

## Women's basketball: CU Buffs look to take advantage of matchups with Utah

By Brian Howell *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

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Now that Stanford and California are out of the way, the Pac-12 schedule gets easy for the Colorado women's basketball team.

Not quite. But, the Buffaloes know they need to start piling up some wins, and they figure Tuesday night is a good place to start.

No. 23 Colorado (11-2, 0-2 Pac-12) will host Utah (9-4, 0-2) on Tuesday at Coors Events Center. It's the first of two games against the Utes this week, as the Buffs will play in Salt Lake City on Sunday.

"We definitely have to take advantage of (playing) this team, because they'll be in the top half, too," CU junior guard Brittany Wilson said. "These are two wins we need to draw even in conference and continue to play well. I think we just have to take care of business and do what we've been doing -- come out to play and play hard."

CU dropped to No. 23 in the Associated Press rankings Monday after losing to No. 4 Stanford and No. 7 Cal. But, they gained a measure of confidence by playing right with two of the top teams in the country. Moral victories only go so far, though.

"This is where we need to step up," head coach Linda Lappe said. "We just played the No. 4 and the No. 7 team in the nation. We have to take that in stride and know that we competed with both of those teams for the majority of both games and get some confidence from that, but understand the opportunities that are ahead if we get down to playing better basketball."

Defensively, the Buffs could not have been much better over the weekend. They held Stanford to 57 points, 14.1 below its season average, and Cal to 53, which is 21.3 below its average.

CU, however, needs to see its offense step up. The Buffs averaged 74.3 points per game in non-conference play, and then scored just 89 in its two losses. They had their two worst shooting nights of the season, hitting just 32.1 percent (34 of 106) of their shots over the weekend.

Missing shots was not the only issue, however.

"We were just tentative, passing up shots we usually take, not knocking down open shots, not being scorers necessarily," Wilson said.

Lappe agreed, saying the Buffs need to be more ready to score.

"We're passing up many, many opportunities every possession to score the basketball, whether it's on a drive, whether it's a shot off some screens," Lappe said. "It needs to be every player that's on the floor. We can't just look to Arielle (Roberson) and Chucky (Jeffery). Arielle has probably been the most aggressive of anybody on our team, and now we need some other players to step up and do the same."

Jeffery is one of those players. She averaged 15 points and made 48 percent of her shots (13 of 27) over the weekend, but did not display the aggressiveness Lappe wants to see. Jeffery didn't attempt any free throws against Cal on Sunday.

"She passed up a lot of shots, was really tentative," Lappe said. "She's got to get back in a scorer's mentality and a mentality where she's going to create for everybody else around her, too. She's stopping herself a lot of times."

With two losses in the books, the Buffs know they can't afford to be tentative anymore.

Like CU, Utah is coming off a weekend where it lost two games, but played relatively well against Cal and Stanford. So, the Utes are sure to bring the same mindset into Tuesday's game as the Buffs will bring.

"I think we're both in the same scenario," Lappe said. "We probably both have confidence and that's a good thing; both teams should have confidence because we played (Cal and Stanford) fairly well, lost both and now we're both looking to get back on the winning track."

Wilson looking to rebound

For much of this season, Wilson has been one of the Buffs' top scorers. Yet, over the weekend, she scored just two points -- on a late layup against Cal -- and missed eight of her nine shots.

"I was frustrated, but then again I missed four practices before the Stanford game (because of a head injury against New Mexico on Dec. 29)," she said. "I'm just trying to get back into the flow of everything."

While Wilson struggled offensively, she had an exceptional game on defense against Cal.

With the Buffs needing more offense, though, Wilson could be a spark plug.

"We have so many weapons, it might not be me; it might be someone else opening up for another eight or 10, but yeah, I do need to be a little bit more aggressive on the offensive end," she said.

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CU women's hoops preview

**TUESDAY:** The No. 23 Colorado Buffaloes (11-2, 0-2 Pac-12) host the Utah Utes (9-4, 0-2) at 6 p.m. at Coors Events Center in Boulder.

**BROADCAST:** TV -- Pac-12 Network, with Ann Schatz on play-by-play and Rosalyn Gold-Owunde with color commentary. Radio -- KKZN AM-760, with Mike Rice on play-by-play and Carol Callan providing color commentary.

**STORYLINES:** Both teams are still seeking their first conference win after being swept by Stanford and California last weekend. ... CU held Stanford and Cal, two of the top seven teams in the country, to a combined 110 points (55 per game). The Buffs, however, scored just 89 and were held below 50 in back-to-back home games for the first time since 1975 -- the program's first season. ... Utah has lost three in a row

and four of its last six after a 7-0 start. ... The Utes lead the Pac-12 in 3-point field goal percentage (.361). ... Utah is second in the conference in scoring defense (allowing 54.1 points per game), while CU is third (54.7). ... CU's Chucky Jeffery averaged 16.0 points and Brittany Wilson averaged 13.3 points in three meetings against the Utes last season.

**KEY STAT:** CU is 10-0 this season when leading at halftime, which is a good sign that the Buffs have learned to close out games. The Buffs are 1-2 when tied or trailing at the half.

**COACHES:** Linda Lappe is 50-32 in her third season at CU and 100-68 overall. Anthony Levrets is 43-37 in his third season at Utah and for his career.

**PROBABLE STARTERS:** Colorado -- G Chucky Jeffery, 5-10, Sr. (12.7 ppg, 8.0 rpg, 4.4 apg, 2.4 spg); G Brittany Wilson, 5-7, Jr. (8.2 ppg, 2.8 rpg, 2.4 apg); G Lexy Kresl, 5-11, So. (5.8 ppg, 2.0 rpg); F Arielle Roberson, 6-1, Fr. (14.9 ppg, 5.8 rpg, 1.5 spg); C Rachel Hargis, 6-4, Jr. (5.9 ppg, 3.2 rpg). Utah -- G Iwalani Rodrigues, 5-9, Sr. (12.2 ppg, 4.6 rpg, 2.5 apg); G Rachel Messer, 5-9, Sr. (4.8 ppg, 3.1 rpg, 1.6 apg); G Danielle Rodriguez, 5-10, Fr. (4.0 ppg, 4.1 rpg, 3.0 apg); F Taryn Wicijowski, 6-3, Jr. (15.8 ppg, 7.5 rpg); F Michelle Plouffe, 6-4, Jr. (15.8 ppg, 7.5 rpg).

**SERIES:** Utah leads the overall series 11-9, but CU was 2-1 against the Utes last season. Utah did get a win in Boulder last year, however.

**UP NEXT:** CU visits Utah on Sunday.