



*CU freshman Lexy Kresl (1) is eager for a trip to her home state -- Arizona.
Photo Courtesy: Joel Broida*



Brooks: Kresl Awaits An Inspirational Trip Home

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BOULDER - The Colorado women's basketball team has lost back-to-back games for the first time this season and could use a shot of inspiration. Freshman guard Lexy Kresl knows exactly where hers is coming from at the end of the week.

The Buffaloes are at Arizona State Thursday night and at Arizona Sunday afternoon, offering Kresl her first opportunity to return to her home state in a CU uniform. Playing before family and friends was a major reason she signed with the Buffs last year, and she expects them to comprise a cheering section in Tempe and Tucson.

Younger brother Logan will be at both sites, and the prospect of him seeing her play lights up Lexy's face. "He's my inspiration," she says, "and he considers himself my good luck charm."

There was a time when the other members of the Kresl family - parents John and Julie, Lexy and youngest brother Colten - didn't know how long they would have Logan. Diagnosed with brain cancer nine years ago, he underwent surgery and chemotherapy. Logan, now 16, battled gamely, successfully and now is in remission.

The disease took a toll, affecting Logan's balance as well as causing him to switch from being right handed to

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predominately left handed. But, his sister added, "He's improved a lot . . . he still loves doing things he did before the cancer. He loves to play basketball and he lifts weights.

"He plays chess, which I consider a sport, and he's very good at that. He's really supportive of me, although I don't get to see him much anymore. But I know he watches all of my games when he can."

Kresl, from the Phoenix suburb of Paradise Valley, attended Shadow Mountain High School, where her ability as a shooter/scorer attracted recruiters' attention near and far. Near was very near. Of course, the instate Pac-12 Conference schools were interested - mostly ASU. But with her desire to go out of state and with the CU coaching staff and her future teammates making a good first impression, she signed with the Buffs.

Kresl averaged 27 points as a high school senior and hit 50 in one game, most from long range. "We brought her in here to shoot the basketball," CU coach Linda Lappe said, and for the most part Kresl has done that well. Lappe would like Kresl to take four to six three-pointers a game, and Kresl has averaged five through 16 games. She has attempted a team-high 90 three-pointers, hitting 30, and is the Buffs' second-leading scorer at 10.3 points a game.

Junior Chucky Jeffery averages 16.3, but both players are coming off 1-for-10 shooting performances in an 80-54 loss to No. 4 Stanford. Jeffery's two points and Kresl's three were season lows for both players, and Kresl's three-pointer was one of only two she's hit in 18 attempts over the past three outings.

An infusion of confidence is needed, and Lappe said it needs to spread team-wide: "Shooting's contagious. Anytime you're in a game and you don't see teammates hitting shots, don't see the ball going in the basket, it's contagious. We didn't have a lot of that toward the end of the Cal game and at the start of the Stanford game.

"It takes a lot of mental toughness to break that mold, for one player to step up and hit a key shot and then another player to hit another key shot . . . and pretty soon it's contagious the other way. You're making your free throws and hitting your threes. I know that's going to come back; we're going to break that at some point, it's just a matter of when."

Kresl had never experienced a 1-for-10 shooting performance, and from watching game tape she said part of her shooting slump is traceable to "not getting my feet set and my shot selection . . . I definitely had a chance to do better than I did (against Stanford)."

Lappe said Kresl "forced a couple against Stanford, which she hadn't done in a long time. Freshmen are going to force shots now and then, and that's OK. I also thought she some good, open looks, but she's been good overall. Like any freshman, she's had better games than others. She's getting better, she's understanding the offense and defense a little better. And for any freshman it's about staying power; this (season) will be the longest she's played, and at the most intense level she's played."

But Lappe isn't close to hitting the panic button. She has seen the 5-11 Kresl hit a game-winning trey against Creighton, a game-tying two-pointer at Washington State and other clutch twos and threes with the shot clock expiring. Said Lappe: "She wants the ball when our team needs to score. You always have to respect that . . . she's stepped up and knocked it down when it really mattered."

So CU's coach remains confident in her freshman shooter's capabilities, even though the entire team is trying to end a shooting drought (42-of-119 from the field) that's marred the last two games. "Right now none of our shooters are making a lot of open shots," Lappe said. "The challenge is for someone to be courageous enough to step up and hit a couple of shots. The next player looks at that and says I can do the same thing, and the next player says that, and the next . . ."

Consecutive home losses last week to California and No. 4 Stanford dropped CU into a five-way tie for fifth with ASU, Arizona, Washington and UCLA. All have 2-3 conference records. Overall, ASU is 11-5 and Arizona 13-4. CU has lost three of its past four games, but Lappe believes her team's resiliency will be apparent on the trip to Kresl's home state.

"Our players know what it takes to win and how to win," Lappe said. "It's a big trip for us and a couple of very big games for Lexy. Arizona State is right in her backyard and Arizona is 90 miles up the road. I know she'll be ready to go, playing in front of friends and family. It should be a fun experience; I know it means a lot to her."

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