



CU coach Linda Lappe wants her season to continue into spring break week.
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



Brooks: Buffs Hoping To Spend Spring Break In WNIT

Release: 03/21/2012 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER - Spring break begins this weekend on the Colorado campus, but women's basketball coach Linda Lappe is hoping her players want no part of it.

March is trickling toward its final week, but Lappe's team is still playing. CU can extend its season even further with a win Thursday (7 p.m., Coors Events Center) against Villanova in the third round of the WNIT. If there's any spring break traveling to be done (Lappe, of course, would prefer another home game) she hopes the Buffs do it en masse . . . going as a team to another WNIT site if that's what's required of them.

"I want us to get used to playing during spring break; it's always in March and we want to play through March," Lappe said Wednesday. "That's a good learning experience for us. It's exciting to be playing through spring break."

CU (20-13) advanced with first- and second-round WNIT wins against Northern Colorado (54-42) and at South Dakota (64-55), respectively. Villanova (19-14) moved on via victories against American University (58-39) and at Illinois State (58-55).

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The Wildcats could be without leading scorer (14.4 points) and rebounder (7.6) Laura Sweeney, a 6-2 junior. She suffered a hand injury in Villanova's first-round win against American University and did not play at Illinois State.

Villanova is listing Sweeney's status as doubtful, but Lappe said her team would be "ready either way . . . their system doesn't change. They (isolated) her a little and she probably runs their spread offense a little better than some other players. But they all do the same thing. One player going out - even though it's their leading scorer - doesn't affect them as much as some other teams when their leading scorer would go out."

Villanova's spread offense system is the product of longtime coach Harry Perretta, who is in his 34th season at the Pennsylvania school. To put the length of his tenure in perspective, he was in the latter part of his second season as Villanova's coach when Lappe was born (Feb. 26, 1980). Perretta entered this season needing two victories to become the 35th women's coach to reach the 600-win plateau and only the seventh at one school in Division I. Perretta got No. 600 two games into the season. His record: 617-392.

With Sweeney's probable absence, Lappe expects a "chess match" with Perretta: "He'll get the pieces in place that he wants and kind of run his offense from there. He'll do that maybe a little more when (Sweeney) is out - and again, she's only been out for a game and a half, so it's a little tough to tell."

A Perretta-Lappe sidebar: Perretta has a 3-1 record against CU, with one of the wins knocking Lappe and her final Buffs teams out of the 2003 NCAA Tournament in Knoxville, Tenn. Lappe's memory of that game's details isn't vivid, but she does recall, "It was a tough game to go out on. They do some very similar things (now) - different players but the same system and they really execute it."

Some of CU's current players are aware of the Lappe-Perretta connection. "I've been hearing something about them putting coach Lappe and Sabrina (Scott) out of the Sweet 16, so it's going to be a good game for us to try and help coach Lappe, in a sense, get them back," said CU sophomore guard Brittany Wilson. "But I think it's more about us, our defense and securing our home court. I'm pretty sure they're a good team; no team has won two games and isn't a good team at this point."

She said even though the Buffs came up short of some of their season expectations - finishing 10th in the Pac-12 and not making the NCAA Tournament, to name two - they are relishing a chance to finish strong. "We've come out and showed we're not your average tenth-place team," she said. "We can really play, and I feel like the last seven or eight games we've pushed our will, we've shown people we can really play and that Colorado basketball is actually back. It's a great experience to bring the tradition back to this school."

The Wildcats will be the best beyond-the-arc bunch the Buffs have faced this season. They averaged nine made three-pointers during Big East Conference play, with six players hitting 20 or more treys in Villanova's 33 games. Redshirt freshman forward Lauren Burford topped the Wildcats, making 62-of-150 (41 percent) from beyond the arc, with junior guard Rachel Roberts next at 56-of-140 (40 percent). As a team, Villanova shoots 33 percent (269-of-796) from three-point range.

