

Lappe`s kids learn on fly

Of eight available players for CU, three are freshmen

By Joshua Lindenstein Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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Brittany Wilson has been a starter on almost every basketball team she`s played for. At the very least, she`s always been a key contributor.

So the only thing that could really make her freshman year with the Colorado Buffaloes a little awkward would be if she wasn`t getting on the court at all. The fact that she and the rest of her classmates have been thrust into major action from the opening tip this season has Wilson in her comfort zone.

"I`m used to the big games, the bright lights," the 5-foot-8 guard from Long Beach, Calif., said Monday. "So I`ve got to just step up and be ready to play."

Wilson and the rest of the Buffs admit that the circumstances that have left them a bit shorthanded -- injury and transfer to name two -- aren`t ideal. But the Buffs aren`t backing down or feeling sorry for themselves either.

The Buffs will suit up eight players heading into today`s 7 p.m. road game at Magness Arena against the Denver Pioneers. Three are freshmen.

"We`re strong with the eight we`ve got and we`re ready to go," said Wilson, who has been the Buffs` first player off the bench so far this season in one exhibition game and one regular season contest.

First-year CU coach Linda Lappe began the season with 12 players on her roster, even after four players with eligibility remaining left in the offseason. Junior guard Alyssa Fressle transferred to Boston College. And center Courtney Dunn (St. Mary`s) and guards Whitney Houston (UTEP) and Kelly Jo Mullaney (San Francisco) all took advantage of the NCAA rule that allows graduated seniors with a year of playing eligibility left the opportunity to play elsewhere without sitting out a season.

But most of those departures were expected upon Lappe`s arrival.

It`s the unexpected misfortune that has left the Buffs adjusting on the fly so far this season. Senior Chelsea Dale is sitting out this semester for academic issues. Sophomore Brenna Malcolm-Peck is still recovering from a preseason knee injury. And sophomore center Melissa MacFarlane has been on leave for personal issues.

The announcement on Friday that promising freshman Shae Kelley was leaving the team only exacerbated the situation.

"We`ve all just got to be in better shape and be ready when our number is called," senior forward Brittany Spears said.

While practices might be shorter and more efficient with fewer bodies, Lappe said the Buffs won`t be changing anything about the way they approach games.

Most teams generally only have eight or nine players in their rotation anyway.

"We just have to be smart," Lappe said. "We still are going to play extremely hard. We can`t play to save energy. If you do that, you`re not going to win very many games."

Lappe said the Buffs also wouldn`t be shying away from their staple man-to-man pressure defense or changing their strategies, especially since they`re still working early in the season to implement new wrinkles.

"We`ve got to play how we`re going to play," she said.

Lappe said Kelley's departure might mean the coaches add to the 2011 recruiting class, but not to the extent that it would hurt their 2012 efforts. CU's coaches signed three players for 2011 last week, and Lappe has said she'd like to add a couple more.

As for this year's freshmen, a group that also includes Wilson's twin sister Ashley and center Rachel Hargis, Lappe knows a lot is being asked of them right away. But she's also been encouraged by what she's seen so far.

"(Trial-by-fire) the best way for the freshmen," Lappe said. "The freshmen are going to have to learn on the fly and be adaptable and figure out the college game very quickly. I feel like they all can do that."

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CU women vs. Denver

Camera staff
Boulder Daily Camera

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TODAY: The Colorado Buffaloes (1-0) hit the road for the first time this season to face the Denver Pioneers (0-1). Game time is 7 p.m. at Magness Arena.

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

STORYLINES: Colorado is coming off of a season-opening 76-38 home win over Regis on Friday. ... New CU head coach Linda Lappe joined her six predecessors in winning in her debut on the Buffs' sideline. ... Colorado routed Denver 84-57 in Boulder last season. ... The Buffs will try to get an early start on washing away the road woes that have hounded them in recent seasons. CU went 2-8 on the road last season and 3-9 in all games away from the Coors Events Center. ... Denver fell by six at Wyoming in its season opener on Friday. But the Pioneers should provide a tough test for CU as they beat Regis in similar fashion as the Buffs, 77-21 in an exhibition game on Nov. 7. ... Former CU star Shelley Sheetz is in her third year as an assistant for the Pioneers.

KEY STAT: CU's Brittany Spears (1,553) needs 22 points to pass director of operations Tracy Tripp (1,574) for eighth place on the school's all-time scoring list.

COACHES: Linda Lappe is 1-0 in her first season at CU after going 50-36 in three seasons at Division-II Metro State. Erik Johnson is 34-29 overall and 22-14 in Sun Belt Conference play in his third season at DU.

PROBABLE STARTERS

Colorado -- G Britney Blythe, 5-9, Sr., 15.0 ppg, 1.0 rpg, 5.0 apg; G Chucky Jeffery, 5-10, So., 13.0 ppg, 12.0 rpg, 6.0 apg; F Brittany Spears, 6-1, Sr., 20.0 ppg, 4.0 rpg, 2.0 spg; F Meagan Malcolm-Peck, 6-2, So., 10.0 ppg, 4.0 rpg, 1.0 apg; F Julie Seabrook 6-3, Jr., 9.0 ppg, 7.0 rpg, 2.0 spg.

Denver -- G Quincey Noonan, 5-9, Fr., 3.0 ppg, 4.0 rpg; G Britteni Rice, 5-9, Sr., 12.0 ppg, 0.0 rpg; G Emiko Smith, 5-5, So., 0.0 ppg, 3.0 rpg, 7.0 apg; F Kaetlyn Murdoch, 5-11, Jr., 17.0 ppg, 4.0 rpg; F Brianna Culberson, 5-11, Sr., 4.0 ppg, 4.0 rpg, 2.0 apg.

SERIES: CU leads 4-1, but the series is tied 1-1 in Denver.

