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Sophomore Jen Reese has averaged 15 points in No. 20 CU's last three wins.

Photo Courtesy: Joel Broida



Brooks: With A Strong Cup Of Joe, Reese Ready To Go

Release: 02/21/2013 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER - It's not that Jen Reese appears to be in danger of nodding off in the midst of an interview, but make no mistake: she is low-key, laid-back and appears generally unflappable.

Linda Lappe, Reese's basketball coach at the University of Colorado, wants Reese to develop more of "a sense of urgency" during the final eight days of February and on into March.

Reese? Urgency?

Tall order, but the remedy might be found in a Tall (maybe Grande or Venti) beverage.

Reese, it seems, needs her coffee - mainly the brand brewed by the mega-company founded in the city that next month will host the women's Pac-12 Conference tournament. That would be Seattle, and I think that's enough of a hint as to where Reese prefers to sip.

Lappe calls Reese "a laid-back person in general, but for her to have that little bit of 'oomph' helps how she plays. Sometimes she can be too laid back. She's the type of person that as long as we're winning, she could be fine not scoring one point or getting one rebound as long as we win and her teammates are doing what they

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need to be doing.

"But as you could see last weekend, we need more of her. When she has that sense of urgency, when she knows we really need her, that's when we see a whole different side of Jen. And that's going to be a big challenge as she goes forward, to bring that consistently no matter the score or who she's playing against . . . the key is going to be can she bring that killer instinct consistently. When she brings that, I think she's virtually unstoppable."

Added Reese: "I agree with her, when I'm more aggressive and wanting the ball, I do a lot better."

Four shots of espresso should just about do it. "Then she gets to be a little more high-key and high-strung," Lappe said with a laugh.

Lappe isn't advocating that Reese be given an Americano IV at halftime to be of maximum benefit to the Buffs. But as they try to close out what could be a special season in CU women's hoops, Reese's role could be vital. Lappe's reference to what Reese did last weekend was aimed at the 6-2 sophomore scoring a career-high 22 points in CU's 71-63 win at Arizona State.

The Buffs' five-game winning streak has vaulted them to a No. 20 national ranking, and in those five games Reese has averaged 11.0 points. And that's despite a scoreless outing in the game (USC) that launched the streak. In her past three games, Reese has averaged 15.0 points and now is averaging 7.6 points and 3.9 rebounds in Pac-12 play.

"She's got her confidence back - I felt like she'd lost it there for a few games," Lappe said. "But it's been good to see her get back in the flow of our offense and start to defend again. She's really narrowed her focus to what she needs to be concentrating on and that's helped her to be able to score the ball . . . it's been good for her to focus on the things she can control."

Reese is a non-starter but in no way a non-producer. She's come off the bench in all of CU's 25 games this season, including 14 in Pac-12 play. She started nine games in as a freshman, but playing in a reserve role this season has allowed Reese time to visualize the strategies already in play and how she might fit in them.

"As the game starts, coming off the bench you're able to see how the game is flowing, how it's going," she said. "Then getting into it feels natural. I let it come to me; I don't force anything that isn't there. I like (coming off the bench), there's nothing wrong with it. As long as I'm playing it's nice. I don't care if I start or not."

Reese said basketball "just kind of came to me" at Clackamas (Ore.) High School, and early on during Lappe's recruitment of her the same conclusion was drawn. Reese's "feel" for the game, said Lappe, "is an innate thing. It was the first thing I noticed in the recruiting process. She just knew the game, how to play."

"And that includes everything - game scenarios, seeing the floor when she gets the ball, she understands angles, just how to play the game and she doesn't have to think about it. It just comes to her. You love to have players like that who have a good skill set and know the game. She's best when it flows for her and she doesn't force things. She's aggressive, but she doesn't have to try. She just does. The best players are the ones that look like they're effortless - and she has the ability to look like that."