Said Lappe: "If your hands aren't up and they're open, they make them. You have to make them miss."

In its two WNIT games, CU experienced wild swings in the turnover department. Against UNC, the Buffs committed 27 turnovers; against South Dakota, they cut that total to a season-low nine - and three of that total came in succession to open the second half. Lappe's explanation: "I think we were mentally focused for South Dakota. It was tough getting back into it for Northern Colorado, just because it felt like we hadn't played for a long time . . . now it feels like we're back into the groove of things, we're getting our routine down again. It was just a matter of being very sloppy in one game and very focused in the next."

CU averages 17.1 turnovers, Villanova 12.1. Lappe has cautioned her players that the Wildcats are "disciplined and don't make many mistakes. They have good players within a good system . . . they shoot, handle the ball and pass. I told our team that only good *teams* beat this team - not good individuals, not everybody on their own page. It takes a team effort to beat this team."

At South Dakota, recalled Brittany Wilson, Lappe rekindled the Buffs' confidence with a pregame locker room talk in which she said the home team appeared shaken: "When we went to the locker room (pregame) she told us she could tell they were totally scared, just in the way they were warming up. Whether she really saw that or not, we took it to heart and came out wanted to put the dagger in them early . . . we felt pretty confident."

At 4-1 in their past five games, the Buffs have rediscovered enough confidence and ramped up their defense in an up-and-down season to be successful. Their lone senior, Julie Seabrook, said it's the kind of finish teams always envision: "Everyone hopes to be playing your best basketball at this time of year. All your practices and all the hard work leads up to this, hoping you're going to make postseason play."

"We've kind of been up-and-down this year. Last year, we kind of peaked during this time; this year has been a little bit different. We were playing well going into the Pac-12 tournament, then we kind of had a lull, then we started to kind of pick up again."

Lappe called her team's defense over the past two weeks "pretty solid, but these guys (Villanova) test it and that's what's going to be really fun . . . you want this team at the end of the year when hopefully you're at your best defensively. And I think we're (there) as maybe compared to what we were in February or January or before. So this is a good time to be playing these guys."

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Women's basketball: CU Buffs set to face hot-shooting Villanova in WNIT

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

Posted: 03/21/2012 10:27:50 PM MDT

CU women's basketball preview

THURSDAY: The Colorado Buffaloes (20-13) host the Villanova Wildcats (19-14) in a 7 p.m. game at Coors Events Center in Boulder.

BROADCAST: Radio - KKZN 760 AM, with Mike Rice doing play-by-play and Carol Callan with color commentary. A free live video stream is available on BuffsTV at www.cubuffs.com

STORYLINES: This is the third round of the Women's NIT. ... The winner will face the winner of tonight's Missouri State at Oklahoma State game. ... CU is 9-3 all-time in the WNIT, including 7-3 in Boulder. ... The Buffs are 31-19 in postseason play. ... CU averaged 60.8 points per game, while Villanova averages 58.0 per game. ... The Wildcats will likely play without top scorer and rebounder Laura Sweeney (14.4 ppg, 7.6 rpg). Sweeney injured her hand in Villanova's first-round win against American and is "extremely doubtful" for tonight, according to the team's sports information department. ... Villanova is one of the top 3-point shooting teams in the country, averaging 8.2 successful 3-pointers per game. ... This is CU's first game against a Big East school since an 80-54 win over Seton Hall on Dec. 6, 2009, in Boulder. CU is 11-8 against the Big East. ... CU's Meagan Malcolm-Peck needs two 3-pointers to become the 12th Buffs to hit 80 in her career.

KEY STAT: This season, Villanova has made 269 3-

Colorado's women's basketball team has gone up against teams that like to shoot the 3-pointer.

Oregon hit 7.7 3-pointers per game this season; Arizona made 6.3 per contest.

What the Buffs (20-13) see Thursday night from Villanova, however, will be different. The Wildcats (19-14) have connected on 8.2 3-pointers a game this season and they shoot 24.1 times per game from beyond the arc.

