



COLORADO BUFFALOES

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CU senior Chucky Jeffery (23) says the Buffs' focus on the road will pay off.

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Buffs Do A Quick About Face, Return To California

Release: 01/31/2013 Courtesy: Caryn Maconi, CUBuffs.com

BOULDER - The No. 22/23 Colorado women's basketball team is just a few days removed from two tough losses at then-No. 7 California and then-No. 6 Stanford last weekend.

But the Buffs haven't had much time to settle; after Thursday night's practice the team was headed to Los Angeles for another pair of Pac-12 Conference games.

On Friday, Colorado will take on its third straight ranked opponent in No. 18/19 UCLA. On Sunday, the Buffs play at Southern California.

Due to both the level of competition and the stress of travel, this two-week stretch would be a challenge for any team, but CU head coach [Linda Lappe](#) said her Buffs can handle the pressure.

"Playing four games in a row on the road, we haven't done that yet," Lappe said. "It's going to be an important weekend in terms of making sure we stay recovered, stay healthy, that we're eating right, getting enough sleep and just taking care of ourselves . . . It's also going to be important that we're mentally tough."

BUFFALO EXTRAS



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Stanford and Cal have dealt the Buffs their only four conference losses of the season, two last weekend and two earlier in January. Lappe, however, said her players have improved because of those losses.

"We learned a lot from last weekend, and I think now we're ready to take that next step and really maximize off any opportunity that we get," Lappe said. "We've gotten better in our offense, moving the ball and taking what our defense gives us, and being more versatile in how we're scoring."

UCLA won't be a much easier opponent, but the CU women can perhaps say they have their two most intimidating teams out of the way.

Freshman forward [Jamee Swan](#), however, said the effort she and her team put into their play shouldn't differ depending on the opponent's record. Swan, who led the Buffs in scoring at Stanford with 14 points, just takes the season one game at a time.

"I play my best, it doesn't really matter who's on the other side," Swan said. "I just think that we need to stick together as a team . . . I think we've got it, we're pretty good together."

UCLA is currently 15-4 overall and 6-2 in conference play, its only two losses also coming against Cal and Stanford in late January. The Bruins demonstrated their strength in non-conference play earlier this season with wins over then-No. 11 Oklahoma and then-No. 12 Texas.

Since starting Pac-12 play, UCLA has swept both Washington schools, both Oregon schools and both Arizona schools. Senior guard/forward Markel Walker leads the Bruins in scoring at 11.7 points per game and leads the Pac-12 in both assists and steals.

But the Buffs are ranked, too, and for good reason. CU leads the Pac-12 in scoring defense at 52.1 points per outing, and it picked up its own top-10 win over then-No. 8 Louisville during the non-conference season.

Colorado's 15-4 overall record is its best after 19 games since the 2003-04 NCAA Tournament season.

Senior guard [Chucky Jeffery](#) said her team hasn't forgotten its potential, and its confidence is not about to be shaken.

"Two road trips back-to-back is always hard, especially when you're playing three ranked opponents out of four, but we're ranked as well," Jeffery said. "We've got to make wins on the road, that's what good teams do."

And though some teams would shudder at the thought of four straight games away from home, Jeffery said her team thrives outside of the Coors Events Center.

"Sometimes I think that we do we play better on the road because we have a different kind of focus," Jeffery said. "It's just us, and we know that we're all that we have. There's more of a togetherness."

Even with last weekend's losses, the Buffs remain 13-9 in their last 22 true road contests. Leaving the home court, while it can be a struggle, is something the Colorado women have learned to overcome.

Lappe said that maintaining a positive mentality at this point in the season is as important as maintaining a decent record, though a win over a ranked conference opponent certainly wouldn't hurt.

"If we can stay together, keep a great outlook and a great attitude and keep having fun through January, then we're going to be in a great position to do some great things in February and March," Lappe said.

Friday's game is set for 9 p.m. MST and will be broadcast on the Pac-12 Network.

SHOW MENU

CU Buffs mean business again in women's basketball

By Tom Kensler The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — Riding a seven-week run in the top-25 polls figures to help the Colorado women's basketball program when it comes to recruiting, and it won't go unnoticed when the NCAA Tournament selection committee convenes in March.

But for now, all that national recognition does is plant a bull's-eye on the backs of the Buffaloes.

"You always want to beat a ranked opponent," said CU senior guard Chucky Jeffery. "Teams are going to be dialed in against us. I remember that's how we felt in past years when we weren't as good. We were gunning for ranked teams."

In three seasons with coach Linda Lappe, No. 22 Colorado (15-4, 4-4 Pac-12) has evolved from the hunter to the hunted. This season marks CU's first appearances in the national polls since a four-week stretch during the nonconference portion of the 2007-08 schedule. The current seven-week run in The Associated Press poll is the Buffs' longest since being ranked for 19 consecutive weeks in both major polls in 2003-04.

