, when Baylor pulled away for good with a 14-0 run that included one stretch in which the Bears scored six points in 61 seconds thanks to three straight CU turnovers against the pressure up [top](#). Griner hurt the Buffs in a variety of ways, even going coast-to-coast for a layup in BU's opening run. But her biggest impact was the logjam she created in the lane.

The Buffs, a guard-oriented bunch who rely heavily on the outside shot anyway, appeared reluctant to drive inside and challenge Griner and the rest of the bigger Bears at times. Added to the difficulty was the fact that CU slashing guard Chucky Jeffery was out of the state to attend her great-grandmother's funeral.

The result was the Buffs being outscored 38-12 in the paint. They shot just 30 percent (21 for 69) for the game, including an 11-for-37 clip from 3-point land.

"I thought (freshman guard) Brittany Wilson came in and did some good things at the rim," Lappe said. "But Chucky is one of our better drivers and a lot of time she can set other people up as well. I thought we took a lot of outside shots but that's kind of what we needed to do and that's what teams against Baylor a lot of times do anyway."

Four players scored in double figures for Baylor.

Destiny Williams added a double-double with 10 points and 11 rebounds. Point guard Odyssey Sims scored 18 points, grabbed eight rebounds and had five assists. And Kemetria Hayden added 11 points.

Spears led the Buffs in what could be her final home game with 23 points, nine rebounds, two blocks, two steals and two assists. But she had to earn them, shooting just 8 for 25 from the field against Baylor's defense.

Sophomore Meagan Malcolm-Peck added 16 points and 10 rebounds for CU and Brittany Wilson had 12 points.

"We changed our mentality and I liked that part of it," said Lappe, whose squad will face Kansas in the first round of the Big 12 tournament on Tuesday. "I think that shows a lot of growth. We just have to go into every game as the aggressors and not take a backseat to anybody."

Baylor 81, Colorado 59

BAYLOR

FG FT Reb

Min M-A M-A O-T A PF PTS

Williams 20 5-12 0-3 6-11 2 2 10

Griner 36 8-18 10-11 4-13 3 2 26

Sims 33 5-10 6-6 2-8 5 1 18

Madden 27 1-2 3-3 1-3 1 1 5

Jones 24 0-1 0-0 0-3 2 0 0

Hayden 16 4-5 2-3 0-1 3 1 11

Zchrsn 4 0-0 0-0 0-0 1 0 0

Robertson 6 0-0 1-2 0-0 0 0 1

Condrey 8 0-2 0-0 0-1 0 1 0

Field 6 0-0 0-0 1-2 0 1 0

Palmer 3 1-1 2-2 0-1 0 0 4

Pope 14 2-10 2-2 1-3 0 1 6

Chandler 3 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 2 0

Totals 200 26-61 26-32 15-48 17 12 81

Percentages: FG .426, FT .813.

3-Point Goals: 3-7, .429 (Sims 2-4, Hayden 1-1, Madden 0-1, Condrey 0-1).

Team Rebounds: 2.

Blocked Shots: 4 (Griner 4).

Turnovers: 12 (Williams 3, Griner 3, Condrey 2, Field, Sims, Madden, Zachariason).

Steals: 9 (Sims 3, Hayden 2, Madden 2, Jones, Pope).

Technical Fouls: None.

COLORADO

FG FT Reb

Min M-A M-A O-T A PF PTS

Seabrook 23 0-5 0-0 1-3 1 4 0

Spears 34 8-25 4-4 1-9 2 3 23

Blythe 23 1-5 0-0 1-1 2 2 3

B Wilson 30 5-14 0-0 2-5 2 2 12

Dale 30 1-7 0-0 3-5 2 0 2

A Wilson 18 1-2 0-0 1-2 1 1 3

M M-Peck 28 5-11 2-4 4-10 1 4 16

Hargis 14 0-0 0-0 1-3 0 5 0

Totals 200 21-69 6-8 16-40 11 21 59

Percentages: FG .304, FT .750.

3-Point Goals: 11-37, .297 (M. Malcolm-Peck 4-8, Spears 3-11, B. Wilson 2-5, A. Wilson 1-1, Blythe 1-5, Seabrook 0-3, Dale 0-4).

Team Rebounds: 2.

Blocked Shots: 3 (Spears 2, Seabrook).

Turnovers: 15 (B. Wilson 4, Spears 2, Seabrook 2, Dale 2, M. Malcolm-Peck 2, A. Wilson, Hargis).

Steals: 7 (Spears 2, Dale 2, Hargis, M. Malcolm-Peck, Blythe).

Technical Fouls: None.

Baylor 34 47--81

Colorado 28 31--59

A -- 6,012.