"This is the best 3-point shooting team that we've faced and probably will face all season long," CU head coach Linda Lappe said. "That's what they try to get. They run a lot of things to get open 3s. If your hands aren't up and if they're open, they make them."

CU allowed 10 3-pointers in a loss to Oregon on March 1 and 11 3-pointers in a win over Weber State on Dec. 17. Villanova has connected on 10 or more 3s in nine different games and finished nine in four others.

"We haven't seen that yet so far, so that'll be a big change for us," CU freshman Jasmine Sborov said. "We just have to really stay focused on our principles and not get caught up watching the ball. They're just spotting up and ready to shoot 3s."

Villanova, in addition to shooting 3-pointers, is a solid defensive team. The good news for CU is that during its current 4-1 stretch, the Buffs have defeated four defensive-minded teams. That means the Buffs are doing good things on defense, too.

After struggling during the middle of the season, the Buffs are back to being aggressive on defense, going after loose balls, etc., Sborov said.

"Now that we have that (intensity) back, it's definitely taken us to the next level," she said.

Facing Villanova will provide another challenge and perhaps the biggest one yet, because the Wildcats have great discipline. They've averaged just 12.1 turnovers per game (five less than CU).

"I feel like our defense has been pretty solid, but these guys test it," Lappe said. "That's what is going to be really fun. I think it's going to be a lot of fun for our players, I think it's fun for our staff."

"You want this team at the end of the year when hopefully you're at your best defensively, and I think we're at our best defensively."

Painful memory

Lappe's last game as a CU player came against Villanova, and it didn't end well.

pointers in 796 attempts (33.8 percent). By comparison, CU, which also shoots the 3 a lot, has 166 in 573 attempts (29.0 percent).

COACHES: Linda Lappe is 38-29 in her second season at CU and 87-65 overall. Harry Perretta is 617-392 in his 34th season at Villanova and overall.

PROBABLE STARTERS:

Colorado - G Brittany Wilson, 5-7, So., 9.1 ppg, 3.1 rpg, 1.8 apg; G Chucky Jeffery, 5-10, Jr., 15.5 ppg, 7.6 rpg, 3.7 apg; G Jasmine Sborov, 6-1, Fr., 2.8 ppg, 2.9 rpg; G/F Meagan Malcolm-Peck, 6-2, Jr., 4.1 ppg, 4.3 rpg; F Julie Seabrook, 6-3, Sr., 7.2 ppg, 5.4 rpg. **Villanova** - G Rachel Roberts, 5-9, Jr., 8.7 ppg, 3.7 rpg, 56 3-pointers; G Jesse Carey, 5-10, Jr., 1.1 ppg, 1.9 rpg, 2.0 apg; G Lindsay Kimmel, 6-0, Sr., 4.1 ppg, 2.4 rpg; F Lauren Burford, 6-0, Fr., 8.4 ppg, 1.7 rpg, 62 3-pointers; F Taylor Holeman, 6-1, Fr., 2.1 ppg, 2.3 rpg.

SERIES: Villanova leads 3-1. CU won the most recent meeting, 64-58, on March 27, 2008, in the third round of the WNIT in Boulder. All four games have been decided by six points or less.

UP NEXT: : The winner will face either Oklahoma State or Missouri State in the WNIT quarterfinals.

Playing in the Sweet 16 round of the NCAA Tournament, Villanova knocked off CU 53-51 on March 29, 2003, in Knoxville, Tenn.

CU led 39-28 with 15:45 to play in the game, but Villanova turned it on after that. The Wildcats shut down the Buffs and starting draining 3s to pull off the win.

"The bottom line is they execute their system perfectly," Lappe was quoted in USA Today after the game. "They're in the elite eight. I'd say they're a pretty dang good team."

Villanova head coach Harry Parretta led the 'Cats to that win, and he still leads them today. He also still runs the spread offense that gave CU and so many other teams fits back in 2003.