Reese's confidence took a hit when she took one beneath her left eye against No. 2 Stanford last Feb. 23. A broken orbital bone eventually required surgery and cost her the remainder of last season. She began this season wearing protective goggles and still is sporting a more advanced pair. Her vision has not returned to 100 percent - "I still have double vision when I look up and to the sides" - but doctors have told her normal sight will return. And even if she's seeing a couple of couple of baskets at times, she's hitting the right one.

"She's overcome that," Lappe said. "There was a segment in there (earlier this season) where she wasn't adjusted to how fast the game was going and how quickly she had to see something. It might have even been that the glasses affected her peripheral vision (and) it might have taken a little time to get used to those. But the biggest thing for Jen is to understand how good a player she is and how much our team needs her to just do the things she can do. She doesn't have to do anything special; just by being the player she is and with her understanding of the game, it just helps our team offensively and defensively."

In the Pac-12 standings, the Buffs trail California and Stanford (both 13-1), Washington (11-3) and UCLA (11-4). Washington State (6-8) visits the Coors Events Center on Friday (7 p.m.) and UW comes in on Sunday (2 p.m.). CU closes the regular-season at Oregon (March 1) and Oregon State (March 3).

Reese believes the Buffs can finish by adding four more 'W's to their five-game winning streak. "I really feel like that," she said. "Everyone is playing their best basketball. As the postseason goes on you see good players do their things and you get opportunities to do that, too. I feel like we've got a great chance to show the country how amazing this team is."

NCAA first- and second-round regional play is scheduled for the CEC on March 23-25, and the Buffs are hoping to be there. But first comes the Pac-12 tournament on March 7-10 in Seattle, where Jen Reese should have no trouble finding a decent hot beverage.

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SHOW MENU



Basketball: Coors could be busy come March

By Ryan Thorburn *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

Posted:

Buffzone.com

NCAA Tournament or bust?

Tad Boyle is obviously focused on a strong finish and getting Colorado into the Big Dance for the second consecutive year.

But if the Buffs do have their bubble burst on Selection Sunday, athletic director Mike Bohn said it will be possible for CU to play home NIT games, even though the Coors Events Center will be hosting first- and second-round women's NCAA Tournament games.

"We haven't really seen any real challenges with that," Bohn said. "With our new facility and the ability to move different times around and practices it could be worked out."

CU will be the official host for women's NCAA Tournament games that will be played either March 23 and 25 or March 24 and 26. NIT games are usually scheduled for broadcast windows on the ESPN family of networks.

Entering Thursday's game against Utah, Boyle's Buffs were projected by ESPN "bracketologist" Joe Lunardi as a No. 9 seed in the NCAA Tournament taking on No. 8 Minnesota in Lexington, Ky.

On the women's side, Linda Lappe's No. 20 CU squad was penciled in as a No. 5 seed playing No. 12 San Diego State in a rematch at the Coors Events Center with No. 4 Florida State facing No. 13 Middle Tennessee in the other first-round game in Boulder.

"That has been a carrot for them since it was announced that we were hosting," Bohn said. "Our student-athletes and our head coach and their staff have used that to their advantage. It's playing out very nicely. We recognize we have four big conference games left, and I know Linda would like to win them all."

Scott 'satisfied' with

Colorado, Utah

Larry Scott participated in a live chat with fans this week. The Pac-12 commissioner was asked if he was satisfied with the additions of CU and Utah since both new league members have "struggled heavily during their first two years."

The Buffs have obviously had a rough go in football with a 4-21 record as members of the Pac-12. The Utes have not lived up to preseason expectations on the gridiron and have resided at or near the bottom of the men's basketball standings since leaving the Mountain West.

However, Boyle's program was the conference's shining star at the NCAA Tournament last March.

"I am very satisfied with the additions of Colorado and Utah. Both schools have been terrific fits on every level. The addition of schools is something that we took very seriously and thought about in a very long-term way," Scott replied. "Performance in any given sport in year one or year two was not something that success

or failure was going to be measured by, nor should it be measured by when you think about the long-term compatibility and merits of a school joining a league.