"Our ranking signifies a team that has come together and has taken care of business," Lappe said. "I think the ranking is important for us. It makes people pay attention, and that's important when teams are considered for the post-season. It puts us in another category, when you're considered a top-25 team. But we really think we can improve on that."

A two-year captain during her playing days at CU (1998-2003), when Ceal Barry coached the Buffs, Lappe has returned the team to relevancy while making steady progress.

CU has posted a winning record each year under Lappe, although conference play has been a struggle. This season's 4-4 record in the Pac-12 may be deceiving because the Buffs are getting the toughest portion of their league schedule out of the way early. All four losses have come to No. 4 Stanford or No. 6 California. CU plays Friday night at No. 18 UCLA, but after that the Buffs' schedule eases up.

If they finish strong and receive their first NCAA Tournament bid in nine years, the Buffs will get to stay home for the first and second rounds. CU is among the hosts for the opening rounds (March 23 and 25, at the Coors Events Center), and under women's tournament rules the Buffs would be automatically slotted for that site.

"We've talked as a team about that," Lappe said.

She credits experience and depth for this year's breakthrough. Seniors Jeffery and Meagan Malcolm-Peck and juniors Rachel Hargis and twins Brittany and Ashley Wilson have logged a lot of playing time. So have three sophomores.

"We have older players that have been in pressure situations," Lappe said. "And we also have young players that provide a lot of talent, athleticism and skill. That's a good combination."

An indication of CU's new-found depth: Malcolm-Peck was a starter during her first three seasons but now

comes off the bench.

CU still lacks a dominant, 6-foot-5 center that many top teams have. For now, the Buffs rely on depth and versatility in the frontcourt with 6-1 redshirt freshman Arielle Roberson (averaging 13.2 points and 5.6 rebounds), 6-2 sophomore Jen Reese (8.8, 5.1), the 6-4 Hargis (5.2, 3.1) and 6-2 freshman Jamee Swan (4.4, 3.3) each bringing a different skill set.

The 5-10 Jeffery, a four-year starter, directs the backcourt and as usual tops the team in most statistical categories, including scoring (13.3), rebounding (8.2) and assists (3.7). There are plenty of options along the perimeter as well, including the Wilson sisters, 3-point shooter Lexy Kresl and others.

"With that depth, we've been able to keep players fresh," Lappe said. "I've noticed in a lot of games that it will be close until about 12 minutes left and then that's when we start to make our run. We really wear down opposing teams."

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Women's basketball: Another road test awaits CU Buffs

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Whoever made the Pac-12 women's basketball schedule wasn't too kind to the Colorado Buffaloes.

The Buffs, however, have managed to stay afloat through one of the toughest schedules around. Eight games into a 10-game gauntlet to start the conference slate, the 22nd-ranked Buffaloes (154, 4-4 Pac-12) are still confident and hungry.

"Everybody still has confidence in themselves," senior point guard Chucky Jeffery said. "We come into practice every day ready to go, working hard. I don't think we have a set-back type of mentality. We just want to go out and we want to continue to win. For good teams, when you lose you bounce back and you come back mentally prepared and ready to go."

CU's first 10 games of Pac-12 play included two against No. 4 Stanford and two against No. 6 California. It also includes four consecutive road games, which arguably couldn't be a tougher four-game swing in the conference. The Buffs played at Cal on Jan. 25, at Stanford on Sunday and then visit No. 18 UCLA Friday night (9 p.m., Pac-12 Network) and Southern Cal on Sunday.

"We knew it was going to be a brutal first 10 games, and that's why we knew we had to be prepared coming in from the non-conference," Buffs head coach Linda Lappe said. "It's also going to be important that you're mentally tough. If we can stay together and we can keep a great outlook and a great attitude and keep having fun through January, then we're going to be in great position to do some great things in February and the beginning of March."

So far, the Buffs still have a great attitude. All four losses have come against Stanford and Cal, and the Buffs believe they are better now than they were even a week ago.

"We've had our best week of practice so far this year," Lappe said on Thursday. "I've been able to say that every week of the season because we keep getting better, we keep understanding that the stakes are high and that we are a good team."

"We have to look at playing Cal and Stanford twice as an opportunity to get better in each of those games, and I feel like we have. We learned a lot from last weekend and I think now we have to be ready to take that next step and really just maximize any opportunity that we get."

Lappe said the Buffs were limited offensively before facing the two Pac-12 juggernauts, but she's seen substantial growth.

"We've gotten better in our offense of moving the ball, taking what the defense gives us and being more versatile in how we're scoring," she said.

It will be critical for the Buffs to put their improvement on display this weekend.

UCLA (15-4, 6-2) is just as battle-tested as CU to this point. Three of UCLA's four losses have come against teams currently ranked in the top six -- No. 2 Notre Dame, Stanford and Cal. They've also got three wins

against teams that were ranked at the time -- Oklahoma, Texas and St. John's.

