

Bragging rights on the line for CU, CSU women

Bufs take on rival Rams today in women's basketball

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It can be difficult to generate motivation for non-conference games, considering some of the lesser-known, directional schools often on the schedule.

Colorado's women's basketball team shouldn't have any trouble with motivation today, however.

The Buffaloes (2-0) will visit in-state rival Colorado State (1-2) at 2 p.m. at Moby Arena in Fort Collins.

"It's always fun, an in-state rivalry and you've got all the hype coming in," CU junior Chucky Jeffery said. "We plan to show up and give them our best game."

Although Jeffery grew up in Colorado Springs, she didn't realize until coming to CU just how big this game is for the two schools.

"When I got here as a freshman, I knew how important it was to the team and the program to get that win," she said. "(The Rams) circle this day on their calendar. They're going to come at us full speed, scrap with us the whole game, play tough. They want to beat us and we know that. We have to prepare for that."

The Buffaloes have defeated Northern Arizona and Texas A&M-Corpus Christi to this point, but realize this one will have a different level of intensity.

"Any rivalry game is always special," said CU head coach Linda Lappe, who has seen the rivalry from a variety of angles -- as a CU player, CSU assistant and now as the Buffs head coach. "Emotions are high on both ends. I'm sure they really want to beat us and we really want to beat them."

"For us, it's the best competition we will have faced up to this point."

Lappe expects nothing less than a tough battle with the Rams, who routed Tulsa in their most recent outing.

"They're really physical; they're tough," she said. "They run their motion offense very well. They have a lot of players that can hit the outside shot, and they have some dynamite scorers."

Lappe said CSU has two or three players that could rack up 30 or 40 points on a given night, including Kim Mestdag, who had 35 against Tulsa.

"Any time you have that, on defense it's going to be really tough," she said. "I'm excited to see our defense step up. It's going to be the first time where we can't make defensive errors because they're going to exploit them and they're going to take advantage of them."

The Buffs have capable scorers, as well, but the key to this game, Jeffery said, will be defense and rebounds.

"That's our identity and we have to continue to get better at those things," she said. "We know that if we do slack off in those areas that they will exploit that. They're a smart team and we have to prepare and come with our A game."

That shouldn't be a problem. The Buffs and Rams look forward to this one every year.

"You get the bragging rights for the whole year and it kind of shows who is the toughest team in our state," Jeffery said. "It's all about pride, really."

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CSU Rams ready for in-state matchup with Buffs

In-state rivalry games usually mean there's a little more attention, a little more emotion to them.

That's the message Meghan Heimstra wants to convey to some of her teammates when the CSU and Colorado women's basketball teams meet at 2 p.m. today at Moby Arena.

"I think all of us Colorado girls understand the rivalry," Heimstra, a junior forward on the Colorado State University squad, said Saturday after practice. "We're trying to get the out-of-state girls to understand what CU vs. CSU means."

Heimstra, a Longmont resident, is one of five Colorado players on the Rams' roster along with senior forward Kelly Hartig (Highlands Ranch), sophomore forward Sam Martin (Parker), freshman forward Kara Spotton (Fort Collins), sophomore guard Hayley Thompson (Denver) and junior guard Ashley Wiens (Grand Junction). The Buffaloes have three in-state players in junior guard Chucky Jeffery (Colorado Springs) and sisters Brenna and Meagan Malcolm-Peck (Boulder), both guards/forwards.

"It's a rivalry, so you know that we're going to get their best," CSU coach Kristen Holt

said.

Said Colorado coach Linda Lappe: "It's definitely a rivalry game for us, too. It's not a rivalry if it's just one team that thinks so. We're going to come in ready to play, and CSU is going to come in ready to play."

The Buffaloes (2-0) are a young team with five freshmen and four sophomores on their 12-player roster. Brittany Wilson, a 5-foot-7 sophomore guard, leads the team in scoring with 16 points a game; their next three top scorers - Jeffery (15.0 points, 9.5 rebounds), 5-11 freshman guard Lexy Kresl (13.0, 5.0) and 6-2 freshman forward Jen Reese (10.5, 3.5) - all come off the bench.

"The thing about our team is we have a lot of different who can score," Lappe said. "I've told our team we should four or five players in double figures each and every night.

"And we can score in different ways, too. We can shoot the 3, we can shoot the pull-

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up, we can score at the rim, we can score in the post. We're pretty versatile."

The Rams (1-2) will have to protect the basketball if they want to win. Colorado is forcing its opponents into an average of 21 turnovers a game while getting 10 steals and six blocks a game as well, yet Lappe says the Buffaloes can do better.

"I'm not happy with our defense at all," Lappe said. "We have to continue to get better. CSU is going to be able to show us what we need to work on."

The Rams showed they can protect the ball in the second half Thursday in an 87-68 win over Tulsa. CSU had just six turnovers in that half and none in the first three-plus minutes, when they went on a 12-0 run to turn a close game into a rout.

"I think that start kind of deflated Tulsa," Holt said.

Holt will change her starting lineup for the first time, giving freshman guard LaDeyah Forte her first start in place for Spotton. Thompson, who has sat out four games, including one exhibition while recovering from an ankle injury, might play too.

"I think they're the best team we've played so far," Holt said of the Buffaloes. "They all have the ability to score. So I think it's going to be a good game."

» Next up: Colorado at CSU, 2 p.m. today, Moby Arena
» Admission: \$8 reserved, \$6 adult general admission, \$4 youths 3-17 general admission
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