"I am confident Colorado and Utah will be very competitive across the board year-in and year-out in our conference, and let's not forget Colorado's winning the Pac-12 men's basketball tournament and going the conference proud in the NCAA Tournament last year!"

Notable

Freshman guard Eli Stalzer, who has been accepted into the CU College of Music, was a member of the choir that performed the national anthem before Thursday's game. ... Former CU standout and current New England Patriots left tackle Nate Solder was in attendance at the Coors Events Center.

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Women's basketball: Front court key to CU Buffs' continued success

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Senior point guard Chucky Jeffery is, without question, the best player on the Colorado women's basketball team.

As good as Jeffery has been, however, the key to the success of the 21st-ranked Buffaloes (20-5, 9-5 Pac-12) just might be the front-court foursome of Rachel Hargis, Jen Reese, Arielle Roberson and Jamee Swan.

"If we don't get anything from those four, not just offensively but defensively, we're not a very good basketball team," said CU assistant Jonas Chatterton, who coaches the front court players. "Those four need to come ready to play every night."

Lately, they have been.

Sunday's 71-63 win at Arizona State was arguably the best game that group has played together all season. In that game, the 6-foot-2 Reese scored a career-high 22 points, the 6-1 Roberson scored 16 and Swan, a 6-2 freshman, scored nine points off the bench. Meanwhile, the 6-4 Hargis was her usual nasty self on defense, with a pair of steals, seven rebounds and throwing in five points.

Seeing that group play well together is starting to become normal. Most, if not all, of them have played well in each of CU's last five games -- all victories. They'll need to continue their strong play when the Buffs host Washington State (10-15, 6-8) on Friday.

"We were doing that at the beginning of the season and we knew we wanted to get back to that," Hargis said. "We stepped up to the challenge."

Hargis is the defensive force of the group. She averages just 4.8 points, but is the only Buff to start all 25 games this season. That's because she leads the team with 27 blocked shots (and countless re-directed shots) and flexes her muscles against the top centers and forwards around the Pac-12.

"Rachel is a huge part of what we do as a team," Chatterton said. "That's why she is starting. Defensively at times, she's a clinic. I mean, she's really good. She runs our whole defense. Rachel brings, for our whole team, toughness. If she doesn't bring it, we're not that good."

Hargis' toughness stems from the fact that she understands CU's defense-first philosophy.

"I definitely try to bring my toughness every game and start off with that," she said. "When (the rest of the Buffs) see that, they become more aggressive. When everybody gets that mentality, it really just helps the defense pick up."

Reese said Hargis' toughness has helped her, Roberson and Swan get tougher, too. But, the Buffs aren't just tough on defense. One of the keys to their resurgence in recent games is their scoring punch on offense.

"We're being more aggressive in wanting the ball and calling for it," Reese said.

At least one of the four has scored in double figures in each of the last five games. During the recent five-game

stretch, the front-court foursome has averaged 32.2 points per game. In the nine games before that, they averaged 22.3.

"Experience has a lot to do with that," Reese said.

The group is young -- Hargis is a junior, Reese a sophomore and Roberson and Swan are freshmen -- but they have been getting big minutes all season.

It also helped the group to go through the mid-season gauntlet of facing No. 4 Stanford twice, No. 6 California twice and No. 17 UCLA once. The group sometimes struggled through that stretch of games, but they got better through it.

"I think we played some tougher competition and we just kind of got out of the flow of what we've been doing," Hargis said of the mid-season struggles of the front court. "Now we know that even when we do play tougher competition or different defenses, we still need to be looking inside no matter what."

With a tougher mentality and increased level of confidence, the front court players could be the key to the Buffs' success as they head to the postseason in a couple of weeks.

"They've really been a good base and foundation for our team this year," Chatterton said. "It's absolutely critical (they play well)."

