



*Arielle Roberson remains upbeat while in an unfamiliar position in her freshman season.*  
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



## Brooks: Arielle Roberson Stays On Hold, Cheerfully

Release: 02/08/2012 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

**BOULDER** - Find a day when Arielle Roberson isn't upbeat and you've discovered a rare day indeed. The old line about making lemonade when life offers lemons is a sweet fit here. Roberson could open a bottling plant.

The 2011-12 women's basketball season hasn't gone like the lithe Colorado freshman expected. Not even close. Roberson arrived in Boulder last summer wanting to match her billing as a supremely athletic forward - a commodity highly prized by CU coach Linda Lappe as the Buffs made their way into the Pac-12 Conference.

But early on in drills, Roberson wasn't herself. She had experienced periodic back pain during her senior season at Wagner High School in San Antonio, but never to the degree that it forced her to miss any games.

"I usually played through it," she said Wednesday, flashing that ever-present smile. "I saw chiropractors like every game day, on weekends, and that definitely helped me out a lot. But I battled through it. It was nothing like this year; it was like, 'Oh, it's just tight today,' or 'I feel a little off today.'"

A little off in high school deteriorated into something worse at the college level. Recalled Roberson: "I felt like I

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was back in middle school. My cutting was off, my timing was off. I couldn't jump. I just felt like I was going at a slower pace.

"It was really, really frustrating - a total letdown. I didn't want everyone to think this was how I play. This is definitely not me, and especially being a freshman you want to come out and have a big bang. But if I would have played, it wouldn't have been a good first impression for fans, coaches, my team."

Initial tests were on Roberson's back, but the various scans and X-rays came back negative. With the season approaching Roberson tried specific exercises and physical therapy, but the low-grade pain and sub-par performance persisted.

"I tried to push through it," she said. "But it just wouldn't let me."

Eventually, the medical scrutiny shifted to her left hip. Another round of testing revealed a torn labrum, which was surgically repaired in early December. With a recovery/rehab time of six to eight months, her freshman season was finished. She's redshirting now and taking part in practice on a very limited basis.

This is all new to Roberson - the injury, the rehab, and playing replaced by watching, which she'll do again Thursday night when CU entertains Arizona at the Coors Events Center (7 p.m.).

"It really kills me, especially during games just sitting there," she said. "I've never had to do that before; it's a whole different experience. It's frustrating because you can see yourself doing some of the things (the Buffs) need help with right now.

"I feel helpless at times, but I try to remind myself, well, I'm in a different spot so maybe I can teach somebody something and help them grow and understand what I'm seeing."

The 6-1 Roberson averaged 18.2 points, 9.7 rebounds, 2.7 assists, three steals and two blocks per game as a senior at Wagner. It's reasonable to project that she could have helped the Buffs immediately. Lappe, in fact, was counting on it: "We thought all of our freshmen would help us and I'm sure Arielle would have. But the bright side is that she'll have four more years to help us."

Wednesday was a good day for Roberson. She was cleared to begin the next phases of rehab - running in water and doing lunges with both legs. The pain experienced earlier in her hip has been reduced to "a little irritation and discomfort when it's cold . . . I can tell when the weather is going to change," she said with a laugh.

Goodbye, Weather Channel.

"I'm feeling pretty good now," she continued. "The progression is definitely there. I'm not in as good (cardiovascular) shape as I'd like. I'm doing bike and elliptical work, but I still get winded going up the stairs. Right now, I'm in more walking shape than basketball shape. But I'm hoping that by June, July I'm getting back in the swing of things."

Roberson's older brother, Andre, preceded her arrival at CU by a year and also plays hoops. Pretty well, too. He leads the Pac-12 in rebounding (11.2 a game) and is the conference's only player averaging a double-double (11.1 points).

Brother and sister are close, but Arielle didn't sign with CU rather than North Carolina or South Carolina because Andre already was on the scene. Still, his presence, especially given the unforeseen circumstances of her freshman year, has been welcome. His being here, Arielle said, "was like a bonus . . .

"All the schools I visited, I knew people there, so anywhere I went I wasn't going to be alone . . . I hang out with him some and we have Skype sessions with the rest of my family. They definitely keep me happy. And whenever something's wrong, he's there to pick me up. When I'm down, he knows. He can give me some words of

encouragement or shed some light on the situation."

