



Men's basketball coach Tad Boyle and women's coach Linda Lappe share many of the same desires as their first seasons begin.
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



10/15/2010 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

Brooks: Boyle, Lappe Pursuing Same Goal - Success

BOULDER - Tad Boyle and Linda Lappe have more in common than the month of their hiring, their small-town roots (Boyle is from Greeley, Lappe from Morningstar, Iowa) and their devotion to the university that brought them aboard last April within a couple of weeks of one another.

Boyle and Lappe are traveling parallel paths toward higher ground, a basketball season in which each will push his/her Colorado team toward a respectable height.

It's been awhile since either Buffaloes team has been there. Reservations have been made but not kept. Still, on Friday - Media Day for both coaches and their squads - Boyle and Lappe closely resembled their peers around

BUFFALO EXTRAS



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Brittany Wilson
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Boyle Press Conference

the nation: undefeated, undaunted and approaching their debut seasons with unbridled enthusiasm.

"It's an exciting day in Colorado basketball (and) a great day in my life - personally and professionally," Boyle said.

"It's easy to talk about something you love - I love women's college basketball," Lappe said.

Boyle inherits a team that finished last season 15-16 overall and 6-10 in the Big 12 Conference. Lappe takes over a squad that was 13-17, 3-13 and, according to media covering the league, is not expected to be much better than that in the Buffs' final season of Big 12 play. Lappe and her players, of course, think otherwise.

Boyle's bunch is more experienced and is unique among Buffs teams in this respect: two of his players - senior Cory Higgins and sophomore Alec Burks, both wings - are on the prestigious Wooden Award preseason watch list. That's heady territory - more like Kansas, Duke or Kentucky terrain - for the long-suffering CU men's program.

Boyle and Lappe are looking for their first Buffs teams to share several tendencies: use Boulder's altitude to their advantage, play defense so tenaciously that opponents will swear they've encountered five strands of barb wire and play smart.

From now until March - late March he hopes - you'll hear Boyle use this phrase a lot: "Hard, smart and together." And more than once, you'll hear Lappe mention playing "the Colorado way," reminding her players of a 53-game CU home winning streak w-a-a-a-y back when (the Sox Walseth era), and that it wasn't *that* long ago when the Buffs were an NCAA Tournament fixture (the Ceal Barry era).

Both coaches want their teams to take giant steps on a daily basis, be better on Dec. 5 than they were on Nov. 5 and take that monthly improvement into March, maybe even April. It would be a dreamy journey for Boyle and Lappe - not to mention Buffs fans.

Random Media Day musings on each of their teams:

CU MEN

An early observation: If Jeff Bzdelik was the headmaster with the hard edge, Boyle is the neighbor who hands you his garden shears - or anything else you might need - over the backyard fence. But there's an intensity about Boyle that you won't find on his sleeve.

Bet on it being easily recognizable in his practices and on game-night, though. . . .

If Boyle had to select a most improved player since his arrival, he says it would be Big Aussie Shane Harris-Tunks. (Little Aussie is point guard Nate Tomlinson.) If Harris-Tunks' steps are as significant as Boyle believes, that's very good news for CU's inside game and rebounding. Harris-Tunks was

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Men's Media Day Quotes



Women's Media Day Quotes



Men's Season Tickets



Women's Season Tickets

listed in last season's media guide as 6-foot-11, 225; this year he's listed at 250, and Boyle calls Harris-Tunks' improvement "dramatic . . . I'm very pleased with the track he's on." . . .

Boyle also is pleased with Burks' newfound level of maturity. "He's handled all the hype well," Boyle said, adding he told Burks "to stay focused and let me coach you . . . he has unbelievable talent and basketball instincts." . . .

Burks claims he hasn't surpassed his 6-6 listing in the media guide, but he looks taller. As for his increased maturity, he told me, "I'm a long way from home and I've got to mature into a man someday. I feel like I should do it right now; I just feel like it's what I had to do." . . .

As for his schoolwork, Burks said, "A lot of things were thrown at me last year . . . I feel like I've got a little bit more of a handle on it this year. I'm doing a lot better than I was last year." . . .

