



*Coach Linda Lappe wants CU to finish with a flourish.
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com*



Brooks: Lappe Pushing For Final Five-Game Upgrade

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BOULDER - She isn't thinking about the timeline, but Linda Lappe's second season as the University of Colorado's women's basketball coach is trickling toward a conclusion.

With five regular-season games remaining - including Saturday's Pac-12 Conference contest against Utah at the Coors Events Center (5 p.m., ROOT Sports) - Lappe sees five opportunities to improve.

Of course, five wins would be nice. Four wins would be nice, too, given that number would reward the CU women's program with its first 20-win season since 2003-04 (22-8) and Lappe with her first 20-win campaign in five seasons as a head coach. Her three Metro State College teams finished 19-10, 14-14 and 17-12; her first CU team was 18-16.

At 16-8 this season, her Buffs have been as up and down as I-70 through the central mountains. They opened the season 12-0, which Lappe concedes "possibly" generated a false expectation or two among outsiders. (Full disclosure: Just two of those dozen early opponents now have winning records - the University of Denver at 17-11, Creighton at 13-11. Utah is 12-12 and at 5-8 in the Pac-12 is tied with CU for eighth place.)

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But while Lappe notes tougher non-conference schedules are on the horizon, she says this season's non-league lineup was the right one at the right time for the young Buffs, whose most glaring deficiency has been inconsistency on offense.

They've acquired a distressing penchant for turnovers. In their past five games - four of them losses - they've averaged 20 turnovers. In the four losses, the average number of miscues was 18.2, with a high of 25 in a 62-54 home overtime loss to UCLA that put the "yeeew" in ugly.

Lappe insists that her program still is undergoing a "cultural" change, and not quite two full seasons into the makeover that's a fair assessment. But the mid-February bottom line in Season II is this: The Buffs have won 16 games yet still have plenty of room - if not loads of time - to improve.

As do all coaches, Lappe wants the light to come on and be shining the brightest by March 1. And she believes it can.

TAKING 10 WITH LINDA LAPPE

CUBuffs.com: Is a 20-win season now what it was 10 years ago?

Linda Lappe: "A 20-win season is a 20-win season, it doesn't matter when, what era you played or coached in or what sort of team you're talking about. A 20-win season is a special season. It means a whole lot. It's a number everybody tries to reach all over the country."

CUBuffs.com: Do you mention 20 wins to your players or is that putting the cart before the horse at this point?

Linda Lappe: "Right now we have to focus on getting better. The wins and the losses, the end part takes care of itself. The wins take care of themselves as long as we come to practice, we work hard, we get better and play together and have effort. A 20-win season will take care of itself. If we start focusing too much on that, players have the tendency to only think about that and lose the perspective of getting better every single day and (lose) the next game."

CUBuffs.com: What does getting better mean for this team?

Linda Lappe: "We've got to continue to cut down on our turnovers. We've focused on passing, catching, making the right decisions offensively. We've focused on catching and being ready to shoot, thinking you're going to shoot as an outside or inside threat. And just being ready to take (a shot) when you have an opening. I thought we did a really good job of that against Arizona (a 69-59 win). We came out firing and had a lot of confidence on the offensive end. The other thing for this team to be successful in the end - and success is not defined by wins and losses - is we have to show more consistent effort and energy and enthusiasm. Those are the 'Big Three E's' that we talk a lot about that we don't necessarily show for 40 minutes for a number of different reasons. Sometimes the opposing team causes us to lose focus on those things, or we have some sort of adversity that causes us to relax in those things. But those are the things that we can bring and there are no excuses why we can't have a lot of effort and a lot of energy coming out every single game and possession. That's what our coaching staff expects and I think it's what our team is coming to expect. Hopefully here in the next five games we're going to be able to see a change in those areas."

CUBuffs.com: Is it late in the season for you to be talking about those kinds of things?

Linda Lappe: "Every team is so different . . . you hope at this point (of the season) those things took care of themselves, but that's not always the case. To make sure we're doing those three things, it's just really important to know where we're going. We obviously don't want to be talking about those things (this late). Effort and attitude are things you don't want to have to coach. Sometimes right now we're having to coach those things. But at the same time we're getting down to the point where for this year's team to be considered a success at the end of the year, we don't want to still be talking about those things in March. So we have a couple of weeks here

where we can get them fixed. It's never too late to work on things you're not good at."

CUBuffs.com: Is this team, given what you just said, where you thought it might be when you went 12-0 to open the season? Or has it plateaued a bit in some areas?

Linda Lappe: "This season has been very unique, very different than any other season most of us have been a part of because we did win so many games in a row early. We didn't expect that, so that exceeded our expectations. Then to start off the conference 2-1, I thought we were doing some really good things. I thought the Cal (CU lost a 12-point second-half lead and lost 68-55) and Stanford home swing (the No. 4 Cardinal rolled 80-54) really hurt us in terms of our mentality. We've had a tough time bouncing back from those two games. But you know it's definitely not a lost cause; our players do some really good things at times. They're just not consistent right now. So that's our biggest thing - starting to understand that everything matters, not only how you're representing yourself but how you're representing the team, Colorado basketball - it all matters. We have to understand that and really have a lot of heart every time we take the floor."

