



CU guard Brittany Wilson led a first-half surge Wednesday night in the Pac-12 tournament.
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



Brooks: Buffs Use Big First Half To Roll Utes

Release: 03/07/2012 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

LOS ANGELES - After a disheartening drop during the midsection of the regular season, the Colorado Buffaloes appear to be back on the ascent - and the timing couldn't be better.

Showing the same steady improvement that second-year coach Linda Lappe has detected over the past 21/2 weeks, the Buffs cruised to a 19-point first half lead on Wednesday night and eliminated Utah 55-41 in the first round of the Pac-12 Conference women's basketball tournament.

No. 10 seed CU (18-12) plays No. 2 seed California on Thursday (6 p.m., MST) at USC's Galen Center. The Bears swept the Buffs during the regular season.

With their convincing 10-point win against Oregon State in their final regular-season game, the Buffs now have won back-to-back games for the first time since late January. But Lappe

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Statistics

insisted her team's improvement has "not only been in the last two (games), but probably the last five or six. We gained confidence at Stanford and at California (both losses) and against Oregon State we saw everything put together.



"We're limiting our mental mistakes and staying steady with that. We're not getting tired mentally or physically."

At the outset, the Buffs were fresh, physical and at times frenetically good on Wednesday against the No. 7 seed Utes, whose regular-season visit to Boulder resulted in an overtime loss for the home team. Utah (15-15) was more physical in that game, and CU was determined to flip that in the Pac-12 tournament. And that's how it happened.

"We didn't let their physicality bother us, that was the biggest difference in this game and the last one," Lappe said.

Utah coach Anthony Levrets agreed: "Colorado took us out of what we do; they sped us up and were clearly the aggressor. They were the better team tonight."

Indeed, it was all CU, almost all the time.

Brittany Wilson led the Buffs with 21 points - 18 in the first half - and Chucky Jeffery added 20 - 14 in the second half. Jeffery also collected 14 rebounds for her 17th career double-double.

"Our game plan was to attack the rim," Jeffery said. "We changed it up a little (from the last meeting) . . . we wanted to attack as much as we could."

CU trailed three times early in the first half, falling behind 3-0 on a three-pointer by Cheyenne Wilson on the game's first possession. But that basket and the opening six minutes were in no way indicative of what was coming.

After Utah's Wilson hit another trey to put her team up 10-8, CU took control with its pair of Wilsons - twins Brittany and Ashley, of nearby Long Beach. Brittany, who had scored CU's first seven points, hit a short jumper to tie the score at 10-10 - and the Buffs kept on going . . . and going.

After Cheyenne Wilson's trey with just over 14 minutes left before intermission, Utah didn't get another field goal until the half's final minute. During that span, CU launched a 22-1 run and shot ahead 30-11.

Forward Taryn Wicijowski, who led the Utes with 18 points, worked inside for a pair of baskets in the last minute, drawing the Utes to 32-15 at halftime. But the first 20 minutes were a nightmare for Utah, which hit only six of its 26 field goal attempts (23.1 percent) and went 13 minutes minus a field goal. The Utes' 15 points were the lowest by a Buffs opponent since the 1997 team held Iowa State to 12 in that season's Big 12 tournament.

But could CU keep the hammer down and the intensity up in the second half?

After the Buffs missed their first two shots and the Utes hit their first two, Lappe called a timeout with 18:27 remaining. The Buffs came out of it . . . and missed another shot.

Utah got one of two free throws from Michelle Plouffe before Julie Seabrook banked in a short jumper from the right side for CU's first points of the half at the 17:30 mark. The Buffs led 34-20, then 36-20 when Jeffery hit a runner from the right baseline.

Had order (for CU) been restored?

Temporarily. But the Buffs were being semi-abused inside by the 6-3 Wicijowski, who scored seven of the Utes'

first 10 points in the second half and brought her team to within 38-25 with just under 15 minutes to play. When she hit a pair of free throws about 8 minutes later, Utah cut the deficit to seven (43-36).

Were the Buffs worried? Not a bit, said Brittany Wilson: "No . . . we knew they're we were waiting for their run (and) we were waiting to make our run. You don't get nervous."