Notable

Sophomore guard Lexy Kresl, who separated her shoulder Sunday, remains day-to-day. Head coach Linda Lappe said Kresl has improved every day and she won't rule out Kresl playing Friday vs. WSU or Sunday against Washington. ... Senior captain Meagan Malcolm-Peck, who has missed the past five games with a shoulder injury, practiced at full strength this week and is ready to play again. ... On Sunday, CU is celebrating National Girls and Women in Sports Day. There will be a free fitness and skills clinic for kids ages 13 and under from noon-1 p.m. at the Coors Events Center. Anyone who participates in the clinic, and adults who brings kids to the clinic, get free admission to the Buffs' game against Washington, which starts at 2 p.m.

Follow Brian on Twitter: @BrianHowell33.

CU women's hoops preview

FRIDAY: The No. 20 Colorado Buffaloes (20-5, 9-5 Pac-12) host the Washington State Cougars (10-15, 6-8) in a 7 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 has won five in a row, its longest conference winning streak in nine years. ... Washington State is 5-2 in its last seven games, but lost to last-place Oregon on Sunday. ... The Buffs are 19-0 this season against unranked teams. ... Washington State is 1-3 against ranked teams, beating No. 20 Ohio State on Dec. 15. Ohio State has not been ranked since. ... CU is 13-2 at home, while Washington State is 4-10 away from home. ... In Pac-12 games, CU has out-rebounded opponents by an average of 5.4 rebounds per game (third in the conference). Washington State has been out-rebounded by 2.4 per game (eighth). ... During Pac-12

play, the Cougars lead the conference in steals (10.4 per game) and rank third in blocked shots (3.8 per game). Lia Galdeira leads the conference individually in steals, at 2.9 per game. ... Although the Cougars get a lot of steals, they are just 2-7 when they get at least 10. ... During her last four games, the Buffs' Jen Reese has averaged 13.8 points and 5.5 rebounds per game. ... CU's Chucky Jeffery has averaged 14.3 points, 8.7 rebounds, 3.6 assists and 2.3 steals per game during the Pac-12 portion of the schedule.

KEY STAT: Colorado is 24-4 when Jeffery posts a double-double, including 8-0 this season. Jeffery has had four doubles-doubles in the last five games. She came within one rebound of a double-double against the Cougars last year. Eight WSU opponents have posted double-doubles in Pac-12 play.

COACHES: Linda Lappe is 59-35 in her third season at CU and 109-71 overall. June Daugherty is 55-124 in her sixth season at Washington State and 369-337 during her career.

PROBABLE STARTERS: Colorado -- G Chucky Jeffery, 5-10, Sr. (13.4 ppg, 8.5 rpg, 4.0 apg, 2.4 spg); G Brittany Wilson, 5-7, Jr. (8.4 ppg, 2.5 rpg, 2.3 apg); G Lexy Kresl, 5-11, So. (6.2 ppg, 2.8 rpg); F Arielle Roberson, 6-1, Fr. (12.0 ppg, 5.5 rpg); C Rachel Hargis, 6-4, Jr. (4.8 ppg, 3.4 rpg, 1.1 bpg). Washington State -- G Dawnyelle Awa, 5-9, Fr. (1.8 ppg, 1.5 rpg, 2.5 apg); G Katie Grad, 5-9, Sr. (2.3 ppg, 2.5 rpg); G Lia Galdeira, 5-11, Fr. (15.0 ppg, 5.2 rpg, 2.9 spg); F Sage Romberg, 6-1, Jr. (6.6 ppg, 4.8 rpg, 1.2 apg); C Carly Noyes, 6-5, Sr. (6.4 ppg, 3.2 rpg).

SERIES: CU leads 2-1, including 1-0 in Boulder. The Buffs won the only meeting between the teams last year, 57-56, in Pullman, Wash.

UP NEXT: CU will host Washington on Sunday at 2 p.m.