



*Coach Linda Lappe wants a stronger January-February next season.*  
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



## Brooks: Lappe Wants Next Season Good Start To Finish

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**BOULDER** - The 2011-12 Colorado women's basketball season was bookended by the precise brands of on-court confidence and success that second-year coach Linda Lappe envisioned. It was those middle chapters - specifically, lapses in January and February - that she hopes the Buffaloes can rewrite in her third year on the job.

Lappe's second CU team closed out its season last Sunday afternoon with a 78-70 WNIT quarterfinal loss at Oklahoma State. It was the Buffs' second consecutive WNIT appearance under Lappe, who recorded the first 20-win season (21-14) of her five-year head coaching career. In her two seasons at CU, she's 39-30, with the arrow pointing up.

The Buffs opened 2011-12 with a 12-game winning streak, tying the second-best start in school history, and closed it by winning five of their final seven - including three in the WNIT. Perfect start, good finish . . . but in-between there were losing streaks of three, three and five games that all but neutralized that 12-0 start and helped plunge their first Pac-12 Conference record to 6-12 (10th place).

CU's January-February record was 4-11 (3-5 in January, 1-6 in February), and as she reviews this season and plans for next, the results of those two months are in obvious need of an upgrade.

"All in all, it was a good season . . . as a coach, you always want it to be better," Lappe said in her office on

Wednesday morning. "But I think toward the end of the season we maximized our potential. Toward the middle of the season, I didn't feel like (that) . . . but I thought we had a great beginning and a great end. The key going forward will be to help that middle portion of it - then you have a really good team.

"I think by Oklahoma State we maximized our potential; we played about as well as we could have played - especially on the offensive end. Defensively, maybe we could have been a little better. But I thought all of our players played hard, we were into it, we were motivated - all the things you want to see at the end of a season."

In consecutive seasons under Lappe, the Buffs have developed a sense of urgency in March. Not waiting that long next season, she said, requires "a change of mentality" that will help them achieve one of her goals - to reach the NCAA Tournament rather than settle for another WNIT appearance.

"One of my goals was making it to the NCAA Tournament if not by the second year, then certainly by the third and fourth year," she said. "Part of that is how we perform in the middle of the season. Everybody is ready to go at the beginning of the season (and) anybody can play at the end of the season if they're playing like it's their last game.

"The challenge becomes, can we play like it's one-and-done in January and February? Essentially, if you're trying to get to the NCAA Tournament, it is a one-and-done scenario. As a player and coach, you have to have that mindset; you have to put yourself into that. If you don't have it is one-and-done.

"Until players really understand that and can see it, it's hard to convey . . . every year you have freshmen - we played a lot of freshmen - and they don't quite understand that. I thought the returners understood it because they had done the same thing the year before. But that's going to be a huge challenge for us next year as we try to get into the NCAA Tournament. You can't have slipups in January and February. You have to beat people you should beat; you have to win home games you should win.

"You hope as players get older they realize that, and it becomes easier to play with that sense of urgency in January and February. I would hope that, but sometimes until you've actually been there it's hard to understand exactly what it takes and what kind of teams get to the NCAA Tournament. It's not by happenstance; there are steps along the way in order for that to become a reality."

The 2011-12 Buffs did accomplish this goal: Find a way to win on the road. Lappe's first CU team was 3-10 away from the Coors Events Center (3-8 at other campus sites, 0-2 at neutral sites). Her second CU team went 9-8 away from the CEC (6-7, 3-1), and Lappe calls that "one of the biggest steps I wanted us to make from year one to year two . . . in order to be a tournament team you've got to win on the road. That's what saved us this year; we probably wouldn't have made the WNIT had we not won all those games on the road. I thought the confidence our team showed, the toughness going on the road was kind of the difference in our season and a big difference from year one to year two."

The Buffs lose only one senior - forward Julie Seabrook - and will gain a three-member 2012 recruiting class ranked as high as No. 20 nationally. Coming aboard this summer will be Lauren Huggins, a 6-1 wing from Littleton (Heritage High School); Jamee Swan, a 6-2 forward from Tucson; and Kyleesha Weston, a 5-7 point guard from Kansas City, Mo. Also, Arielle Roberson, a 6-1 forward from San Antonio who signed in 2011, will be available after sitting out this season following hip surgery.

Individual player meetings are scheduled with 11 returnees next week when classes resume after spring break. That total, including Roberson, features a pair of seniors-to-be (Chucky Jeffery, Meagan Malcolm-Peck), juniors Ashley and Brittany Wilson, Brenna Malcolm-Peck and Rachel Hargis; and sophomores Lexy Kresl, Jasmine Sborov, Jen Reese and Esther Lee.

The Buffs' 15 three-pointers in the season-ending loss at OSU were a season high and the second-most in school history. But their undoing came inside, both offensively and defensively. CU was without the 6-2 Reese (facial surgery for a cracked orbital bone) for the Pac-12 tournament and the WNIT, and Lappe expects her return and the addition of Roberson and Swan to make the Buffs stronger inside and more athletic.

