



*Chuckie Jeffery wants to close out the regular season in style.*

*Photo Courtesy: Joel Broida*



# Brooks: Common Ground Unsuitable For Jeffery, Buffs

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**BOULDER** - The road to uncommon already has taken Chuckie Jeffery and the Colorado women's basketball team to some pretty sweet places - a non-conference win over a Top 10 team, a 22-win season, an extended stay in the Top 25, a probable No. 4 seed in the upcoming Pac-12 Conference tournament . . .

But the road continues to wind and the No. 19 Buffaloes' aren't eager to leave it. It's just the opposite, in fact. Jeffery, her teammates and coaches believe their best is still out there - and that's not a reference to this weekend's trip to Oregon.

CU winds up the regular season this weekend against the Pac-12's pair of lower tier residents - No. 11 Oregon State and No. 12 Oregon. The Ducks (4-24, 2-14) come first on Friday night, followed by the Beavers (9-19, 3-13) on Sunday afternoon. If Washington loses to No. 4 Stanford Thursday night - a very good possibility - and CU defeats Oregon the next night, the Buffs are the Pac-12's No. 4 seed for next week's gathering in Seattle.

CU hasn't been as high as a fourth seed and had a first-round tournament bye since 2004 (No. 3, Big 12). If that

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scenario already is cemented going into Sunday's final regular-season game, the Buffs' objective would seem to be getting out of Corvallis with a 'W' of any stripe and thus padding their NCAA resume.

But Jeffery, the gifted senior from Colorado Springs who can see her CU career tapering down, doesn't view her last weekend of regular-season play quite that way.

"At the end of the year we want to look back and say we reached our potential as a team," she said. "And that consists of us coming to practice, staying focused, doing the little things and getting better at what our team identity is no matter what point of the season we're in."

That said, maintaining focus against a pair of opponents at the bottom end of the Pac-12 shouldn't be a problem for the Buffs. Then again . . .

Here's Jeffery take on that: "It gets kinda tough to remain focused because we've played all the tough teams early on in our schedule. But it doesn't mean these last two aren't important, because they're very important to what we're trying to get to."

That would be the NCAA Tournament, which features first- and second-round games at the Coors Events Center on March 23-25. Of course, the Buffs want to be present in more than a host capacity, and coach Linda Lappe sees this weekend in Oregon as an opportunity for her team to underscore the presumption that it carries a solid NCAA resume.

"We have no room to take it easy right now . . . we know that," Lappe said. "Our sense of urgency has to be at its highest right now, and our team understands that. We could potentially get a four seed, but in the long run that wasn't our goal at the beginning of the year . . . it means that we're not satisfied, not happy. We have to make sure we end the season playing well."

Jeffery has been playing well for most of her CU career, leading the Buffs (or ranking in the top two or three) in practically every statistical category for the past three seasons. Once again, her final season finds her as the team's scoring and rebounding leader at 13.2 points and 8.6 rebounds. Her current scoring average is 2.3 points below last season, but she's nearly a full rebound above her 2011-12 average.

There's a simple explanation for the minor drop-off in scoring: Finally, in Jeffery's final season, the Buffs are deeper and don't have to rely on her for 18 to 20 points a night. Lappe and her staff have fashioned a roster that is very capable of unburdening Jeffery, and Jeffery's words, "It's gone pretty well. There are a couple of games where me and coach had this conversation. There would be some games where I needed to score 18- or 20-plus points. There would be games where I had 10 or 15 points and I have 15 rebounds and eight assists, things like that.

"It just depends on the type of game and the flow and me managing the game and understanding what our team needs. So it's actually working out pretty well because to go out and have the pressure of having to score 20 points every game is not good for any player.

"I think I've had some pretty solid games and some games where I wasn't quite aggressive enough or I had too many turnovers . . . but I think it's gone pretty well. I think I've stepped up being a leader this year and not too much worried about scoring. But I've taken my shot when it's there and tried to help my teammates in whatever."

The Buffs have won 22 games overall and 11 in the Pac-12. All of their five losses have been in conference and all have been to the conference's other Top 25 teams - twice to No. 4 Stanford, twice to No. 6 California, once to No. 17 UCLA. In NCAA tourney terminology, it means CU doesn't have any "bad" losses.