Burks already has been the subject of early-NBA talk, and it won't cease anytime soon. "I hear it everywhere I go . . . I mean you can't help but notice it," he said. "But I'm not talking about it. At the end of the year I'm going to sit down with my mom and make a decision about it - what's the best for my future. If it's to go, I'll go; if it's to stay, I'll stay. I don't know that answer right now. I'll wait it out." . . .

I asked Burks if the prospect of playing in the Pac-10 would be a factor. His answer: "I would love to play in Cali (California). The Pac-10/Pac-12 would be a new conference, and getting another chance to play with man Shannon (Sharpe) would be great. It's an added bonus, and there are so many bonuses to stay." . . .

The athletic Sharpe, meanwhile, believes he's "90 percent" recovered from the knee injury that sidelined him last season and Boyle says Sharpe "guards the ball as well as anybody I've seen . . . I haven't seen him in a lot of five-on-five work, but I think he can be great in the open court." . . .

Sharpe's expectations: "We expect to be good and win . . . get out and compete and be a team that people don't expect us to be." . . .

And while on expectations, here's Boyle view: He values those of the internal variety far more than the external kind. His biggest question is, "What do we expect from ourselves and each other? There's tremendous room for improvement and we'll do it together." . . .

Boyle also believes that "80 to 85 percent" of games are won before tip-off. Consider that a clue on how he will conduct his practices. . . .

Boyle's practices will be open - a departure from his predecessor, Bzdelik, who was a stickler for privacy in more than workouts. Both coaches ran structured practices, but Boyle's will be snap-your-fingers lively, hair-on-fire fast - like the game tempo he wants.

"For us to walk it up, that gives it (the altitude advantage) all away," Boyle said, who will mix zone defenses with his preferred man-to-man. "But we'll hang our hats on the man . . . and we'll value every possession." . . .

Higgins is one of four seniors - Levi Knutson, Marcus Relphorde and Javon Coney are the others. The roster includes two freshmen - Andre Roberson and Ben Mills - and three transfers - Sabatino Chen,

Carlton Brown and Hassam Safieddine. . .

Boyle's up-tempo plan excites Higgins, and he says the coaching transition is nearly complete: "It's been working out great . . . everybody's got two feet in now. Guys like me and Alex, I think it's going to showcase our abilities. I think we all can excel in that kind of system. Besides, it's my last year, so there's a sense of urgency there. I want to enjoy it and leave here with no regrets."

CU WOMEN

If you attend one of Lappe's practices - they're open, too - and call out "Brittany," stand back. You might be overrun. CU's roster features a trio of Brittany's - Spears, a senior; Wilson, a freshman; and Blythe, also a senior, although she's Britney. . .

The 2010-11 roster also features two sets of twins - sophomores Meagan and Brenna Malcolm-Peck and freshmen Brittany and Ashley Wilson. . . .

Between the Brittany/Britneys and the look-alikes at practice, "Yeah, it can get confusing," Brittany Wilson said. . .

Lappe's goal for her team is to be "mentally tough and disciplined and play hard-nosed defense. We want to do things right on the court - be excellent in everything." . . .

Spears, the team's leading returning scorer and rebounder, also has been the most athletic player on the roster since her arrival four years ago. "She wins almost every sprint," Lappe said.

This season, though, Spears has a challenger in that department in Shae Kelley, a 6-0 freshman from Denver East who even at first glance represents a caliber of athlete CU hasn't had in a while.

Lappe told of watching Spears and Kelley go one-on-one while Lappe and her staff marveled (and loved) the competition. Spears should only benefit, as should athletic point guard Chucky Jeffery as she enters her sophomore season. . .

Kelley and her three freshmen teammates (center Rachel Hargis is the other) have hit the ground running. Said Kelley: "I don't think any of us has the time to be a freshman."

Lappe's observation of the 2009-10 team from watching game tapes, paraphrased: When teams need to get tough, they can go one of two directions - they either step up and get it done or they don't. "Sometimes," said Lappe, "they went the other way." . . .

Turning that around and identifying one, two or more crunch time players are chief among Lappe's goals. And her practices are geared with those things in mind. She also wants the Buffs to improve in rebounding, be good at the free throw line and get there more often, play better transition defense and make opponents work for every basket.

Said Lappe: "We have to prove a lot of people wrong." . .

Lappe's roster features three seniors - Spears, Blythe and Chelsea Dale. . . .

A recent "aha moment" for Lappe: "There were eight players on the floor going for a loose ball."

