

Lappe's Buffaloes lighting it up from outside

CU's 3-point percentage better than its overall field goal shooting

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Just because the Colorado women's basketball team is draining its 3-pointers this season doesn't mean the Buffaloes need to cast up more shots from long range.

In fact, coach Linda Lappe said after her team's victory over Santa Clara on Friday, being choosy is what's helped the Buffs find so much success from beyond the arc this season.

The 2010-11 season is merely three games old. But so far CU has been on fire outside. The Buffs have hit 22 out of 45 3-point attempts entering today's 2 p.m. contest against Tennessee-Martin at the Coors Events Center. And their 49 percent clip is even better than their overall field goal efficiency of 45 percent (79 for 175).

"I think the reason that we are shooting so well from the 3 is our players are doing a great job of determining what's a good 3 and what's not necessarily a good 3," Lappe said. "They're taking 3s when they're open. They're taking 3s when their teammates have set them up for good shots. And they're not forcing too many 3s. And I think that's really important."

One of the major question marks for the Buffs entering the season was whether someone besides senior forward Brittany Spears would be able to consistently hit 3-pointers to help keep defenses honest and allow CU's leading scorer to keep getting open looks.

Bianca Smith, the school's all-time leading 3-point shooter, graduated. And Meagan Malcolm-Peck was the only returning player besides Spears who had hit more than 30 percent of her 3s last season — 22 of 71 — of the players who attempted more than 10.

Several Buffs have gotten in on the act so far this season.

Spears leads the way, making 9 of her 15 attempts. But Britney Blythe (6 for 10), Malcolm-Peck (3 for 8) and Chucky Jeffery (2 for 5) have all taken turns hitting from deep.

"It helps a lot because the floor is open for drives, penetrate and kick or whatever," Spears said of the fact that multiple players are hitting 3s. "Chucky is a good penetrator and passer. It makes everything much easier if everybody can shoot and pass the ball."

The Buffs hit four of their first five 3-point attempts against Santa Clara to storm out to an 18-2 lead. CU hit just one more 3 the rest of the game, but the impact had already been made.

Guard Brittany Wilson got a piece of the 3-point action during the victory, hitting two of her four tries after starting the season 0-for-3 from downtown. Afterward, the freshman added some levity to the post-game press conference.

"I can shoot it," Wilson said. "It's just a lot of times it doesn't go in. So when it finally went in (Friday) it felt good. When I know my 3 is going down, everything else is basically going down, too."

While Lappe lauded her team's shot selection so far, the coach said the Buffs need to be careful not to get too complacent with the 3-point shot.

She said a big focus for the team has been to get more easy looks close to the basket, an effort that was aided by forward Julie Seabrook's play inside Friday. If the Buffs can continue to get strong interior play, Lappe said, the open outside looks will keep coming.

"We've been shooting it pretty well, but we definitely can't rely on that," Lappe said. "The best 3-point shooting teams

also establish that inside presence as well and are able to then get some outside shots.

"It's just something that when it's there you've got to like it, but when it's not there you've also got to have a backup plan."

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