

Women's basketball: CU Buffs searching for confidence

Lappe's squad struggling to score

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 01/21/2012 05:56:42 PM MST

The early part of this season brought few concerns about offense for the Colorado women's basketball team.

Led by junior point guard Chucky Jeffery, the Buffaloes knew they had plenty of weapons to put the ball in the basket.

Now that they've lost three games in a row and four out of five, the Buffs (13-4, 2-4 Pac-12) are dealing with an unexpected problem.

Their offense is suddenly low on ammunition.

"Yeah, our offense has to get better," head coach Linda Lappe said as her team prepared for Sunday's game at Arizona (13-5, 2-4). "We have to simplify some things. We have to become better passers. As a staff we've been challenged. We want to really put our players where they can be successful."

CU had little trouble scoring during non-conference play, posting 69.5 points per game. Yet, in six conference games the Buffs have averaged 55.7 points, ranking 10th in the Pac-12.

The past three games have been particularly demoralizing for the offense. Against Cal on Jan. 12, the Buffs were outscored 29-4 in the last 12 minutes, and 17-0 in the last 7 minutes.

Then, they opened up against Stanford with zero points in the first 6:59. It took 8:15 to hit their first field goal.

The Buffs followed that up with a historically bad first half against Arizona State on Thursday. CU was scoreless for the first 8:17 and didn't get a field goal until 12:16 into the contest. They finished with a team-record low of nine points in the half, going into the break with a 42-9 deficit.

"It's just a lot of little things," Lappe said of the scoring woes. "I don't know that there's anything major, but a lot of little things that we have to clean up that have maybe gotten away from us in the last three games."

Even Jeffery has struggled, scoring a total of 11 points in the past two games combined. She's not alone. Freshman Lexy Kresl has lost her scoring touch. Junior Meagan Malcolm-Peck has struggled with her shot all season. And senior Julie Seabrook, who opened Pac-12 play by averaging 15.3 points in the first three games has slipped to 5.7 in the last three.

Failing to hit the basket isn't the only issue with the offense, though. The Buffs are averaging a conference-high 19.0 turnovers per game and they have a conference-worst .582 free-throw percentage.

Jeffery believes the main problem is on defense. The Buffs aren't as sharp on that end of the floor as they were early in the season and that really has been the catalyst to their offense.

After the dismal first half at ASU, the Buffs were aggressive on defense in the second and subsequently outscored the Sun Devils 34-22 after intermission.

"What sprung it was our defense," Jeffery said. "We got steals, we got some easy transition layups and that gave us confidence and then we came down and we started hitting shots out of our offense."

Confidence is part of what carried CU to a 12-0 start this season. That confidence has taken a major hit lately, though.

"We really do need to have a good game to fully get our confidence back," Seabrook said. "We had a great practice (Friday) and I think everyone's spirits are pretty high. We are all here wanting to get better."

If CU does get better, it may look back at halftime in Tempe on Thursday as the turning point. They were completely embarrassed as they sat in the locker room that day.

"We said, 'This ends here,'" Seabrook said. "We really sat down and talked as a team and figured out what we need to do to be successful and what we've done in the past to be successful."

The Buffs have found the formula for success in the past. Now, it's a matter of rediscovering it.

"It's a long season, but I think we're ready to move on," Lappe said. "We're ready to get back to where we were."

Close Window

Send To Printer