The Bruins don't have anybody putting up impressive individual numbers, but they do have five players averaging between 9.1 and 11.7 points per game, and they have three players averaging at least 7.5 rebounds per game. Senior Markel Walker is probably the Bruins' top player, averaging 11.7 points, 7.9 rebounds, 5.5 assists and 3.2 steals.

Jeffery said the Buffs can't worry too much about the Bruins' individuals. Instead, they have to continue trying to get better as a team and doing what they can to pile up victories.

"We've got to make wins on the road; that's what good teams do," she said. "UCLA and USC are both great teams, they're playing well right now, so it's going to be a tough one, but I think we can do it.

"We know how big a win is, but there's no pressure; we just want to go out and play well against a good team."

CU's mental toughness will be tested, for sure, as it tries to recover from back-to-back losses by taking on another ranked opponent on the road.

"It's going to be a big test of our character in how we respond," Jeffery said. "Hopefully we go out, we come focused and we bounce back."

Notable

Junior guard Ashley Wilson broke her nose against Stanford on Sunday and has been wearing a mask in practice. Wilson came out of the game briefly to stop the bleeding, but continued to play. She didn't realize until after the game that she had broken her nose. ... Sophomore forward Jen Reese got new, less cumbersome, goggles this week. She has been wearing goggles all season because of an eye injury suffered in last year's trip to Stanford, but Lappe said Reese is more comfortable in the new set she got this week.

Follow Brian on Twitter: @BrianHowell33.

CU women's hoops preview

FRIDAY: The No. 22 Colorado Buffaloes (15-4, 4-4 Pac-12) visit the No. 18 UCLA Bruins (15-4, 6-2) in a 9 p.m. game at Pauley Pavilion in Los Angeles.

BROADCAST: TV -- Pac-12 Network, with Anne Marie Anderson on play-by-play and Tammy Blackburn with color commentary. Radio -- KKZN (760 AM), with Mike Rice on play-by-play and Carol Callan providing color commentary.

STORY LINES: CU is on a two-game losing streak, having lost last weekend at No. 6 California and No. 4 Stanford. ... The Buffs have not lost three in a row this season. ... UCLA won both of its games last week, at home against Arizona and Arizona State. ... This is the first time in program history that the Buffs will play three consecutive true road games against ranked opponents. ... UCLA is 8-2 at home this season. ... CU has lost 19 consecutive road games against ranked opponents. The Buffs' last road win against a ranked team came on Dec. 9, 2007, at No. 20 Vanderbilt. ... UCLA's Markel Walker led the Pac-12 in rebounding last year, with 11.0 per game. This year, she's leading the conference in assists (5.5) and steals (3.2). She's also seventh in

rebounding (7.9). ... UCLA's Alyssia Brewer is among the conference leaders in double-doubles, with six. Walker has four. ... During conference play, CU has the top scoring defense in the Pac-12, allowing just 52.1 points per game. ... CU's Lexy Kresl had a team-high 15 points in a 62-54 loss to UCLA on Jan. 29, 2012, in Boulder. ... CU's Ashley and Brittany Wilson and Alexis Atchley are all from the L.A. area.

KEY STAT: CU has not allowed an opponent to score 70 points this season. In fact, the Buffs have held 37 of their past 38 opponents under 70 points. UCLA, meanwhile, is second in the Pac-12 at 70.6 points per game. Bruins were held under 70 in three of their four losses.

COACHES: Linda Lappe is 54-34 in her third season at CU and 104-70 overall. Cori Close is 29-20 in her second season at UCLA and for her career.

PROBABLE STARTERS: Colorado -- G Chucky Jeffery, 5-10, Sr. (13.3 ppg, 8.2 rpg, 4.2 apg, 2.4 spg); G Brittany Wilson, 5-7, Jr. (8.2 ppg, 2.6 rpg, 2.4 apg); G Lexy Kresl, 5-11, So. (5.8 ppg, 2.8 rpg); F Arielle Roberson, 6-1, Fr. (12.6 ppg, 5.7 rpg); C Rachel Hargis, 6-4, Jr. (5.2 ppg, 3.1 rpg, 1.2 bpg). UCLA -- G Thea Lemberger, 5-7, Jr. (9.9 ppg, 2.4 rpg, 2.9 apg); G Kari Korver, 5-9, Fr. (4.8 ppg, 1.2 rpg); G Mariah Williams, 5-4, Sr. (3.7 ppg, 1.9 rpg, 2.3 apg); F Atonye Nyingifa, 5-11, Jr. (11.2 ppg, 7.5 rpg, 1.6 spg); F Alyssia Brewer, 6-3, Sr. (10.8 ppg, 7.9 rpg).

SERIES: UCLA leads 3-2, but the teams are tied 1-1 in Los Angeles. The Buffs won in their last trip to Pauley Pavilion, 79-48 on Dec. 8, 2001.

UP NEXT: CU will visit Southern California on Sunday at 11 a.m.