

Lappe finally gets her chance to work with Buffs

New CU women's coach holds 'intense' first practice

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Coaches

would always like to spend more time working with their athletes. That goes double for new coaches, who have relationships to develop with players and new schemes to implement.

Unfortunately -- as Colorado women's basketball coach Linda Lappe experienced the past few months -- the timing of new hoops hires and NCAA rules don't allow much for on-court introduction before the season starts.

Lappe was hired in mid-April, just a few days before the spring workout period when coaches work with players came to an end. Most of her summer was spent recruiting while only strength coach James Davis could conduct workouts. Once school started, coaches could spend only two hours per week with groups of four players at a time.

"You want to get on the floor fast and be on the floor a lot with them, and you just don't get that in the preseason," Lappe said Monday.

As construction workers continued laying the foundation for a new basketball operations center outside the Coors Events Center on Monday, though, Lappe finally got to begin in earnest her own rebuilding project with the first official day of practice inside Coors.

For the first time since being hired to replace Kathy McConnell-Miller, Lappe got to work with all 12 of her players at once. And while there was more time spent Monday on getting players on the same page in drills than implementing X's and O's, Lappe and her staff wasted no time in setting a tone for the way they want the Buffs to work.

"Intense" was a word that seemed to echo through Coors as players came off the court following the 2½-hour practice.

Want a water break? Jog there. Off to shoot free throws? Run. An errant pass go out of bounds? Compete to chase it down first anyway.

Coming off of a 2009-10 campaign in which they went 13-17, including a 3-13 mark in Big 12 Conference play, the Buffs were eager to pick up the pace.

"I think they're just taking things to the next level," said sophomore wing Meagan Malcolm-Peck, one of three returning starters. "No messing around. Everything we do is 100 percent, and we're learning so many new things that we weren't taught before."

Senior Brittany Spears, one of the school's all-time leading scorers, said the boost in intensity didn't come solely from players knowing they've got to start fresh with impressing a new coaching staff.

"We've all got to prove ourselves, but it came from the coaching staff," Spears said. "It had to because I've been here for three years, and it's never been that intense or physical on the first day."

Lappe knows doing things at a fast pace is the only way the Buffs will be able to accomplish everything they need to before the regular season opener at home against Regis on Nov. 12.

All of the players, Lappe said, are basically coming in as freshmen with regard to learning the way the new staff does things. There are no upperclassmen to teach younger players drills.

"The big thing right now is they're being really coachable," Lappe said. "As long as they stay coachable, we could be pretty good this year."

Few outside the Coors Events Center have much for expectations for the Buffs this season. CU has had just one winning season in the last six, and Big 12 coaches picked the Buffs to finish last in their annual preseason poll last week.

But the Buffs said they aren't giving themselves any grace period on getting up to speed with a new coaching staff and readying young players for game action.

"There's a sense of urgency," Spears said. "We're trying to win this season and prove everybody wrong."

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