



Julie Seabrook's three straight games in double figures is a career first.
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



Brooks: Seabrook's Offense Surfacing At Right Time

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BOULDER - Over the past three years, Julie Seabrook has had her moments in Colorado women's basketball - and by her own admission the majority of them occurred on defense.

Being from Vancouver, B.C., it could be that her comfort zone was in the western U.S. rather than the Heartland. But for whatever reason (she and her coach have several theories) Seabrook's offense seems to have found a nice time and place to blossom in the Pac-12 Conference.

In the Buffaloes' first three Pac-12 games, Seabrook's 15.3 points a game is the team's best scoring average. Over the past three games she has reached double figures in three consecutive contests for the first time in her CU career.

What's going on? Why the offensive transformation?

Seabrook chuckled Wednesday before practice when asked if she was the same player. "Over my career, I've definitely seen myself more as a defender than an offensive threat," she conceded. "Now, I'm just trying to get a better feel for the game and taking what's being given to me."

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So give her credit for being opportunistic. In CU's conference opener at Utah most of her 17 points resulted from the defense leaving her open on the perimeter. At Washington, she was able to maneuver around her defender inside for most of her 18 points. And at Washington State "it was a kind of combination of both" that led directly to her 11 points.

There's no doubt that her senior season finds her with a better grasp of the game and significantly more confidence in her ability. "I feel like I'm understanding the game more and am able to take advantage of more things . . . and I'm not nervous about making mistakes," she said. "I think being more confident goes hand-in-hand with that - knowing when I'm open I'm going to knock my shots down and feeling good about taking those shots."

And here's the proof: She's hit seven of her 10 three-point attempts in league play. What's more, her 59.5 percent field goal accuracy (she was at 64.3 in the first three league games) leads the conference.

Not surprisingly, CU coach Linda Lappe says Seabrook "is playing as well as we've seen her since this staff has been here." And Lappe is basing that critique on more than Seabrook's sudden offensive output. "She's just doing a lot of different things for us," Lappe said, alluding to the 6-3 Seabrook's 6.0 rebounds a game (20th in the league; her 2.96 offensive boards are 10th) as well as her defensive and usually vocal leadership roles.

"That's what I like to bring - the talking, the defensive leading," Seabrook said. "It's kind of a staple I had last year when I wasn't scoring as much. I had to do something, whether it was getting other people open, screening, trying to get a defensive stop . . . when I'm not playing as well as I want to play, whether it's scoring or whatever, I focus more on getting other people open."

And that's also helped Seabrook find more open looks. Here's how Lappe explains Seabrook's recent success on the offensive end, particularly from the perimeter: "She's hitting her outside shot because she's finding gaps to get her outside shot. A lot of times she's getting shots because she's setting great screens and she's doing a great job on the offensive glass . . . her teammates are looking for her and she's getting some great looks because of that."

After three conference road games, Seabrook and the Buffs play their first pair of Pac-12 games at the Coors Events Center on Thursday against California (7 p.m.) and Saturday against No. 4 Stanford (4 p.m., ROOT Sports). Tickets for each game, with prices starting at \$8, are available at CUBuffs.com/tickets or by calling 303-49-BUFFS.

The Buffs are vaguely familiar with the Golden Bears, who visited Boulder last March in the WNIT. CU won that game, rolling to a 27-point halftime lead before cruising to an 81-65 victory. But more than CU's conference affiliation has changed since last spring. Cal has a new coach (Lindsay Gottlieb replaced Joann Boyle) and the Bears have had an infusion of new players.

But, said Seabrook, some things never change: "They'll rebound really hard and will look to get up and down the floor. Last year we got them a little tired in transition and we'll look to do that again. But they're a good rebounding team . . . it'll be a war on the boards."

The Pac-12 stat sheet backs her up. Cal and CU are 1-2 in the conference in defensive rebounding percentage, with the Bears snatching a defensive board 75.1 percent of the time and the Buffs not far behind at 73.5 percent.

Lappe calls defensive rebounding "a good finishing touch on a possession . . . and it's one of the things we focus on. But Cal is going to bring a whole new level to that and we have to make sure we amp it up on our end, too."