Arielle is as far from being a doomer/gloomer as Warren Buffett is from being a pauper. She concedes, though, after her surgery in early December, "I had my lapses. The first conference game was the hardest on me - new season, new conference . . . I'd missed out on that. I've had my letdowns, moments when it was 'why me?' and times when I wanted to cry.

"But then I see other people who have it worse than I do. I'm looking at this like a blessing in disguise. It would have been worse if I was a senior and this happened, or if it happened at mid-season, or something worse happened. That's what keeps me going."

Forget self-pity. If she senses any of that coming on, she has only to glance down the Buffs bench. Sophomore Brenna Malcolm-Peck has battled a variety of ailments/injuries since she's been at CU but has maintained a positive outlook. Said Roberson: "I look at her and what she's gone through and I can't get down."

Instead, her new and very different vantage point is allowing her "to see the coaches' point of view now. When I was practicing and coach would tell me something, I'd sometimes think, 'What's she talking about?' I can see some of those things now. This is a good staff; the dedication of the staff here was what it came down to for me (in signing with CU)."

Arielle chuckles about the time commitment the Buffs made to her during the recruiting process. Lappe and her staff saw enough of Roberson's basketball games, but they were on hand for volleyball as well. "I saw them five times in one month," Roberson said. "That made an impression . . . I could tell they were genuine people."

On her CU visit, she said two things became evident to her: "The progression of the team and what coach Lappe is saying, what her vision is - and that's when I fell for it. I bought into it. It was just nice all the way around, and having Andre here was having family here. I made the right choice, no doubt about it."

The Buffs still feel as good about their investment as she does about her decision. The payoff for both parties will take just a little longer than expected, but Arielle isn't letting it drag her down. Not much can.

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SHOW MENU



# CU Buffs' Meagan Malcolm-Peck aims to break out of shooting slump

## CU women host Arizona tonight

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

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Thoughts of making an upward move in the Pac-12 standings are still there for the Colorado women's basketball team.

If those thoughts don't turn into results soon, the Buffs could be in trouble.

Colorado (15-7, 4-7 Pac-12) takes a three-game losing streak into tonight's 7 p.m. game against Arizona (13-10, 2-9) at Coors Events Center.

Prior to the losing streak, the Buffs had a chance to take over sole possession of fourth place in the conference. Now, they sit tied for eighth.

"There's only so much time we can keep saying we're going to get back," junior Meagan Malcolm-Peck said. "We really wanted last week to be that step-up point, but since we let that pass us by, it really does have to be this week to step it up."

Following a loss at home against UCLA on Jan. 29, the Buffs went to Oregon last week and lost to both Oregon State and Oregon.

"We're really disappointed with our last couple of performances," Malcolm-Peck said. "Our goal for the (Oregon) trip was to sweep the trip. It didn't happen that way, but I think we just have to let it go at this point and move on and realize we still have a lot of opportunities."

Taking advantage of those opportunities would be a lot easier if the Buffs could start hitting their shots. They've been in a major shooting slump throughout Pac-12 play. Malcolm-Peck has been in a season-long slump.

During her first two years, she hit 40 percent of her field goals, 33.9 percent of her 3-pointers and 56.9 percent of her free throws.

This season, she has made 29.5 percent of her field goals, 22.1 percent from 3-point range, and 38.1 percent of her free throws.

"I've been shooting just as much," she said. "Last year I had a good percentage. I'm confident in my 3-point shot and it's feeling good. In the beginning part of the season it wasn't feeling as good as it is now. It's just got to go in there one of these days. If not this season, it'll be next season."

As for this season, the Buffs can take some satisfaction in seeing a couple of key players warm up lately. Freshman Lexy Kresl has rediscovered her shot in the past three games and junior Chucky Jeffery is seemingly out of her mid-season lull.

Another positive is that the disappointment of last week has not carried over to practices this week.

"We realized we had to let that go and focus on improving and getting better on what we need to get better at," Malcolm-Peck said.

Tonight's game will be the first re-match of the season for CU. The Buffs beat last-place Arizona on its home floor 56-54 on Jan. 22. They're hoping for a better effort but a similar result tonight.

"I think we take what we did really well against Arizona and we have to make sure we do it again and then we take what we did badly against Arizona and we've been working on that in practice to improve that," Malcolm-Peck said. "Hopefully we have a full game of doing what we want to do against Arizona."

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