

# Lappe expects everyone in CU uniform to contribute

## Short-handed Buffs open season with exhibition game today

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Any nerves she might have had about playing for a new coach Brittany Spears got out of her system during off-season workouts and preseason practice.

When the Colorado women's basketball team tips off its 2010-11 slate tonight against Western State in a 7 p.m. exhibition game at the Coors Events Center, Spears said she'll be ready for business.

"I'm just going to go out there and play my game," the Buffaloes' leading scorer the last two seasons said after Thursday's practice.

Unofficially, tonight's game is the first of a new era with former CU standout Linda Lappe on the sidelines as the Buffs' coach. While the wins and losses don't start accruing until next week's game against Regis, the matchup with the Division-II Mountaineers will provide CU fans with their first peek at Lappe's rebuilding process.

"I think it's more excitement than nerves," Lappe said of coaching her first game on the same court where she played from 1998-2003.

Lappe, too, will be getting her first true look at how her team performs when the lights are bright and there are fans in the stands.

One thing that won't be a mystery, however, is which players figure to factor into CU's rotation. The answer is everyone in a uniform.

Only nine of the 12 players on the roster will suit up tonight -- and likely for the first few games.

Sophomore wing player Brenna Malcolm-Peck is still on crutches and recovering from a hyper-extended left knee suffered during preseason workouts. Sophomore center Melissa MacFarlane is still on leave from the team for personal reasons. And senior Chelsea Dale will sit out the first semester because she is academically ineligible. The Buffs will field a starting lineup that includes Spears, junior Julie Seabrook and sophomore Meagan Malcolm-Peck at forward, along with senior Britney Blythe and sophomore Chucky Jeffery at guard.

The bench will consist entirely of freshmen -- forward Shae Kelley, center Rachel Hargis and twin guards Brittany and Ashley Wilson.

"Twelve or 13 is the number I'd like to have practice-wise," Lappe said. "Nine or eight, you don't have much to play with if somebody goes down. If somebody gets in foul trouble, you're at a disadvantage."

Lappe said Brenna Malcolm-Peck would likely miss the first few games, while Dale will re-join the team for the second semester's games. Lappe said Dale -- a humanities and education major who is still practicing -- remains on pace to graduate in May.

"She's doing what she needs to do now and hopes to come back after the first semester's over," Lappe said.

MacFarlane's status, meanwhile, is less clear. Lappe said she wasn't sure whether she expected the 6-foot-7 Omaha, Neb., product to return to the team.

"We should know more next week with her," the coach said.

MacFarlane's absence leaves a squad that was already green inside even thinner. But the athletic Kelley has lately shared

a lot of practice time on the low block with Seabrook and Hargis to help add depth there.

"We have a good post rotation," Lappe said. "We've definitely moved on and been able to work some different lineups and do some different things that way."

Spears, for one, said she doesn't mind starting the season with only nine players, even though everyone will still be getting their game legs under them. It's a chance, she said, for everyone in the mix to gain solid chemistry with each other as well as a great opportunity for the freshmen to prove their worth with playing time rather than just in practice.

And with the hope of a new season and the excitement of a new coaching staff, there is little that could get the Buffs down anyway as they come out of the gate.

"We're doing a lot of things differently this year, so I feel like (fans) should be just as excited as we are," said Jeffery, the team's second-leading returning scorer. "I know we've been the underdog, but we're trying to come out with a bang this year."

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