The Buffs didn't and immediately answered, getting one of two free throws from Jeffery, a Jeffery layup and a two free throws by Brittany Wilson to restore a 12-point lead (48-36) with 4:26 left.

Utah never got closer than 11 the rest of the way, with Jeffery hitting seven of eight free throws in the final 2:52 to seal it.

Lappe called the Buffs' defensive effort "really solid, and I thought that helped us get the victory . . . I thought our team did a lot of nice things from the start. We had a little trouble scoring (to start), but I loved the lead we were able to get by halftime. Then we fought back when (Utah) rallied and hit some free throws."

In their game against Cal in Boulder, the Buffs owned a 12-point lead with about 12 minutes left in the second half. They wound up losing 68-55. Cal won 64-43 in Berkeley.

Lappe called the Bears "a solid team, they play lot of players . . . just keep bring them off the bench." Protecting the ball, she said, will be critical Thursday night: "At their place, they hurt us with their press . . . turnovers lead to layups against Cal. But I like what we're doing now; we're in a good spot."

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Brittany Wilson sparks CU women in win over Utah

Bufs earn first conference tourney win since 2007

Buffzone.com staff report
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:03/07/2012 08:05:41 PM MST

LOS ANGELES -- For just the second time as a college player, Brittany Wilson got a chance to play in her hometown.

She looked mighty comfortable in leading the Colorado women's basketball team to a 55-41 win over Utah in the first round of the Pac-12 Tournament at the Galen Center.

Wilson scored 21 points, just one shy of her career high and 13 more than her season average, in helping CU to its first conference tournament win in five years.

"I don't think it made a difference with me being home or being in Colorado," she said. "It is great to be home, I love this place, I love California, but I knew we had to come home and get this win. I was willing to do whatever it took, whether it was defense, offense or whatever my team needed me to do."

Wilson started the game with a pair of 3-pointers and finished with 18 points in the first half alone. Junior Chucky Jeffery was stellar, as well, with her seventh double-double of the season. Jeffery had 20 points and 14 rebounds.

CU (18-12), which will face California (22-8) tonight, had its last conference tournament win in the first round of the 2007 Big 12 Tournament against Texas Tech.

"I thought our team did a lot of nice things tonight," head coach Linda Lappe said.

Especially in the first half. The pace was turtle slow early on. When Utah's Cheyenne Wilson drained a 3-pointer with 14 minutes, 26 seconds to go in the first half, it gave the Utes a 10-8 lead.

Utah (15-15) then went 9:03 without a point, but CU didn't do much to take advantage, scoring just eight points during the stretch.

"From the start, we had trouble scoring," Lappe said. "At the beginning of the game, missing a lot of easy shots, and then they started falling toward the end of the first half."

Utah broke its scoring drought with a free throw at the 5:23 mark, but went another 4:35 without a point after that. In all, CU went on a 22-1 run after Cheyenne Wilson's 3-pointer, taking its biggest lead all season against a Pac-12 team, 30-11.

Utah had just one point in a stretch of 13:38 and finished the first half 6-for-26 from the floor. CU led 32-15 at halftime, it's biggest halftime lead in Pac-12 play.

"I love the lead that we were able to build at the end of the first half," Lappe said. "I thought that was key as we headed into the second."

CU built its lead because it got aggressive on offense. Brittany Wilson, Ashley Wilson and Jeffery repeatedly went to the rim and took the ball right at the Utah defense.

"That was just the game plan, to come out and attack the rim," said Jeffery, who was 10-for-16 from the line, including 7-for-8 in the final three minutes. "We changed up our game plan a little bit. We knew that they weren't as good as they were before when we played them in transition defense, so we wanted to attack the rim as much as we could."

CU and Utah split their season series and both games came down to the wire, including Utah's 61-56 overtime win in Boulder on Feb. 18.

Utah threatened to push this one to the wire, too. The Utes' two front-court stars, Michelle Plouffe and Taryn Wicijowski, combined for 21 points during the first 15 minutes of the second half to cut the CU lead to seven, at 43-36.