And that's been representative of most of the practices, Meagan Malcolm-Peck said: "From the first day back, you could tell there was more intensity and attention to detail. There's an overall change in attitude. I think everybody loves the new intensity."

That includes the sometimes enigmatic Spears, who said everyone - including her - is working harder: "Way harder. I think we're already more competitive and there's more chemistry." . . .

The hard work and intensity isn't foreign to the Wilson twins, who played in a top national high school program - Long Beach Poly - and are accustomed to the pace.

"We had same type of coach (at Long Beach Poly)," Brittany said. "We're used to intense practices. Our expectations are high and we're working hard. I think you can tell from the way we worked in the preseason and in the few practices we've had that our goals are way above how they finished last year." . . .

Something, maybe everything, has to change before the Buffs reach the level they're seeking. Said Lappe: "You can't expect different results if you keep doing the same things over and over . . . isn't that the definition of insanity?"

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SHOW MENU



Lappe likes early effort from CU women's team

Bufs aggressive in first few practices with new head coach

By Joshua Linden Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 10/15/2010 06:59:49 PM MDT



Three practices in and Colorado women's basketball coach Linda Lappe had already seen a defining moment from her squad that she couldn't have been more proud of.

Eight players were in a melee on the court, all chasing and clawing and hitting the floor in pursuit of a loose ball.

Lappe herself, after all, was a knee-pad-wearing, gritty competitor when she played for the Buffaloes not quite a decade ago.

"I think that just goes to show you that they're in it and they were excited," CU's first-year coach said at the team's media day on Friday at the Coors Events Center. "They all helped each other up. And they were excited that their teammates got on the floor. They were excited that they got on the floor. And so I don't know if that's been here in the past. If it hasn't, it will be."

Maybe such effort is simply players trying to impress a new coaching staff. Or maybe it's that players and coaches alike know that they'll need no less of an effort every game this season if they're to make any sort of splash in the Big 12 Conference, where the league's coaches have picked the Buffs to finish last.

Senior Brittany Spears laid down the team's objective on the first day of practice Monday, and it was a mantra echoed by Lappe and her teammates Friday.

"We have to prove a lot this year," Lappe said. "We have to prove a lot of people wrong. We've talked about that already."

The Buffs are coming off of a 13-17 season in which they finished 11th in the Big 12 in former coach Kathy McConnell-Miller's final season. And they've got some key spots to fill off of that squad.

Of the seven players who saw regular minutes last season, three return. Sharpshooting guard Bianca Smith graduated. Starting guard Alyssa Fressle transferred to Boston College. And starting center Courtney Dunn and reserve guard Kelly Joe Mullaney both graduated and opted not to use their final season of playing eligibility.

Three starters do return in Spears and sophomores Chucky Jeffery and Meagan Malcolm-Peck. But while Spears led the team in scoring (17.7 ppg) and rebounding (7.8 rpg) and Jeffery was third in scoring (9.3 ppg), Smith was the team's second-leading scorer coming off the bench, Fressle was second in assists, and Dunn was the only true post player to see significant minutes.

That leaves plenty of room for other players to step into key roles this season, a dynamic that Lappe said has been made clear by the competition between players in practice so far.

While Spears and Jeffery will no doubt carry much of the scoring load once again, veteran players like 6-foot-3 junior forward Julie Seabrook and senior guard Chelsea Dale have chances to play prominent roles for the first time. Britney Blythe, who started half the season at point guard two years ago before playing sparingly last season, is also in that group.

But Lappe also said Friday that two or three freshmen could also see meaningful action. They'll have to. Of 12 players on the roster, eight are sophomores or freshmen.

"We have a lot of players in the mix right now," Lappe said. "It's just going to depend on how everybody continues to progress as we go through practice. You earn your starting spots. Even our three starters that started last year, they don't have starting spots necessarily either."

The players, who said they've adapted well to the coaching change so far, know they won't gain respect from opponents until they start earning it on the court. But they pointed to a renewed energy in preseason workouts and practice so far as reasons for optimism.

"We're working way harder in practice," Spears said. "We're more competitive. The team as a whole, we have better chemistry. (Those things) were lacking, chemistry and we didn't work as hard as we could have last year. I think that will make a big difference."