Officials -- Gator Parrish, Maj Forsberg, Doug Knight.

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CU unable to corral Griner

By Joshua Linden Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 03/05/2011 07:58:35 PM MST

The undersized Colorado Buffaloes threw everything they could defensively at 6-foot-8 Baylor sophomore center Brittney Griner on Saturday.

Griner, in her first and likely only appearance at the Coors Events Center, proved as good as the hype. She scored 26 points and racked up 13 rebounds, four blocks and three assists in the Bears' 81-59 win.

CU post players Julie Seabrook (6-3) and freshman Rachel Hargis (6-4) took turns guarding Griner and had success at times. But both Buffs posts got into foul trouble early in the second half. Griner scored 17 of her points in the second frame and capitalized on her opportunities at the free-throw line, hitting on 10 of her 11 chances.

"She's a great player of course," CU wing Chelsea Dale said. "You want to give her her kudos. But there are also ways that we could guard her and that's how we looked at it when we went into the game."

The Buffs held their own rebounding through much of the game, out-boarding the Bears 24-23 in the first half. But CU's foul trouble hurt in the second half, and Baylor finished the game with a 48-40 edge.

Baylor hit 26 of 32 free throws. The Buffs, meanwhile, didn't shoot a single free throw until the 9:21 mark of the second half as they relied heavily on the outside shot against Griner and company.

"They're going to get their free throws because they pound it in there and they're aggressive," CU coach Linda Lappe said. "We just have to be a little more aggressive as well to make sure we get a few more attempts."

Senior thanks

On the day reserved for honoring CU seniors Brittany Spears, Britney Blythe and Chelsea Dale, Dale took the opportunity to honor first-year coach Lappe and her staff.

"Thank you for coming in and believing in us, and me," said Dale, who along with her classmates endured back-to-back losing seasons the past two years.

"I think in the position the three of us were in when we were in the process of getting a new coaching staff, we were afraid that we would kind of be left out of what they were expecting in the future," Dale said in the post-game press conference. "As soon as Coach Lappe and the staff came in, we were a part of everything. They made us feel as though we were the leaders and that we weren't going to miss a beat with these guys. From the get-go, they believed in us 100 percent."

Lappe's incentives kick in

Aside from making the Buffs postseason-eligible, Wednesday's win over Nebraska gave CU coach Linda Lappe some extra padding in her pocket book.

The competition-related incentives in Lappe's contract -- which pays her roughly \$286,000 annually in base salary and other compensation -- begin kicking in at the 15-win mark.

Lappe will earn an extra \$8,000 for winning 15 regular season games. If the Buffs earn a WNIT bid, which is likely, she'll get an additional \$7,500. If CU were to win the WNIT, she'd make \$15,000 more.

Lappe is 2-3 against ranked teams so far this season. And regardless of how the Buffs fare in the postseason, her first campaign will go down as third-best among first-year CU coaches behind Sox Walseth (28-5, 1980-81) and Rene Portland (22-9, 1978-79).

Gotta wear shades

Three days after sitting out of Baylor's game against Missouri, guard Melissa Jones -- a former Legacy High standout -- started against CU wearing sunglasses.

Jones hit her head against Oklahoma a week ago and suffered swelling in the optic nerve of her right eye.

She registered three rebounds and two assists in 24 minutes Saturday and left the floor with 2:12 left to applause from a sizable Baylor contingent of fans.

Drawing a crowd

Linda Lappe called for a big crowd and she got it.

Saturday's attendance of 6,012 was the Buffs' largest of the season by more than 3,000. And it was the largest for CU since drawing 6,163 for a win over Oklahoma State in 2004, the Buffs' last NCAA Tournament year.

"It was fun," Blythe said of the atmosphere.

Notable

CU guard Chucky Jeffery, who missed the game to attend her great-grandmother's funeral, is expected to return Tuesday for the start of the Big 12 tournament. ... Baylor won its ninth straight against CU and improved to 12-8 against the Buffs all-time.

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women: no. 3 baylor 81, colorado 59

Griner, No. 3 Baylor overpower CU women

By Natalie Meisler
The Denver Post

Posted: 03/06/2011 01:00:00 AM MST

BOULDER — Take away the first eight minutes Saturday and Colorado gave Big 12 women's basketball champ Baylor a competitive game.

But with Baylor showcasing national player of the year candidate Brittney Griner, CU never had a chance in an 81-59 loss.

The 6-foot-8 Griner is one of the best known women's players in the country — with five career dunks. The sophomore led all players Saturday with 26 points and 13 rebounds. She also blocked four shots. She did everything but the anticipated dunk.