Lappe said her team's most recent opponent - Washington State - "did a nice job of crashing the glass in the second half and that gave us a kind of a preview of what Cal can do on the offensive glass. We'll be really focused on that; it'll be a huge part of whether we can win or not."

The Buffs have outrebounded their opponents in 12 of 14 games this season and, with a plus-10.6 margin on the

boards, rank No. 3 in the conference and No. 11 in the nation (through Jan. 8). Cal, though, leads the nation in rebounding margin (plus-18.2) and is averaging 48.8 boards (30.6 on defense). Sophomore Gennifer Brandon's 11.1 rebounds a game is second in the conference to Stanford's Nnemkadi Ogwumike's 11.9. Brandon missed Cal's WNIT visit due to a stress fracture in her shin.

The Bears remind Lappe of former Big 12 opponents Texas A&M and Texas Tech. "They're physical, much like those two teams," she said. "They haven't changed styles with the coaching change. We did a really great job (in the WNIT) of setting the tempo in that game, using our defense and rebounding in getting into transition . . . but they'll have much more depth this year, that's the biggest difference for them. They'll have more players that can do a lot of different things - some All-Americans. We'll just have to be ready to rebound the basketball and be tough."

As she did a couple of times last season, Lappe offered her team a change of pace this week during preparations for their home Pac-12 opener. On Tuesday afternoon, after shooting practice that morning, the Buffs went to their locker room believing they were going to watch tape on Thursday's opponent.

Instead, they saw *Secretariat*, the 2010 Disney movie about the legendary Triple Crown winner. The film introduced most of the Buffs to Penny Chenery, who bred the colt that became the first U.S. horse in 25 years to win the Triple Crown. Chenery raised her children in Denver, moved to Kentucky in the early 1970s, but has since returned to Boulder.

At the movie's conclusion, Seabrook and several teammates said it would be "neat" to get in touch with Chenery, who is approaching 90, and reminisce about her experiences. Before that conversation among the Buffs went too far, Lappe said from the back of the room, "Actually, we've already done that."

Then she introduced Chenery to the stunned team.

"It was just amazing," Seabrook said. "Everyone started to cry, they were so shocked. We spent a good half an hour, 45 minutes talking with her and asking her about her experience, the courage and leadership that it took to do such an amazing thing in that time period when women really weren't looked at (as they are now). We were really inspired, really pumped up; we can't wait to start playing again.

"We were talking on the bus after the Washington State game about how much more confident and better we play at home. It's nice to finally have a couple of Pac-12 teams coming in here. We're excited."

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SHOW MENU



CU women expect battle on boards

Bufs host Cal, the country's top rebounding team

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com
Boulder Daily Camera

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The Colorado women's basketball team doesn't have much history with its new Pac-12 Conference foes.

The Buffaloes do, however, have a fresh memory of the Cal Bears and they know they're in for a battle tonight. Colorado (13-1, 2-1 Pac-12) hosts Cal (11-5, 2-2) in its Pac-12 home opener at 7 p.m.

"The main emphasis is being more physical than they are and just being aggressive and ready for a fight," CU junior Meagan Malcolm-Peck said. "I think our team actually raises the level of play with the higher competition we play. That's really exciting for us."

Cal got off to a fast start this year, in large part because of its tremendous rebounding. The Bears rank No. 1 in the country with a plus-18.3 average and have out-rebounded every opponent this year.

Cal hasn't lost a rebounding battle since March 21, 2011 -- in Boulder. The Buffs out-rebounded Cal in an 81-65 win in the WNIT.

"We just fought back and they backed down," Malcolm-Peck said. "I think we have to throw the first punch and be ready for it, but know we can do it."

CU has been exceptional on the boards all season, as well, out-rebounding 12 of 14 opponents and ranking 11th in the country with a plus-10.6 rebounding margin.

"It's always fun to be physical down there," said Malcolm-Peck, who has averaged five rebounds per game this season. "I think (Cal is) for sure the best rebounding team we've played. We've worked a lot this week on just boxing out and you've got to hit them first and not let them make the first move."

