



COLORADO BUFFALOES

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Sophomore Jen Reese is averaging 10.0 points and 6.0 rebounds.

Photo Courtesy: Joel Broida



Brooks: Fresh From Sweet Road 'W,' Buffs Eye Rams

Release: 12/04/2012 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER - Through a month of non-conference play, Linda Lappe was getting an indication here and an inkling there that her Colorado women's basketball team was developing resiliency and resolve.

Proof came last weekend at Illinois when the Buffaloes didn't shoot particularly well (45.6 percent from the field), hit one of 11 three-point attempts (9.1 percent), treated the ball as if it were covered with thorns (27 turnovers) and were whistled for 21 fouls.

For all those reasons, road games can turn ugly. But what appears to be developing into a decent CU basketball team for Lappe made ugly work to its advantage. The Buffs won 69-62, staying unbeaten (6-0) and on track as Wednesday night's game against archrival Colorado State approaches.

Starting at 5:50 p.m., the women's game will be the opener of a Buffs women's/men's doubleheader against the Rams at the Coors Events Center. The men's game is scheduled to begin about 8:30 p.m.

At Illinois, Lappe said she saw a CU team that stepped off the airplane believing it was going to win: "I never felt our confidence wavered at any point. We came into Illinois thinking we were going to win and we didn't let

BUFFALO EXTRAS

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anything affect that. I liked how we battled against a pretty good BCS school on its homecourt (and) how we responded to some adversity through the game."

Plus, it helped that the Buffs continued to get strong play from redshirt freshman forward Arielle Roberson. At her current pace, Roberson might have the Pac-12 Conference freshman of the year award tucked away by the start of league play. In the season's first four weeks, Roberson is a three-time winner of the league's Freshman of the Week award.

Her output at Illinois included a career-high 25 points, highlighted by a three-pointer (CU's lone trey of the game) in the final minute that gave the Buffs a 66-60 lead in their comeback win.

The road victory, said Roberson, "was great for us to build on . . . we stayed focused on when calls were not going the right way and we didn't let that affect us. You expect some of that on the road, but you have to be tough and play through it. We did a really good job of that; we turned things around and stayed together.

"That was the challenging part, but I think that's why we ended up winning. We were able to push all that aside and focus."

Lappe had envisioned Roberson being a solid addition this season, but she might not have expected what Roberson has produced. "She's started off very strong (18.5 average)," Lappe said. "She did not enjoy sitting out last year (after hip surgery), but it helped her immensely. She's gotten a year wiser and hungrier. She's excited to be on the floor and she feels very fortunate to be on the floor. A lot of times until you get injured and get that taken away you don't feel that hunger."

Throughout her unexpected season off and her long winter as a spectator, Roberson said she stayed engaged and excited: "My excitement over basketball never really left . . . I was still pumped last year like I was going to play."

Now, she has an outlet for her energy and "it's kind of a little different because I don't have to bottle everything up like I did last year," she said. "It's a blessing. I've played most of my life and I'm still excited every time I play."

And her teammates like this year's role much better than last year's.

"She gives us so much," sophomore forward Jen Reese said. "It's so good to have her back finally. She makes shots on the offensive end, she passes the ball, makes good reads . . . on defense she's usually on a key player, making stops. She's just an all-around good player."

A more confident Reese has done her part as well. She scored 15 at Illinois and is averaging 10.0 points and 6.0 rebounds. "I just think my overall game has gotten better," Reese said.

A big difference this season is the Buffs not having to count on senior guard Chucky Jeffery for the majority of their points, rebounds, etc. Nonetheless, Jeffery has hardly disappeared. In scoring, she trails Roberson at 11.8 points a game but is the team's leader in rebounding (7.0), assists (19) and steals (15).

But thus far, CU's strength has been its inside play, with Roberson and Reese working the paint and Jeffery and the guards driving to the rim. Lappe expects CSU "to pack the paint." Added Roberson: "I expect they would try and play better post defense on us, because as a post group we're doing really well."

Lappe wants the Buffs' rebounding to improve (they have a plus-12 advantage), their turnovers to decrease (17 a game) and their perimeter shooting to improve (21-of-77 from beyond the arc). Plus, she's looking for her players to continue to develop better court awareness.

"A big part of our offense is understanding what's open, when players need the ball and how to get the ball to them," Lappe said. "We've gotten better with our post passing, but we have to improve reading the defense and really seeing the court better overall."

CSU (2-4) comes to Boulder with a new coach that Lappe and her team were introduced to last March. Ryun Williams was coaching South Dakota when CU traveled to Vermillion for the WNIT. The Buffs won, 64-55, and

although CSU hasn't yet picked up on all of Williams' court philosophies, Lappe sees development.