"Well, she's a big presence," said Baylor's Melissa Jones, a former Colorado Gatorade player of the year from Legacy High School. "She's changing the game of basketball. To have someone of that caliber (against) your team, you can't help but have that look in your eyes if you've never seen that before, because you haven't."

The intimidation factor in the paint was so significant CU put up 37 of its 69 shots from behind the arc.

"We had to have an attacking mentality," CU coach Linda Lappe said. "I thought we came out a little bit on our heels."

Colorado did not exit without a fitting senior sendoff for forward Brittany Spears. She sat down with 43 seconds remaining to a standing ovation. Her 23 points pushed her over the 500-point plateau for the third consecutive season.

She wouldn't give Griner too much credit.

"I don't think we were star-struck because we played them last year," Spears said. "We were rushing our shots."

The Coors Events Center crowd of 6,012 — the biggest since 2004 when the Buffs last made the NCAA Tournament — watched as Baylor (28-2, 15-1) looked every bit the No. 3 team in the country. The Bears raced out to a 22-2 lead. An 18-4 Buffs run to close out the first half cut the lead to 34-28.

CU certainly missed its leading rebounder, Chucky Jeffery. The 5-10 sophomore guard was attending a relative's funeral.

"Obviously, it's a huge difference," Lappe said.

CU (15-14, 6-10) heads into the Big 12 Tournament beginning Tuesday in Kansas City, Mo., all but assured of a WNIT bid if it doesn't

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win the Big 12.

BAYLOR (28-2, 15-1 BIG 12)

Williams 5-12 0-3 10, Griner 8-18 10-11 26,
Sims 5-10 6-6 18, Madden 1-2 3-3 5, Jones 0-1
0-0 0, Hayden 4-5 2-3 11, Zachariason 0-0 0-0
0, Robertson 0-0 1-2 1, Condrey 0-2 0-0 0, Field
0-0 0-0 0, Palmer 1-1 2-2 4, Pope 2-10 2-2 6,
Chandler 0-0 0-0 0. **Totals 26-61 26-32 81.**

COLORADO (15-14, 6-10)

Seabrook 0-5 0-0 0, Spears 8-25 4-4 23, Blythe
1-5 0-0 3, B. Wilson 5-14 0-0 12, Dale 1-7 0-0
2, A. Wilson 1-2 0-0 3, M. Malcolm-Peck 5-11
2-4 16, Hargis 0-0 0-0 0. **Totals 21-69 6-8 59.**

Baylor 34-28. 3-point goals — Baylor 3-7
(Sims 2-4, Hayden 1-1, Madden 0-1, Condrey
0-1), **Colorado 11-37** (M. Malcolm-Peck 4-8,
Spears 3-11, B. Wilson 2-5, A. Wilson 1-1,
Blythe 1-5, Seabrook 0-3, Dale 0-4). **Fouled**
out — Hargis. Rebounds — Baylor 48 (Griner
13), **Colorado 40** (M. Malcolm-Peck 10).
Assists — Baylor 17 (Sims 5), **Colorado 11**
(Blythe, Dale, Spears, B. Wilson 2). **Total fouls**
— Baylor 12, Colorado 21. A — 6,012.

Halftime —

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Texas Tech		8-8	22-10 Final
Texas		7-9	19-13 -
Kansas		6-10	20-12 18
Colorado	6-10	15-15	SIE
Missouri	5-11	13-18	MRST
Oklahoma State	4-12	16-14	45
Nebraska	3-13	13-18	60
View expanded standings			45
			60
			0
Associated Press			• Final

BOULDER, Colo. -- Many in the crowd at the Coors Events Center came to see jaw-dropping sophomore Brittney Griner, and her dominant play at both ends helped No. 3 Baylor overcome a first-half letdown to rout Colorado 81-59.

The opponent with her own cheering section, however, was Bears senior Melissa Jones, who starred at Legacy High School in Thornton, about 15 miles down the road.

Still blinded in her right eye by a hard fall a week earlier, Jones couldn't match Griner's 26-point, 13-rebound effort. But her presence Saturday gave the Bears (28-2, 15-1 Big 12) a spark nonetheless.

"That just tells you what kind of kid she is," Baylor coach Kim Mulkey said. "She was cleared by the doctor to play. This is her home. This is her last time to play here and that's emotional. And she must have had 100 people here just to see her. For her to go out on that floor as our captain and as the type of player that she is, just her presence makes us better."

Donning shades to protect her good eye, Jones returned to Baylor's starting lineup a week after hitting her head on the floor in a game against Oklahoma.

Jones, who averages nearly 10 points, missed her only shot and didn't get to the foul line. She grabbed three rebounds, dished out two assists and had one steal in 24 inspiring minutes.