Said Malcolm-Peck: "There's just so many players that have improved. So I think we're going to shock a lot of people."

The players said their objectives this season were to finish in the top half of the conference and make the NCAA Tournament. Lappe didn't lay out any such benchmarks for her own expectations, but made it clear she's shooting for a steep learning curve.

"I think the expectations are that we should make bigger jumps than probably anybody in the conference as we start to learn the new offensive and defensive system and get acclimated to what we're trying to do," the coach said.

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CU women's basketball: New start

Women's basketball media day previews season

By Marlee Horn on October 16, 2010

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New coaches. New players. New season.

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CU women's basketball team has quite the season ahead of them. Last season the Buffs finished 13-17 (3-13 Big 12).

New head coach Linda Lappe said she is ready to make a fresh start and help the team become re-focused on what is important.

Lappe herself knows a thing or two about what it takes to be a true Buffalo. After all, she helped CU make three consecutive NCAA appearances from 2001-2003, including an Elite Eight appearance in 2002 and a spot in the Sweet 16 as a senior in 2003.

She averaged 7.8 points, 3.7 rebounds and 2.0 assists in her 115 games as a Buff from 1998-2003. She was a two-year captain and an All-Big 12 Conference honorable mention selection.

More recently, during her three years as head coach at Metro State College in Denver, Lappe led her team to top-three finishes and winning records in the Eastern Division of the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference each season. Her record was 50-36.

Her return to CU makes her the youngest women's basketball head coach at a BCS Conference school and the third youngest coach overall.

At Friday's basketball media day, Lappe and her team could barely contain their excitement to start the season and begin a new era.

"We are extremely excited for the upcoming season," Lappe said. "It's easy to talk about something that you love, and I love CU women's basketball. I'm so happy to be a part of something so special."

Lappe described the importance of starting the season out on the right foot and instilling the "Colorado way" within the team. She describes this as discipline and excellence on and off the court.



In this file photo, junior Brittany Spears (22) dribbles down the court during the CU versus Nebraska women's basketball game at Coors Events Center on Jan. 30. (CU Independent/Stephanie Davis)

"We are very mentally tough," Lappe said. "We're very disciplined. We're very fundamental. We play tough, hard-nosed defense, and that's kind of where everything starts."

Sophomore guard/forward and Boulder native Meagan Malcolm-Peck said that she had CU season tickets as a child and remembers watching Lappe play and bring that type of spirit to the court.

Malcolm-Peck said she is ready for the intensity that Lappe is bringing to this year's team and is excited to add her part to the "Colorado way."

"[Lappe's] awesome," Malcolm-Peck said. "We all love her so much. She's really dedicated. She definitely instills in us a work ethic, and it's just a step up from last year."

Last year, Malcolm-Peck averaged 5.3 points, 3.7 rebounds and 1.1 blocked shots per game as a true freshman. She led the Buffs with 34 blocks on the season, the fifth-best single-season mark in CU freshman history, and the third best among freshman in the Big 12.

She said she hopes that the experience she and fellow sophomore guard Chucky Jeffery gained last year can make them leaders to the freshmen of the team. While she said that they are excited and ready to go, she also wants them to keep a good attitude and give 100 percent.

She and her fellow teammates also look to senior forward Brittany Spears to be another leader on the team.

Lappe said she agrees that Spears is stepping up even more as a leader this year. Spears has led CU in scoring and rebounding the last two seasons and is one of six CU players to record 1,500 points and 700 career rebounds. Lappe said her quickness and skills in defense and making baskets make her an ideal player to follow.

"Brittany Spears obviously does a very good job," Lappe said. "She's in really good shape right now. She's not the most vocal leader, but the team really looks up to her because she wins almost every sprint and she's a very, very good player."

Spears has always been described as a silent leader, but she said that this season, that will change.

"I think this year I'm being more vocal because coach is making me," Spears joked. "If I don't talk, we've got to run. So I'm being more vocal this year than ever before."

The freshmen of the team said they are learning from their older teammates, but also feel like they have something to prove.

Lappe said she is already very impressed by what some of her younger players are already doing.

Freshman guard Brittany Wilson had an 131-9 record with three state titles at Long Beach Poly High School. She was named first team all state, Co-MVP of the Moore League and a McDonald's All-American Candidate.