And that means taking care of business (twice) in Oregon now becomes mandatory. The Buffs don't want to undo what they've been doing since mid-November. Records aside, Lappe calls the Ducks and Beavers "good teams" with "good players . . . Oregon State probably is playing its best basketball, with a lot of young players starting to come into their own (the Beavers lost 58-56 at Cal last week). We know these games are not by any

means easy games. We have to make sure we're at our best."

Jeffery knows uncommon teams don't lose in Eugene and Corvallis, and being uncommon "can mean a lot of things for us," she said. "Last week going to Arizona and getting a road sweep - we didn't do that last year. That's uncommon. Beating a Top 10 team (then-No. 8 Louisville) in the preseason. That's uncommon for us. Even though we lost those games to Stanford and Cal, we fought and didn't give up. That's uncommon as well. There are a whole bunch of little uncommon things we do to reach our big goal of being uncommon."

Added Lappe: "We're getting there . . . we haven't reached our potential yet. When you look at the definition of uncommon it's going to be did we do something that nobody thought we could do? Or did we reach our potential? Ultimately that doesn't mean any sort of wins or losses. Yes, we have a lot of wins and not many losses. So when you look at it on the outside it might seem that we've been uncommon.

"But to us, we're not there yet. We drew a line in the locker room, one being the first day and the other being the last game. We're not there yet and we all understand that. I think that allows us to keep getting better and keep doing our best every single day."

She called her third CU team "special so far because we haven't stopped working. A lot of teams would be satisfied with a lot of wins and not very many losses. But on this team, it's not what we've been shooting for. So that means we're not going to be satisfied yet."

As for Jeffery as her CU career edges toward an end, graduation is on the horizon and then, hopefully, a chance to play professionally. "But that's down the road," she said. "We're focused on the Pac-12 tournament after these two games and then getting a good look at the NCAA Tournament. I'm super-excited about that. I'm not looking too far down the line at all . . . we've got a lot more basketball to play."

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## CU vows to not look past struggling Oregon programs

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Facing the bottom two teams in the Pac-12 Conference, the Colorado women's basketball team seems to have an easy road trip this weekend.

The No. 19 Buffaloes aren't viewing it that way, though.

"We have no room to take it easy right now and we know that," Buffs head coach Linda Lappe said. "Our sense of urgency has to be the highest right now and our team understands that."

Today, CU (22-5, 11-5 Pac-12) will visit last-place Oregon (4-24, 2-14). They follow that with a visit to 11th-place Oregon State (9-19, 3-13) on Sunday.

"We know these games are not, by any means, easy games," Lappe said. "We have to make sure we're at our best."

"We have to make sure we end the season playing well as a team."

Colorado should have plenty of motivation going into tonight's game at Oregon. The Buffs are in prime position to get a top four finish in the Pac-12, which would mean a first-round bye for the conference tournament, which takes place next week.

After No. 4 Stanford defeated Washington on Thursday, all the Buffs have to do is beat the Ducks to wrap up that first-round bye.

"It's really cool, especially this year," sophomore Jen Reese said of CU's opportunity. "I don't think many people on the team have had this experience. In high school maybe, but this is college. To me, this is amazing. It's kind of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. You never know when you'll get it back."

While the Buffs are excited about the prospect of a top-four finish, they aren't getting overly amped about it.

"Yes, we could potentially get a four seed, but in the long run, that wasn't our goal at the beginning of the year," Lappe said.

The No. 4 seed would, however, get the Buffs a step closer to some of their bigger goals. That's why Lappe and the Buffs won't be looking past Oregon or Oregon State.

CU, after all, has never defeated the Ducks on their home court, going 0-4.

"Oregon has really good players, players that can score and do a lot of good things," Lappe said. As for Oregon State, Lappe said the Beavers are, "probably playing their best basketball right now and they have a lot of young players that are starting to come into their own."

Seems like an odd thing to say about a team on a 10-game losing streak, but she's right. Oregon State nearly upset No. 6 California on the road on Sunday (losing 58-56). Six days earlier, they nearly knocked off fifth-place Washington, falling 49-44. Those were two of seven losses by five points or less in conference play.

Colorado's plan for the weekend is to simply stick to what has worked so far. The Buffs have played stellar defense throughout the season and have received contributions from a variety of players on offense.

"It's going to be a tough road, but I feel like we're going to take care of business and do what we need to do," said Reese, who is from Clackamas, Ore. "I think everyone is focused. We know what we need to do.

"If we do what we do and play Colorado basketball, we've got a really good shot."

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