This week, Lappe said she still remembers preparing to play that offense. She, painfully, remembers how things turned sour that night. She also remembers it was how her college career ended.

"Last game of your career, you're going to remember it more no matter who it is," she said.

Notable

In the WNIT opener, CU matched its season high with 27 turnovers. In the second round against South Dakota, the Buffs had a season-low nine. "It was just a matter of being very sloppy in one game and being very mentally focused in the next," Lappe said. ... CU is one of three Pac-12 teams still playing. Stanford is a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament, while Washington defeated Oregon State on Tuesday to become the first team into the WNIT quarterfinals. ... Tonight's projected starters are Chucky Jeffery, Brittany Wilson, Meagan-Malcolm-Peck, Julie Seabrook and Jasmine Sborov. CU is 4-2 with that combination in the lineup. ... CU shot 40.3 percent from the floor in Monday's win at South Dakota. The Buffs are 14-0 when shooting at least 40 percent, but have hit that mark just five times in the past 22 games.

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Women's basketball: CU Buffs' Brittany Wilson finally finds consistency

Sophomore averaging 16.0 ppg during last four games

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

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There have been plenty of times this season when Brittany Wilson has come up big for the Colorado Buffaloes.

She had 22 points in a season-opening win against Northern Arizona. She had 13 and then 14 in wins over Weber State and Utah, respectively. She hit for 21 points in a win over Southern Cal.

It hasn't been until recently, however, that Wilson has given the Buffs (20-13) a steady threat on offense.

"It's been my focus since the beginning of this year, but it hasn't really gone so consistent," the sophomore guard said. "I feel like (lately) I've just been taking the shots they've been giving me and driving when I'm able to and it's just been working out."

In the past four games, during which CU is 3-1, Wilson has averaged 16.0 points per game while connecting on 45 percent of her shots. It's the first time in her career that she has scored in double figures in four straight games.

"She's doing a great job and she's scoring in a lot of different ways, which is good," CU head coach Linda Lappe said. "It makes her tougher to guard."

The Buffs need Wilson to keep it up as they continue their run through the Women's NIT. They host Villanova (19-14) Thursday night at 7 p.m. in the third round.

"I knew this year in order for us to win games I'd have to be a consistent scorer," Wilson said. "Better late than never."

Junior guard Chucky Jeffery has been CU's top scorer all year and currently posts 15.5 points per game. During CU's rough 1-9 stretch during the latter part of Pac-12 play, however, Jeffery didn't have a lot of help.

Even Wilson struggled mightily. After her 21-point game against Southern Cal, she averaged just 5.1 points over the next 10 games. Only once did she score more than seven in that stretch.

That lack of a second scorer hurt Jeffery, as well, but she's flourished right along with Wilson in the past four games, averaging 17.0 points on 47-percent shooting.

"Those two together make us a tough team to guard, especially from the guard position," Lappe said. "The more scorers we have the better for (Jeffery) because she feels more confident in not having to do everything."

"(Wilson) has been more and more consistent and that's something hopefully she can take into her junior year."

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The change for Wilson? Not much really. She said there's maybe a little more focus or a little more work in the gym, but not much.

"It's just being aggressive more, I would say," she said.

Wilson has often looked for the outside shot before looking inside. Lately, however, she's taken the ball to the rim first. She's been to the free-throw line 20 times in the past four games after getting there just 27 times during the entire 18-game Pac-12 schedule.

"I like Brittany's aggressiveness right now and she's doing a great job of not settling for the outside shot," Lappe said.

It isn't just Wilson's scoring that has been stellar lately. She's averaging 4.5 rebounds (her season average is 3.1) and 2.0 steals (season average is 1.3) in the past four games, as well.

The scoring is what CU has really needed, however. With Wilson and Jeffery combining as a serious 1-2 threat, the Buffs are on a roll.

"It's been fun," Wilson said. "It's getting my confidence up. I knew I had it, but I just had to bring it out."

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