UP NEXT: Colorado hosts Santa Clara at 7 p.m. Friday.

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CU hoops learning on the fly

By Brian Howell
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The University of Colorado men's basketball team wasn't thrilled with its overall performance in a season-opening 88-80 win over Idaho State on Friday.

As they prepare to face Georgia tonight, however, the Buffs realize that learning how to play under first-year head coach Tad Boyle could take a while.

"It's still a learning process with the new coaching staff," sophomore guard Alec Burks said. "We're trying to adjust to everything new, but we'll get there. We're going to keep going at it until it gets there, one game at a time."

CU (1-0) will visit Georgia (1-0) in Athens, Ga. The Buffs were 2-14 away from Boulder last year and they'd like to get off to a good start on the road tonight. Mainly, however, the Buffs want to see a better performance, especially on defense, than they had against Idaho State.

"We have expectations on this team and we know where we want to be," senior guard Cory Higgins said. "We can tell that we're not there yet, but we're not down on ourselves. We're eager to get back in the gym and get better."

WOMEN BACK ON COURT: CU's women's basketball team plays tonight, as well. The Buffs will visit Denver University for a 7 p.m. tipoff.

After finishing 1-13 to wrap up last season, the Buffs have looked good against a couple of in-state teams. They defeated Western State 93-62 in an exhibition on Nov. 5, and then routed Regis 76-38 on Friday.

"It feels good to win," senior Brittany Spears said. "We're playing more as a team this year, compared to last year. It's a better feeling, and you just feel more confident on the court, knowing that the team has your back."

The Buffs are in the midst of a tough stretch to start the season, however. The game against Regis was the first of four games in 10 days, and the Buffs play nine games in the first four weeks.

Making that even tougher is the fact that CU has just eight healthy players. Chelsea Dale is out this semester for academic reasons, while Brenna Malcolm-Peck is nursing a knee injury and Melissa MacFarlane is out for personal reasons. Freshman Shae Kelley left the team before Friday's opener.

First-year head coach Linda Lappe believes the Buffs can make their situation into a positive, however.

Tonight's games

Colorado men (1-0) at Georgia (1-0)

When/Where: 5 p.m. tonight, at Stegeman Coliseum in Athens, Ga.

TV/Radio: FSN/760-AM

The series: Georgia leads 5-1, including 3-0 in Athens. The teams have not met since a 71-70 Georgia win in Boulder on Dec. 3, 2002.

Leading scorers: CU — Alec Burks (20 points in opener); Georgia — Jeremy Price (20 points in opener).

Notes: CU had four players score in double figures in an 88-80 win over Idaho State on Friday, including 16 apiece from Levi Knutson and Cory Higgins. ... Price, Gerald Robinson (19 points) and Travis Leslie (16 points, 11 rebounds) all had strong debuts in Georgia's 72-70 win over Mississippi Valley State on Friday. ... CU will put on a lot of miles this month. After tonight's game in Athens, they play at San Francisco on Saturday, home in Boulder on Nov. 23 and at Harvard in Cambridge, Mass., on Nov. 28.

Colorado women (1-0) at Denver (0-1)

When/Where: 7 p.m. tonight, at Magness Arena in Denver

TV/Radio: No TV/760-AM

The series: CU leads 4-1. The Buffs are 1-1 against the Pioneers in Denver. CU won last year, 84-57 in Boulder, but hasn't been to Denver since 1999.

Leading scorers: CU — Brittany Spears (20 points in opener); Denver — Kaetlyn Murdoch (17 points in opener).

“It gives everybody the opportunity to get a lot of minutes,” she said. “With eight players, everybody’s got to contribute, and that leads to some very good team chemistry.”

“Most teams only play eight players anyway — eight or nine — and you have five or six sitting on the bench. We just don’t have the luxury of having those kids sitting on the bench.”

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Notes: Chucky Jeffery had a double-double (13 points, 12 rebounds) in CU's 76-38 win over Regis. ... The Pioneers lost at Wyoming in their opener. ... Denver has four starters back from a squad that went 18-13 a year ago, and finished third in the Sun Belt Conference. ... CU plays eight of its first nine games in Boulder; this is the only road trip in that stretch.

Brian Howell

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CU women's basketball heads to DU

Team hopes to continue winning streak in Denver

By Caryn Maconi on November 16, 2010

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The Buffs women are working with a small squad, but they expect to pull out a win against the DU Pioneers.

Having won their first home game against Regis on Nov. 12 with a score of 76-38, the women are preparing for their first road game of the season, Tuesday night at Denver University's Magness Arena.

"There's a level of nervousness going into every game," said Head Coach Linda Lappe, who made her CU coaching debut in the game against Regis.

Lappe said coaches "deal with nerves and motivate the players without overwhelming them."

One of the biggest challenges the Buffs will face early in the season is performing with a small team.

Senior guard Chelsea Dale is taking the fall semester off for academic reasons, while sophomore guard/forward Brenna Malcolm-Peck is off the court due to a hyper-extended left knee.

On Nov. 12, top freshman recruit Shae Kelley also left the lineup. Kelley told Lappe she would no longer be playing basketball for CU due to personal reasons.

Lappe said the diminished roster will not necessarily put the team at a disadvantage, but the freshmen will certainly have to step up.

"They will have to be on the fast track as far as learning offenses and defenses and making the transition from high school to college," Lappe said.

Sophomore guard Chucky Jeffery, who earned her second career double-double during the Regis game with 13 points and 12 rebounds, said the extra pressure put on the freshmen early in the season will make them better prepared for conference games later on.



Junior forward Julie Seabrook drives to the basket during the Buff's 76-38 win over Regis on Nov. 12 at the Coors Events Center. (CU Independent/Phil McMichael)