Wilson said she is ready to bring her winning spirit to Colorado and blow everyone's expectations out of the water.

"All of our expectations are high – from the coaches, from the players," Lappe said. "We just know this year's going to be a lot different."

As for being voted to finish last in the league, Wilson confidently believes that is not true.

Fellow freshman, forward Shae Kelley, said she is also feeling very prepared to bring her strength – especially her rebounding, driving and energy – to the young team.

Kelley was the 2010 Denver Post Ms. Colorado Basketball Award winner, the 2010 Denver Prep League Player of the Year and a three-time All-League first team selection. Last year Kelley led Denver East to its first ever girls' basketball state title and was named the Colorado Class 5A State Finals MVP.

Despite the differences she has noticed between high school and college, she said she knows that she can't let inexperience hold her back.

"We have a young team," Kelley said. "We kind of don't have time to be freshmen."

Lappe said that the team still needs to work on many of the areas that they were deficient in last season such as rebounding, getting to the line and transition defense. She said she knows that her team will face many challenges in the coming season, but she also knows that they team is tackling them one day at a time.

"The team that you see on Nov. 5 against Western State and then Nov. 12 against Regis is not going to be even close to the same team that you're going to see at the beginning of December," Lappe said. "And that's not going to be anywhere close to the team you're going to see in January, February, March, and so on and so forth."

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THE DENVER POST

colorado basketball

Running with the Buffs' new scheme

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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BOULDER — First-year Colorado men's basketball coach Tad Boyle expects fans and his players will become enthusiastic about the new up-tempo style he began installing Friday night with the season's first practice.

It was evident during CU media day interviews earlier in the day that his squad can't wait to turn on the jets.

"Every player likes the run-and-gun, up-tempo style," smiled standout guard Alec Burks, a 6-foot-6 sophomore who has NBA scouts salivating. "I feel like it's going to help out the whole team."

Former CU coach Jeff Bzdelik employed a more patterned offense, although the Buffaloes would run when a low-risk opportunity presented itself. Boyle promises that his team will push the pace.

"We're going to run. We're going to get out (in the open court)," said Boyle, who coached that high-octane style at Northern Colorado. "We've

got some tremendous athletes on this team. We have some really gifted, offensive basketball players. We want to take advantage of that. In addition to that, we're playing at altitude. Playing a half-court style gives that (advantage) away."

Aiming higher.

Boyle said he has not yet used the Big 12 coaches preseason poll for motivation "but it's duly noted," he said. The coaches projected the Buffs, who have two potential all-conference players in Burks and senior guard Cory Higgins, to finish ninth in the league standings.

Some preseason magazines say Colorado has a chance to make the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2003. That probably would take at least a sixth-place finish in the Big 12.

"I'm confident we will surprise a lot of people," said redshirt freshman Shannon Sharpe, an athletic point guard who sat out last season after undergoing knee surgery.

Clearing the glass.

Colorado finished last in Big 12 rebounding for 2009-10, but 6-foot-7 freshman forward Andre Roberson may help. Though listed at just 195 pounds, Roberson averaged 12 boards to go along with 15 points per game last season at San Antonio (Texas) Wagner. He loves to play above the rim and has been called "fearless" by his new teammates.



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"Andre has amazing rebounding ability, and he always goes hard," Higgins said. "In the future he's going to be special."

Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280 or tkensler@denverpost.com

Lappe teaching "the Colorado way."

First-year women's coach Linda Lappe didn't have to ask for a campus map. The former Metro State coach played for the Buffs under Ceal Barry from 1998-2003.

"We talk to our team a lot about the Colorado way being mentally tough, very disciplined, very fundamental," Lappe said.

Looking to slam.

Shae Kelley, a 6-foot freshman forward who led Denver East to the Class 5A state title last spring, has been attempting dunks during practice. "She got one to fall but it rattled around," Lappe said.

Kelley has never dunked in a game. "But look out for that," she said. "I can get up there with ease and grab the rim with two hands."

Seeing double.

The addition of guards Brittany and Ashley Wilson from famed Long Beach (Calif.) Poly gives CU two sets of twins, along with sophomore forwards Brenna and Meagan Malcolm-Peck. And the roster now includes two Brittany's (Wilson and Spears) and a Britney (Blythe).

"It's all very confusing," Brittany Wilson said.



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