That's easier said than done. Cal sophomore Gennifer Brandon is posting 11.1 rebounds per game, including 24 in one game and 19 in another. She sat out last year with an injury and didn't play against the Buffs.

Led by Brandon and Talia Caldwell, the Bears are particularly good at hitting the offensive glass. Cal scores an average of 18.1 second-chance points per game, nearly double the second-chance points the Bears allow (9.1). In Saturday's 90-67 win over Oregon, the Bears out-rebounded the Ducks 63-26 and had 29 second-chance points, compared to one for Oregon.

"That's part of their offense," CU coach Linda Lappe. "They look to drive it hard and just crash the glass. We'll have to do a great job of boxing out and keeping them out of the paint. You can't let them get too many offensive rebounds and you can't let them score them."

In addition to competing on the boards, the Buffs are looking to stay strong on defense, score in transition and cut down on their turnovers. The Buffs have averaged 17.2 turnovers per game and rank last in the conference in turnover margin. They have 58 turnovers in three conference games.

"Anytime they're over 15, it's too many turnovers," Lappe said. "We've become a little sloppy with our outlets. We've become a little sloppy with our posts -- we have too many post turnovers."

While CU has spent this week working on getting better in preparation for Cal, the Buffs have also been eager to hit the Coors Events Center court. They haven't played in front of the home fans since Dec. 17.

"It's an exciting time," Lappe said. "First Pac-12 game here and hopefully we get a good fan base and get this place rockin'."

a little bit. If that's the case, we'll definitely bring a lot of energy."

CU vs. Cal

TODAY: The Colorado Buffaloes (13-1, 2-1 Pac-12) host the Cal Bears (11-5, 2-2) in a 7 p.m. game at the Coors Events Center.

BROADCAST: Radio on KKZN (AM 760), with Mike Rice doing play-by-play and Carol Callan providing color commentary.

STORYLINES: Tonight will be CU's first Pac-12 home game. ... The Buffs are 7-0 at home this season. ... Cal is 0-2 in conference road games this season. ... Both teams rank in the top 11 nationally in rebounding margin, with Cal sitting at No. 1 and CU at No. 11. ... Colorado's Chucky Jeffery and Cal's Gennifer Brandon both rank among conference leaders with five double-doubles season. ... CU's Julie Seabrook and Rachel Hargis are the only Buffs to start all 14 games. ... Four of Cal's losses have come by five points or less. CU is 2-0 in games decided by five or less.

KEY STAT: Senior Julie Seabrook leads the Buffs in scoring during Pac-12 play, at 15.3 points per game. She has also averaged 7.3 rebounds in the three conference games. For the season she's at 8.7 points and 6.0 rebounds per game.

COACHES: Linda Lappe is 31-17 in her second season at CU and 81-53 overall. Lindsay Gottlieb is 11-5 in her first season at Cal and 67-42 overall.

PROBABLE STARTERS:

Colorado -- G Chucky Jeffery, 5-10, Jr., 16.9 ppg, 8.4 rpg, 4.4 apg; G Lexy Kresl, 5-11, Sr., 11.1 ppg, 4.0 rpg; F Meagan Malcolm-Peck, 6-2, Jr., 5.2 ppg, 5.0 rpg; F Julie Seabrook, 6-3, Sr., 8.7 ppg, 6.0 rpg; C Rachel Hargis, 6-4, So., 4.6 ppg, 3.9 rpg.

California -- G Brittany Boyd, 5-9, Fr., 8.0 ppg, 3.3 rpg, 4.5 apg; G Layshia Clarendon, 5-9, Jr., 10.4 ppg, 3.9 rpg, 2.6 apg; G Lindsay Sherbert, 6-0, So., 5.8 ppg, 3.2 rpg; F Gennifer Brandon, 6-2, So., 9.3 ppg, 11.1 rpg; C Talia Caldwell, 6-3, Jr., 8.0 ppg, 7.2 rpg.

SERIES: CU is 5-0 against the Bears, with all five wins coming in Boulder.

UP NEXT: Fourth-ranked Stanford will be in Boulder on Saturday at 4 p.m.

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