

Turnovers, poor shooting do in Linda Lappe's CU Buffs

Arizona State Sun Devils roll to win over Colorado

By **Brian Howell** Buffzone.com
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Early in the season, the Colorado women's basketball team found it easy to spot the good things it was doing.

Lately, the Buffs have been forced to look for silver linings.

Arizona State sent the Buffs to another Pac-12 loss on Saturday, 60-47 at Coors Events Center. CU (16-8, 5-8 Pac-12) is now 3-7 in its last 10 games.

"We're disappointed, of course, but we did make a step to get better," said Ashley Wilson, who finished with nine points. "We are still getting better. We saw some things that we liked, some things we didn't like. But we made a better step. We've got to take something out of this loss."

Postgame comments from players and coach Linda Lappe signaled a change in outlook for the Buffaloes.

This is a season that began with just the third 12-0 start in program history, at one point earning a top-25 vote.

Even as they started 2-4 in conference play, the prevailing thought was that they were close to turning the corner. Then

they won two in a row, but followed that three losses in a row. All the while, the Buffs talked about still having an opportunity to make a strong push for the postseason.

Saturday's comments were different, almost an admission from the Buffs that their 12-0 start seems long ago and that their goals ought to be a little more modest as they head into the final five games of the regular season. "We just have to keep getting better," Lappe said. "Arizona State, you have to give them a lot of credit. Many of their players, if not all of their players, have been to the NCAA tournament, and that's what they look like.

"For us, we keep getting better. We've gotten better since the last time we played them. We're just not quite where we need to be quite yet."

The Buffs finished with 24 turnovers, shot just 36 percent from the floor (including 2-for-14 on 3-pointers) and were out-rebounded 43-25.

ASU had 15 offensive rebounds. On the bright side, it was a much better performance than their Jan. 19 trip to Tempe, when ASU (16-8, 7-6) drilled them 64-43, taking a 42-9 halftime lead.

The game was a defensive battle, which is how Arizona State plays most of its games. Countless possessions on both sides saw the 30-second shot clock go into single digits or even expire.

The Buffs kept pace early, though with the game tied at 15 after 14 minutes.

"They're just all up in your face," freshman Jasmine Sborov said of the ASU defense, which leads the conference. "That's what they focus on most is getting turnovers and getting a lot of points in transition. But, I think we did a better job this time handling that pressure than we did last time. We definitely got better."

ASU's experience took over, though. The Sun Devils went on a 12-2 run, holding CU without a field goal for nearly four minutes, to take a 27-17 lead.

The Sun Devils had runs of 10-0 and 6-0 in the second half to snag their biggest lead, 51-33 with 6:39 to play.

Credit the Buffs, however, for responding with a 12-1 run to pull within seven with 3:17 to play. ASU scored eight of the final 10 points to pull away.

Throughout the night, ASU scored 39 points off of offensive rebounds and turnovers. CU had 18 points in those situations.

"The place they hurt us the most was off of offensive rebounds and put-backs or getting to the free throw line," Lappe said. "Those killed us, especially as we were making a run. I was proud of our defense tonight, with the exception of giving up too many offensive rebounds."

Chucky Jeffery led CU with 10 points. Janae Fulcher led the Sun Devils with 16 and Alex Earl added 14.

With a week off before hosting Utah, the Buffs will look to refocus and try, once again, to make that strong push to the end.

"We can't just hang our heads now," Wilson said. "We have to put the foot down and keep going."

Ashley Wilson shines in rare opportunity for CU Buffs

By **Brian Howell** Buffzone.com
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Throughout the Pac-12 schedule, sophomore Ashley Wilson has had few opportunities to shine for the Colorado Buffaloes.

She was given an opportunity Saturday against Arizona State and responded with a good effort, scoring nine points in 18 minutes of play.

"You can never fault Ashley's effort," head coach Linda Lappe said. "She brings the same amount of energy and enthusiasm every single day. That's good for some of our other players to be able to see."

Wilson's 18 minutes matched her conference high, and it was the most minutes she'd played since her 18 minutes against Arizona State on Jan. 19. She had scored just 11 points in the previous seven games combined.

"I just stay ready," Wilson said. "Whenever (Lappe) calls, I'll be ready."

Nothing inside

CU's trio of front court starters, Meagan Malcolm-Peck, Julie Seabrook and Jen Reese combined for seven points, five rebounds and 1-for-6 shooting from the floor.

Malcolm-Peck and Seabrook combined for no points and two rebounds, and all three of their shots came from 3-point range.

"We didn't get very many easy baskets or easy looks," Lappe said. "It's about players stepping up and making sure that, really all we need is energy. I don't need any dynamic 3-point shooters, though sometimes it would help. I don't need any All-American post players, but we do need players that are going to play with a lot of effort.

"You can see when we played with a lot of effort what happened."

Fresh legs

Midway through the second half, the Buffs were down 13 points, with a legitimate chance to win the game. Yet, for several minutes, Lappe had her three most experienced players -- Seabrook, Malcolm-Peck and Chucky Jeffery -- on the bench, while three freshmen and two sophomores were on the court.

"I wanted to find a lineup that could give us a lot of energy," Lappe said. "Ashley Wilson gives us a lot of energy. Jasmine Sborov has been giving us a lot of energy, playing hard the entire time she's in there. Lexy Kresl is playing hard. She was doing some good things on the offensive and defensive end. Jen Reese was probably the one in there that kept everyone together in terms of the offensive end.

"When you're down like we were down, you play your young kids. We wanted to see what our young players could give us and they stepped up. I thought they got a lot better. I thought our freshmen and sophomores got a lot better today."

Home woes

Saturday's loss dropped the Buffaloes to 2-4 in conference home games. They have yet to sweep any of their two-game weekend series.

"You can't make any waves in conference if you can't win your home games," Lappe said. "You really can't, because most teams are going to win their home games. It's something that if you want to be in contention in the conference, if you want to be in contention to possibly get a postseason bid, you have to take care of your home court.

"You can't let teams come in here and out-hustle you, have more effort, want it more than we want it. Those are the things we have to keep getting better at."

Notable

For the first time this season, the Buffs wore gold uniforms. ... CU was 9-0 all-time against ASU before going 0-2 against the Sun Devils this season. ... CU had its lowest point total in a home game since netting just 44 against Texas Tech on Feb. 12, 2011. ... Jeffery hit double-digits in scoring for the 20th time this season. ... Sborov matched her career high with seven rebounds, set previously on Thursday against Arizona.