CUBuffs.com: You've talked about wanting teams to playing their best from mid-February into March. Is there time enough left for this team to pick it up and do that?

Linda Lappe: "In some areas we're playing our best basketball for sure. We've been a lot better defensively. At times we're moving the ball, at times we don't. But I still think we've got a lot of good basketball ahead of us, and that's what we're working for every day. You just have to have faith that it's coming."

CUBuffs.com: So by the time the Pac-12 Tournament opens (March 7-12, Los Angeles), you would like those things to be done and go into the tournament with a full head of steam?

Linda Lappe: "Yeah, I'd like to be able to put together a full 40 minutes of extreme effort, of executing our offense, executing our defense, being tough to score against. I sometimes think about last year - even though I try not to reference it - but we were up-and-down before we went to the WNIT. We had a terrible game in the Big 12 Tournament against Kansas (a 71-45 loss) and did not like that feeling at all. Even up until that point, we were up and down. But it's part of changing a culture and we're still changing the culture. We're not there yet. I know I thought maybe when we were 12-0 . . . but that's OK, too. It's all right to have high expectations and we still have high expectations. But at the same time we haven't arrived yet. We're still building, we're still helping our players to get better and they're still working to get better. It's a team that you look at on paper and we're 16-8. I think any of us at this point, if we'd thought we'd be 16-8, we'd be extremely happy with that. It doesn't matter how you get there, 16 wins is 16 wins. Now we just want to kind of keep going from there."

CUBuffs.com: What are your thoughts on future scheduling? Do you want to toughen it up?

Linda Lappe: "Yeah, we'll toughen it up a little bit next year. I wouldn't change our schedule this year for anything. We had a couple of tough games (in non-conference), we played a couple of big schools. We played on the road . . . to get that first road win at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi early in the season was huge for us. So I don't know that I would change it this year. But every year is going to be different and I will definitely change it next year. We have a lot of things kind of already put in place, so it will be a lot different."

CUBuffs.com: Did the 12-0 start create some false expectations for people on the outside?

Linda Lappe: "Possibly . . . it's hard to say. But I think sometimes we get unrealistic with maybe what our goals are at this point - and that's OK. High expectations aren't terrible and they're good to have. It usually means people respect your program, they respect your players and what you're trying to do. And that's great. But at the same time you can't lose sight of what the end goal is - and as a coach that's for every player to reach their individual potential and our team to reach its potential. That's going to be different every year. Sometimes it's going to be 24 wins, sometimes it might be 18 wins, sometimes it might be 30 wins. You can't pay so much attention to a 12-0 (start). What you should pay attention to is how we were winning some of those games, and those are the things I don't think are false. We were winning the close games, coming from behind and winning games like we did at Utah, like we did in the non-conference a couple of times like against Creighton. I think how

you win games and how you're playing games, that's what people really need to focus on - not a win and that we're 12-0. That's a good storyline for the media and it's good for them to be talking about your program. But at the same time fans who came to watch us could see how we were winning those games. That's what they need to be talking about the most."

CUBuffs.com: You mentioned 16-8, which is really a pretty good number . . . would you have personally been satisfied with 16-8 at this point?

Linda Lappe: "I can't say yes or no, because again I don't really think it's about the record. I think it's about how your team's playing. What we just talked about, you want to be playing your best basketball (now). Right now I'm not satisfied and I don't think anyone on our team is satisfied with where we're at because I don't think we're playing our best. We think there are things we can continue to get better at. That doesn't mean by the end of the season that we won't be satisfied."

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SHOW MENU



Women's basketball: CU Buffs regroup with five games to go

Colorado faces Utah Saturday at Coors Events Center

By **Brian Howell** Buffzone.com
Boulder Daily Camera

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CU women's basketball preview

SATURDAY: The Colorado Buffaloes (16-8, 5-8) host the Utah Utes (12-12, 5-8) at 5 p.m. at the Coors Events Center.

BROADCAST: TV - Root Sports, with Marc Stout on play-by-play and Ceal Barry with color commentary. Radio - KKZN-760 AM, with Mike Rice doing play-by-play.

STORYLINES: CU is looking to rebound from a loss to Arizona State a week ago and earn its 17th win of the season. ... Utah comes in with a two-game win streak. ... CU beat Utah 58-52 on Dec. 31, outscoring the Utes 20-4 in the final 10 minutes. ... The Buffs' Julie Seabrook scored 17 points in that win. ... CU is 2-4 in Pac-12 home games. ... In Pac-12 road games, Utah is 2-4, with both wins coming in overtime. Utah's Michelle Plouffe (eight) and Taryn Wicijowski (seven) are among the Pac-12 leaders in double-doubles. ... Utah is second in the conference in scoring defense (55.5), while CU is fifth (58.2).

KEY STAT: CU has been out shot in six straight games, going 2-4 in those contests.

COACHES: Linda Lappe is 34-24 in her second season at CU and 84-60 overall. Anthony Levrets is 30-29 in his second season at Utah and overall.