"Anytime a team has a new coach, there's a learning period," she said. "They're still trying to understand what his system is, but at any point they could get it. I feel like they keep getting better every week. You don't quite know exactly what you're going to face."

That might be true from a strategy standpoint, but the Buffs know what to expect from the intensity angle. Said Lappe: "It's an interesting game because it is a rivalry. It doesn't matter what the records are at that point, it's a rivalry game . . . they'll be ready to play, we'll be ready to play. We're always excited to play CSU; it'll be a good game."

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Women's basketball: CU Buffs' Jen Reese finds niche as boost off bench

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

DailyCamera.com

Colorado figured that a healthy Jen Reese would be a good asset to its women's basketball team.

So far, Reese has been one of the Buffs' most valuable players.

Entering Wednesday night's rivalry game against Colorado State (2-4), Reese is averaging 10 points and six rebounds per game off the bench for the undefeated Buffs (6-0).

"I feel like I'm doing pretty well compared to last year," she said. "I'm just more confident in my game. I just feel like I know the game more at the college level and that's helped a lot."

Reese has been a key member of the team since arriving last year. She played 24 minutes in the 2011-12 season opener and, by mid season, worked her way into the starting lineup. An eye injury ended her season early, but she still finished with a solid 7.8 points and 6.0 rebounds per game.

This season, she has yet to start a game, but has become CU's top reserve. She ranks third on the team in scoring and rebounds, has improved her field goal and free throw shooting and has produced just four turnovers in the last five games.

Head coach Linda Lappe has noticed a much better Reese this season and gives plenty of reasons for it.

"Her aggressiveness is definitely better," Lappe said. "She wants the ball on the low block. When she does that, we're a tough team to guard. She's not necessarily always going to score it, but we like the ball in her hands because she's going to make great decisions."

In addition to being a threat on offense and one of the team's better passers, Reese has shown great improvement on defense.

"I think the reason Jen has had most of her success this year is because we can keep her on the floor because she'll defend," Lappe said. "She's not a liability for us defensively anymore like she maybe was at times last year."

Reese said her injury motivated her to work harder over the summer, and she's seeing the benefits of that work now.

While she's no longer a starter, she and the Buffs are thriving with her coming off the bench.

"I actually like coming off the bench, seeing how the game's going," said Reese, who tied her career high with 15 points against Illinois on Saturday. "It's good to see it first. I like it so far."

Lappe does, too, so Reese's role may not change for a while.

"I really like Jen coming off the bench because she's a great punch off the bench," Lappe said. "You bring her in after a couple of minutes and the other team maybe is a little bit tired and she's fresh."

CU is hoping Reese and the rest of the team continues its strong start to the season Wednesday night against the Rams. The game, which starts at 5:50 p.m., will be followed by the CU-CSU men's game at 8:30 p.m.

"It's always a big game playing our rivalry team, and there's going to be a huge crowd," Reese said. "It's going to be a great game, great atmosphere."

CU comes in with a six-game win streak, while CSU has a three-game losing streak, but Lappe said that doesn't matter.

"We're going to have to be ready to play our best," Lappe said. "We're going to have to be ready to defend, rebound and run in transition. They're going to do some different things defensively on us that maybe we haven't seen as much.

"It's going to be an exciting game. We'll never take this game for granted. That's why it makes it exciting."

Notable

Reese is one of just four CU players that has not been in the starting lineup at least once this year. The other three -- Alexis Atchley, Lauren Huggins and Ky Weston -- are true freshmen. ... A total of nine players from Colorado high schools will take part in this game, five from CSU and four from CU. Among those is CSU senior Meghan Heimstra, a graduate of Silver Creek High School in Longmont.

Follow Brian on Twitter: @BrianHowell33.

WEDNESDAY: The Colorado Buffaloes (6-0) host the Colorado State Rams (2-4) in a 5:50 p.m. game at Coors Events Center in Boulder.

BROADCAST: Radio -- (KKZN 760 AM), with Mike Rice on play-by-play and Carol Callan providing color commentary. Online -- Pac-12.com.

STORYLINES: CU is off to a 6-0 start for the second year in a row. ... The Buffs have won 19 consecutive regular season non-conference games and are 26-4 in those games under head coach Linda Lappe. ... Last year, CU beat the Rams 72-53 in Fort Collins. Chucky Jeffery, Lexy Kresl and Meagan Malcolm-Peck all scored at least 12 points for the Buffs. ... In three career games against CSU, Jeffery has averaged 13.0 points and 8.7 rebounds and Malcolm-Peck has averaged 12.7 points and 6.0 rebounds. ... CU averages 71.2 points per game, while CSU averages 55.0. ... CSU is looking to snap a three-game losing streak. ... Freshman guard Caitlin Duffy leads the Rams with 9.3 points per game, despite coming off the bench.