"That's the big thing about basketball: obviously, you have to score more points than the opponent, but not everybody has to score," Jones said. "There's so much more you can do in a game, whether it's blocking somebody out or rebounding. All the little things around the play, that's what I was trying to do."

Her return and resiliency meant a lot to her teammates.

"She's just showing how tough she is playing with one eye," Odyssey Sims said. "And her playing showed her love for us."

Jones said she still can't see out of her injured eye but doctors have said her vision should return by the time the Bears head to Kansas City next week as the top seed in the Big 12 conference tournament.

"It hurts me just to sit out at all so just the ability to even step foot on the floor was a great uplift," Jones said.

Sims added 16 points and eight rebounds for the Bears, whose 15th win in Big 12 play is one better than their 2005 national championship team.

Brittany Spears scored 23 points for Colorado (15-14, 6-10), which trimmed an early 20-point deficit to 34-28 at the break but couldn't make another run after halftime without sophomore guard Chucky Jeffery. The Buffaloes' second-leading scorer and top rebounder was attending her great grandmother's funeral in New York.

"It's a huge difference," Colorado coach Linda Cappe said. "She's a scorer and she kind of gets us into what we need to do. Defensively, she usually gets us a couple steals. ... In the first half, we stayed right with them rebounding-wise, but in the second half they took it to us and I think she would have helped a lot."

Colorado fell behind 22-2, and Kimetria Hayden popped the net from beyond the arc to make it 30-10 with 7:22 left in the first half. The Bears would score just one more bucket the rest of the way while the Buffaloes were closing with an 18-4 run that made it 34-28 at halftime and energized the crowd of 6,102 -- the biggest for a women's game here in seven years.

Sims said the Bears were fatigued and "stopped guarding people."

And that's a factor of youth, Mulkey suggested.

"We have one senior on the floor," Mulkey said, "and she's playing with one eye."

The Bears came out of the tunnel refreshed, rested and refocused, pushing their lead to 27.

With Griner in the way, the Buffaloes couldn't get to the line. Their first free throws came with 9:21 left in the game. They were outscored 26-6 from the foul line and 38-12 in the paint, both testaments to Griner's dominance inside.

"She's a big presence," Jones said. "She's changed the game of basketball."

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Buffalo goodbye

Women's basketball ends regular season

By Marlee Horn on March 6, 2011

The game was no fairy tale ending, but it really was something for the story books.

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A crowd of 6,012 came to salute the University of Colorado women's basketball team's three seniors in their final home game.

CU came back from a 22-2 deficit against the Baylor Bears to go into the locker room down just 34-28. But Baylor and 6-foot-8 Brittney Griner were too much to overcome and the Buffs, who lost the bout 81-59 Saturday at the Coors Events Center.

Senior Britney Blythe, who finished the game with three points and two assists, said she liked how her team came together in final seven minutes before the break.

"I think you could tell that we really came together once we made that run and came back in the first half," Blythe said.

"I like our resiliency and our fight in the first half," Head Coach Linda Lappe said. "I think that showed a lot about our team. We got down big to start the game and could have packed it in early and didn't. I think that tells you a lot about the character of our players – to keep fighting and to keep believing."

Brittany Spears lead the team, just missing a double-double with 23 points and 9 rebounds. Her final game at the Coors Events Center helped her move into 10th on the Big 12's all-time scoring list.

Spears has racked up 2,054 points in her 122 career starts. With 521 points this season, she is only the second player to score 500 points in three seasons.

The game was especially emotional for the seniors, who faced a new coaching staff in their final year at Colorado.

Chelsea Dale finished the game with five rebounds and two assists and was visibly emotional after she thanked the fans and the band after the game.

She was especially grateful to the coaching staff which she said has been motivational and supported the players 100 percent.

"I think in the position the three of us were in when we were in the process of getting a new coaching staff, we were afraid that we'd kind of be left out of what they were expecting in the future – 'Let's just kind of get

these guys out and then we'll move on with the program,'" Dale said. "As soon as Coach Lappe and the staff came in, we were a part of everything. They made us feel as though we were the leaders and that we weren't going to miss a beat with these guys."

The Buffaloes' regular season is over, but they head into the Big 12 tournament as the 9th seed to face the Kansas Jayhawks.

The team feels ready for their third match up with KU, saying that it's their turn to lose.

"A lot of us are really excited," Blythe said. "We know that anything can happen. Like Coach Lappe always says, 'It's March, you never know what can happen.'"

Lappe said she likes how her team has improved throughout the season and they're ready to agitate some teams in the tourney.

"Our confidence has gotten better, and that's the biggest thing when you go into the tournament," Lappe said. "You've got to have a swagger and a certain level of confidence and I think we have that."

Contact CU Independent Staff Writer Marlee Horn at marlee.horn@colorado.edu.

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