PROBABLE STARTERS:

With five games to play, it is safe to say that the season has not gone as well as the Colorado women's basketball team had hoped.

Yet, with five games to play, the Buffaloes (16-8, 5-8 Pac-12) realize they still have plenty to play for.

Saturday's home game against Utah (12-12, 5-8) will be the Buffs first game in a week, and it's been an important week for them.

"It was just trying to get things figured out, what we're playing for, where we want to go postseason-wise," junior Chucky Jeffery said. "It was just all getting on the same page and regrouping, really."

Last Saturday, CU lost at home to Arizona State, 60-47. On Tuesday, the Buffs returned to practice after a two-day break. When they got back, they sat down and had a talk.

First they broke into smaller groups, and then came together as a whole. All told, they spent more than an hour -- with no dribbling, no passing, no running and no ball. It was just talking.

"That was different," freshman Jen Reese said. "That was a long talk, but it helped a lot.

"We were coming up with ideas on where we are, where we want to go and how we're going to get there. Then we put it all together."

They spent the rest of the week putting together rejuvenated, spirited practices.

CU believes that the light week not only re-energized them, but also drew them closer together.

"I think you always have to refocus during the season to make sure you have the right goals and make sure you have goals that the entire team is working towards," head coach Linda Lappe said. "We really have to know what we're playing for and it's important that everybody has something that they're playing for that's the same.

"Conflict on a team is always good, and it's always good if you know how to handle it and you can grow from it. I don't know that we necessarily have had conflict (between players), but somebody once told me that if everything is going perfect then you're not becoming the best team you can become."

What can the Buffs become? Well, that remains to be seen. They came into the season picked to finish 11th in the Pac-12, but believing they could reach the top four.

Colorado - G Brittany Wilson, 5-7, So., 9.1 ppg, 2.9 rpg, 2.1 apg; G Chucky Jeffery, 5-10, Jr., 15.1 ppg, 7.0 rpg, 4.0 apg; F Meagan Malcolm-Peck, 6-2, Jr., 4.3 ppg, 4.3 rpg; F Jen Reese, 6-2, Fr., 8.0 ppg, 6.1 rpg; F Julie Seabrook, 6-3, Sr., 7.5 ppg, 5.4 rpg. **Utah** - G Janita Badon, 5-7, Sr., 10.5 ppg, 6.1 rpg; G Iwalani Rodrigues, 5-9, Jr., 10.3 ppg, 3.3 rpg; G Rachel Messer, 5-9, Jr., 5.7 ppg, 1.9 rpg; F Taryn Wicijowski, 6-3, So., 12.7 ppg, 8.5 rpg; F Michelle Plouffe, 6-4, So., 14.4 ppg, 8.5 rpg.

SERIES: Utah leads 10-8, but CU is 8-4 in the last 12 meetings and is 5-2 against Utah in Boulder. The Utes will be in Boulder for the first time since Nov. 17, 1995.

UP NEXT: CU visits the third-ranked team in the country, Stanford, on Thursday.

At 5-8, they technically still have a shot at their goal, as they're just two games out of third. But, this week, the Buffs re-set their focus.

"It's more so how do we want to be playing at the end of the year?" Lappe said. "What does this team want to be known for? What is this team's legacy? Those are the things that we're playing for right now. Right now we don't have a legacy yet. We don't have anything that we're known for yet."

Jeffery said the Buffs decided to "play for the people that don't have the opportunity to do what we do and the people that gave us the opportunity to do what we do."

In doing that, the Buffs have their eyes set on the postseason, and to get there, it starts Saturday.

"It's important to finish strong," Reese said.

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CU women's basketball team embraces Play 4 Kay on Saturday

Fans wearing pink get \$3 GA tickets

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 02/17/2012 08:39:16 PM MST

Fans are encouraged to wear pink Saturday for Colorado's game against Utah at Coors Events Center at 5 p.m.

The game will be CU's annual Play 4 Kay game, in support of the Kay Yow Cancer Fund. The fund was named after late N.C. State head women's basketball coach Kay Yow.

"It's a great event," CU coach Linda Lappe said. "Kay Yow was an exceptional lady. She was a great coach but she was an even better person."

Yow was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1987. She had a third recurrence in 2006 and passed away on Jan. 24, 2009.

Since the fund was set up in 2006, coaches around the country have held Play 4 Kay games, raising more than \$1.5 million in the fight against breast cancer.

"My grandma had breast cancer and she fought it," CU freshman Jen Reese said. "It's just a great awareness (for cancer) to have these games in women's basketball."

Fans who wear pink can purchase general admission tickets for \$3, and the first 2,000 fans will receive a free pink CU women's basketball T-shirt.

"For (Yow) to leave her legacy and really start this foundation and get this thing going is a pretty neat thing," Lappe said.

CU junior Chucky Jeffery said the fight against breast cancer is "really important to every female around the world."

The Buffs will do their part with sporting pink. They will wear special white jerseys with pink trim and they have been breaking in pink shoes all week that they will wear tonight.

"I think we'll look fresh in it," Jeffery said. "It'll look nice."

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