CU closed strong, however, outscoring the Utes 12-5 in the final 5:13.

"We knew that they were going to go on their run and we had to go on ours and ours hadn't come yet (in the second half)," Brittany Wilson said. "We were just waiting for our run. You look up and see that it's down to seven, but you don't get nervous."

Coming into the game, CU was just 2-2 in Pac-12 games in which it had double-digit leads, so Lappe was pleased with how her team closed this one out.

"They came at us in the second half, but we fought back and hit some free throws down the stretch," she said. "Our defensive effort tonight was really, really solid and that's what helped us get the victory."

Utah's 41 points was the lowest total by a CU opponent since a 71-36 win over Denver on Dec. 8. The previous low for a CU opponent in Pac-12 play was Utah's 52 points in the conference opener on Dec. 31. CU was 0-8 was scoring 55 or fewer points in Pac-12 play before Wednesday.

"We know we needed this win," Ashley Wilson said on the KKZN post-game radio show. "It's a good win to build us up, get us going, lead one win into the next."

Colorado 55, Utah 41 COLORADO (55)

MIN FG 3PT FT Rb PF TP

MM-Peck 31 0-5 0-3 0-0 4 1 0

Seabrook 22 1-7 0-3 0-0 6 3 2

B. Wilson 32 6-13 3-6 6-8 5 3 21

Sborov 23 0-1 0-0 0-0 2 2 0

Jeffery 33 5-13 0-1 10-16 14 0 20

Kresl 27 1-5 0-2 2-2 3 2 4

A. Wilson 20 1-3 4-4 0-0 3 1 6

Hargis 12 1-4 0-0 0-0 3 2 2

Team 3

Totals 200 15-51 3-15 22-30 43 14 55

Assists (4): Seabrook, B. Wilson, Jeffery, A. Wilson.

Steals (8): B. Wilson 2, Jeffery 2, Seabrook, Sborov, Kresl, A. Wilson.

Turnovers (12): Jeffery 3, A. Wilson 3, B. Wilson 2, Sborov 2, Kresl, team.

Blocked shots (1): Kresl.

UTAH (41)

MIN FG 3PT FT Rb PF TP

Wicijowski 37 6-15 0-0 6-8 6 1 18

Plouffe 40 3-15 1-5 1-2 9 4 8

Rodrigues 29 0-10 0-4 2-2 6 3 2

Wilson 35 3-4 2-3 2-2 2 2 10

Messer 38 1-3 1-3 0-1 4 4 3

Bridgewater 8 0-2 0-0 0-0 1 1 0

Sitivi 10 0-2 0-0 0-0 1 2 0

Morris 3 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Team 6

Totals 200 13-51 4-15 11-15 35 17 41

Assists (5): Plouffe 3, Wicijowski, Rodrigues.

Steals (4): Plouffe 3, Wicijowski.

Turnovers (15): Plouffe 5, Wicijowski 3, Messer 3, Bridgewater 2, Wilson, Sitivi.

Blocked shots (4): Plouffe 3, Wicijowski.

Halftime score: Colorado 32, Utah 15.

Technical fouls -- None.

Attendance -- N/A.

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CU Buffs cruise into Pac-12 quarterfinals in women's basketball

Denver Post wire services The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

LOS ANGELES — Sophomore guard Brittany Wilson scored 21 points and junior guard Chucky Jeffery added 20 points and 14 rebounds Wednesday night, powering Colorado past Utah 55-41 in the first round of the women's Pac-12 Tournament.

The 10th-seeded Buffaloes (18-12), who had lost eight of nine games before winning their regular-season finale, play No. 2 seed California (22-8) in the quarterfinals today at 6 p.m.

CU used a 22-1 run to build a 30-11 lead over Utah (15-15) before settling for a 32-15 halftime advantage.

Wilson scored 18 points in the first half.

"I loved the lead we were able to build at the end of the first half and thought that was the key to winning," said CU coach Linda Lappe.

"(The Utes) are a solid team, well coached and came at us in the second half."

Jeffery scored 14 points in the second half.

The Utes never came closer than seven points.