Lappe calls Swan "more of a 'four' player who can also play the 'five' . . . Arielle as well. We need help in getting offensive rebound put-backs; both of them are very good finishing around the rim and I feel like that's something we lacked this year - finishing easy shots around the rim.

"In the games we lost that we should have won - did we make our free throws and did we make our easy shots? In all those games, you can look back and say that was one huge deficiency we had. Jamee's strong and can rebound . . . (Roberson and Swan) gives us two players we currently don't have. That's important as you build a team.

"Our athleticism will go up, and that's something we definitely need. But at the same time, we talk to our players about it not only being about athleticism, but being smart and playing hard. Those two things can outweigh a team's athleticism. But if those players bring that - which I think they will - then that's when we become a real special team."

"A real special team" also needs leadership such as Seabrook provided this season, and Lappe believes her returning upperclassmen and a couple of sophomores-to-be can provide it. She said the expected leadership roles of Jeffery and Meagan Malcolm-Peck will differ and that a "few of our freshmen have strong personalities" and have observed "how to lead and how this team needs to run, what (it) needs to look like to be successful."

Next season's Buffs, said Lappe, should benefit "tremendously" from having been through a Pac-12 season. "We'll know exactly what to expect. Our players will know other teams. We as a coaching staff will know other coaching staffs in the Pac-12. It is huge. We know what to expect from the pace of play, the officials . . . just so many variables that change conference to conference. It's just a lot different. I think that will be key in not only how we play next year, but how we recruit in future years."

Lappe doesn't expect any staff changes, but all head coaches cite the unpredictability of their profession. She believes she and her assistants have "different personalities" but have meshed successfully. "Everybody brings a little something different . . . and we work well together in recruiting. It's been good. Hopefully we stay together."

From a personal goal standpoint, Lappe wants to make the offense "a little more consistent" and help the players develop confidence on that end of the floor. That can be done, she said, by implementing the offense earlier in the season.

"Now that we've found an offense that will work for future years, it's one of the things that from year one to year two we didn't do a great job of having a set offense," she said. "But from here going forward, for myself, I think being confident in our offense and knowing these are the sets that are going to help our kids score, these are the looks we want get and here's how we break it down, here's what we need to work on in September in order to be ready for November, December and January. That's going to be a huge thing."

After consecutive WNIT bids, the urgency to join the 2013 NCAA Tournament field should be heightened. But the value of merely playing in the postseason can't be understated, noted Lappe: "I think it's important that our team has wanted to keep playing after the season's been over. That's an important part, too, and I think that tells you a lot about the character of our players, for them to want to continue to play and get better and win games. I think that shows a lot."

And it leaves, of course, that much more to be shown.

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# Linda Lappe feels CU Buffs moving in right direction

## Malcolm-Peck eyes NCAA Tournament berth next season

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

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When Linda Lappe was hired as the head coach of the Colorado women's basketball team, she spoke about a desire to return the Buffaloes to the NCAA Tournament.

It's been nearly two years since she was introduced as the head coach on April 12, 2010. CU has not yet made it to the NCAA Tournament, but Lappe has the Buffs much closer today than they were two years ago.

"We are headed in the right direction," she said. "I think this year was a big step in going in the right direction."

Realistically, Lappe knew getting CU to The Dance wouldn't be an overnight process. She took over a program coming off a 13-17 season, which was preceded by an 11-18 season. In fact, in the six years before Lappe was hired, CU was 74-107 with five losing seasons.

"I really thought the first two years, if we could get to the postseason, WNIT, that was going to be a huge step for us," Lappe said.

Two years in, Lappe certainly seems to have the ship righted. CU went 21-14 this season -- its best win total since going 22-8 in 2003-04 -- and made a second consecutive run to the WNIT quarterfinals.

"I feel like we've made major strides in the two years that she's been here," junior forward Meagan Malcolm-Peck said. "You can always be happy with your season if you keep improving. The last five games, our team definitely kept improving and was happy to have some kind of postseason play, at least."

This season, the Buffaloes saw a standout player (Chucky Jeffery) emerge as a star player; a pair of sophomores (Brittany Wilson and Ashley Wilson) grow into and excel in their roles; and a trio of freshmen (Lexy Kresl, Jen Reese and Jasmine Sborov) go from wide-eyed newcomers to valuable contributors.

Senior Julie Seabrook also became a remarkable leader for a young team that desperately needed one.

"It's going to be a challenge for us to replace some of the things that Julie brought," Lappe said. "Her attitude, her communication and her love for wanting to get better."

Overall, from Game 1 to Game 35, the Buffaloes did exactly what coaches wanted them to do: they got better.

"It's night and day," Lappe said. "Sometimes I go back and look at the first game and see the difference in our team. I like how we ended and when you end like we did you can feel good going into the (offseason) and you really build on what you accomplished."

It wasn't a perfect season, by any means, although it started out that way. The Buffs began 12-0 for just the third time in program history, and for the first time since 1992-93. They followed that, however, by winning just four of their next 16 games before finishing 5-2 in the last seven.