KEY STAT: CU leads the Pac-12 with 11.7 steals per game and has scored 31.1 percent of its points (133 of 427) off of turnovers. CSU allows 10.3 steals per game.

COACHES: Linda Lappe is 45-30 in her third season at CU and 95-66 overall. Ryun Williams is 2-4 in his first season at CSU and 260-157 for his career.

PROBABLE STARTERS: Colorado -- G Chucky Jeffery, 5-10, Sr. (11.8 ppg, 7.0 rpg, 3.8 apg); G Brittany Wilson, 5-7, Jr. (7.3 ppg, 2.7 rpg, 2.2 spg); G Jasmine Sborov, 6-1, So. (5.5 ppg, 5.0 rpg); F Arielle Roberson, 6-1, Fr. (18.5 ppg, 6.2 rpg); C Rachel Hargis, 6-4, Jr. (5.5 ppg, 2.0 rpg). Colorado State -- G LaDeyah Forte, 5-4, So. (7.3 ppg, 2.0 rpg, 4.0 apg); G Taylor Varsho, 5-6, Fr. (6.2 ppg, 4.7 rpg); F Alicia

Nichols, 6-0, Jr. (5.8 ppg, 4.0 rpg); F Meghan Heimstra, 6-2, Sr. (6.5 ppg, 5.7 rpg, 2.2 bpg); F Sam Martin, 6-2, Jr. (7.0 ppg, 5.7 rpg, 1.5 bpg).

SERIES: CU is 31-11 against the Rams, including 21-2 in Boulder. Since 2002, the Buffs are 8-2 against the Rams.

UP NEXT: CU visits Denver at 7 p.m. on Tuesday.

Undeclared CU women have head start on CSU

Written by Kelly Lyell

Dec. 10

coloradoan.com

- Next up: CSU at CU, 5:50 p.m. today, Coors Events Center, Boulder
- TV/radio: none/KIIX (AM 1410), KKZN (AM 760)
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Linda Lappe knows what Ryun Williams is going through in his first season coaching the CSU women's basketball team.

Lappe faced many of the same issues three years ago when she took over as coach of the University of Colorado program. She had to teach her team to pick up its play on the defensive end, go all out all the time and to trust that she and her staff were making the changes necessary to get the Buffs back on track.

"She really emphasizes not having to coach attitude and effort," said CU guard Chucky Jeffery, a senior from Colorado Springs. "We work on that every day. ... We come ready to go every day, and it's a lot more fast-paced."

The Buffs (6-0), who face Colorado State University (2-4) on Wednesday night in Boulder, already have beaten two Mountain West Conference teams — defending conference champion San Diego State and Wyoming — and are coming off a 69-62 win Saturday at Illinois.

They're a team that's clearly a lot further along right now than the Rams, Williams said. Asked to describe a strength of his team at this point in the season, Williams struggled to come up with an answer. The Rams, he said, could play their best game yet and still lose to this CU team.

Or, they could get caught up in the rivalry aspect, feed off the atmosphere and energy of an early-arriving sellout crowd of 11,000-plus for the CSU-CU men's game that follows and surprise some people.

"I've grown up with the rivalry, and now I get to play in it," said CSU forward Sam Martin, a junior from Parker. "... It's going to be a big-time atmosphere for us to play in, and they're a big-time team, so I think we definitely have a chance to come prove ourselves."

CSU senior Meghan Heimstra, a 6-foot-2 forward out of Silver Creek High in Longmont suffered a concussion in the Rams' 71-49 loss Saturday at Bowling Green and won't play against the Buffs,

Williams said. But CSU starters Kara Spotton (Rocky Mountain), Martin and Alicia Nichols (Brush) are from Colorado high schools as are CU's Jeffery, sisters Brenna and Meagan Malcolm-Peck (Horizon in Thornton) and Lauren Huggins (Heritage in Littleton).

This game, Spotton said, is one they look forward to every year, and it means a lot to the players on both sides no matter who their coaches are or how long they've been there.

Lappe, who spent a year at CSU as an assistant under Jen Warden, said she got a good feel for the kind of team Williams is trying to build while playing — and losing to — his South Dakota team in the first round of last year's WNIT. The Rams aren't there yet, she knows, but they've still got the kind of versatility with players that can score both inside and outside to be dangerous.

Now, if they can just develop a little bit of the grit that Williams is looking for.

"The execution will come, the shot-making will come," Williams said. "The bottom line is we just need to continue to come to work and to come to compete every night. ... We're a very marginal team in that toughness category for a lot of reasons, but we can change that. That's a choice our kids can make to change."

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