Along the way, the Buffs lost too many at home (12-6), but learned how to win on the road (9-8). The Buffs hadn't won more than four games away from Boulder since 2003-04.

"That was an important step for us to take this season," Lappe said.

CU has improved in other areas, as well, since Lappe took over. CU's average attendance (2,679) increased by 879 fans per game this year. The Buffs also signed a recruiting class that, in November, was ranked No. 20 in the country by

[ESPN.com's](#) HoopGurlz.

"(Two years ago) I thought if we could increase our recruiting and increase our attendance, those were going to be two things that were going to help us down the road and we did both of those," Lappe said.

Now it's time for another step. Seabrook is the only player from this year's team that graduates and with a top-20 recruiting class coming in, it stands to reason that the Buffs will be better in 2012-13.

How much better?

"I definitely think we should go to the NCAA Tournament and do very well in the Pac-12," Malcolm-Peck said.

"Everybody -- players and coaches -- have in mind what the end goal is and it's trying to get better every year and we're not satisfied yet."

Lappe said her ultimate plan was to get better every year. Her Buffs have done that and she said, "I feel good as we go into the future."

Yet, if one year from now the Buffs are talking about another great WNIT run, Malcolm-Peck said that will be a disappointment.

"(The NCAA Tournament) is where everyone wants to go and I think everyone is going to push hard to get there," she said. "I don't think we want to look at the option of not."

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# Women's basketball: Five questions facing the CU Buffs

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

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Here are five questions about the Colorado women's basketball team as it looks ahead.

## 1. Will the Buffs have the personnel to develop a solid post game?

Against teams with good post players, CU got pushed around and didn't score much. That was especially exploited in the 78-70 loss to Oklahoma State in the WNIT quarterfinals, when the Cowgirls outscored CU 44-14 in the paint.

There appears to be help on the way. Freshman Arielle Roberson, a 6-foot-1 forward, missed the entire season with a back injury. Some have compared her game that of her brother, Andre, who stars for the CU men's team. Jamee Swan, a 6-foot-2 forward from Tucson, Ariz., is one of the three members of CU's top-20 recruiting class and she'll be depended on right away.

"Those two really finish well around the rim," coach Linda Lappe said of Roberson and Swan. "That's one of the things that I don't think we did well this year."

In addition to Roberson and Swan, Lappe is hoping veterans Jen Reese, Meagan Malcolm-Peck and Rachel Hargis will improve during the offseason.

## 2. Aside from a post game, where does CU need to improve?

Turnovers were a big problem this season. The Buffs averaged 17 per game and had at least 20 on nine different occasions.

"We all need to get better with our ball handling and passing," Lappe said. "We had way too many turnovers for much of the season. For the most part, we're not comfortable enough with the ball in our hands. That's player 1 through player 12.

"Once we get better at that, I think we'll become a much better team," she said.

The addition of incoming freshman Kyleesha Weston, a true point guard, could help in that area next season.

## 3. Who will step into Julie Seabrook's leadership role?

The two seniors-to-be, Chucky Jeffery and Meagan Malcolm-Peck, would seem to be natural fits for leadership roles. However, both Lappe and Malcolm-Peck mentioned Lexy Kresl, coming off a fine freshman year, as having the ability to be an emotional leader and calming presence.

"I feel like Lexy can come in and bring some of those things (that Seabrook brought)," Lappe said.

## 4. Can Chucky Jeffery get even better?

Definitely.

Overall, her numbers weren't much different than they were a year ago. In 2010-11, she averaged 13.5 points and 7.9 rebounds. This year, she averaged 15.5 points and 8.0 rebounds. What Jeffery did, however, was emerge as CU's star.

She took a backseat to Brittany Spears for two years and Lappe said Jeffery had always shined in the "underdog" role. This year, Jeffery learned that she can be the "top dog" and still excel.

"That was a huge transformation for her this year," Lappe said.

Going into next year, the Buffs hope Jeffery can shine even more in that star role and become an even better all-around player.

"The important thing for Chucky, she's got to figure out where she wants to go," Lappe said. "How good does she want to be? And, then let our staff help her get to that point."

#### **5. How much will youth play a role in CU's 2012-13 season?**

Quite a bit, actually.

Of the nine players that saw significant time on the floor this season, three were freshmen and three were sophomores. Two of those freshmen -- Lexy Kresl and Jen Reese -- wound up finishing in the top four in scoring. The other -- Jasmine Sborov -- was probably the most improved player on the team and wound up starting the last nine games.

Combined, the three freshmen started 30 games.

"They progressed faster because they were thrown into the fire," Lappe said. "They were sinking for a while and then figured out how to swim and how to help our team."

The three sophomores -- Ashley and Brittany Wilson and Rachel Hargis -- had 43 starts.

All six figure to play key roles again next year, while all three incoming freshmen (Swan, Weston and Lauren Huggins) will be expected to contribute, as well.

"Our freshmen have to come in ready to go," Lappe said.

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