



*Linda Lappe says her 2012-13 team is ahead of where it was at this point last season.
Photo Courtesy: US Press Wire*



Brooks: Lappe Likes Mix Of Experience, Fresh Talent

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BOULDER - The first public showing for the 2012-13 Colorado women's basketball team will come Friday night at Buffs Madness. In a private showing four days earlier, the Buffs showed their coach something she really, really liked.

On Tuesday, CU's first official practice day, after the Buffs endured an expected number of "rough moments," things smoothed out enough to enable [Linda Lappe](#) to proclaim: "Overall, we're exactly where we need to be - which is ahead of where we've been at this time last season or the year before. And that's what should be happening; that's a real positive."

Nearly a week into her third preseason practice as CU's head coach, Lappe finds herself in a good place. Her roster features a promising blend of experienced upperclassmen and raw but talented freshmen. Her three-member recruiting class was ranked 27th nationally, not always the surest measure of incoming talent but surely better than not being recognized at

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"We've got a lot of juniors and seniors (three in each class) who have been in every single scenario that you could ask for and have been successful in many of those scenarios," Lappe said. "That's the part I really like from our team. As we go into this year, we're not going to have to teach them everything . . . they can draw on previous games, previous seasons."

Lappe's first two seasons at CU have produced a 39-30 overall record and consecutive WNIT berths. The Buffs hope to be in the NCAA Tournament field next spring - CU is hosting first- and second- round games on March 23-25 - but in this case, the journey is the destination.

Lappe isn't focused so much on the NAAs as the daily steps required to get there. "With this team, we've talked about doing something that's really special - and that doesn't necessarily mean the NCAA Tournament," she said. "It might be more than (making) the NCAA Tournament; it might be going far in the NCAA Tournament. We don't know yet what special means for this group.

"For every team it means something different. As long as they come to work every single day like they have been, have the right attitude and give max effort, then I think it's going to be a special year. Our ultimate goals will come to fruition if we do those things every single day. We can't control the end of the year, but we can control what we do on Oct. 10, 11, 12 or whatever."

Lappe has a returning All-Pac-12 performer in senior [Chucky Jeffery](#), who is expected to spend less time at point guard due to the arrival of [Kyleesha Weston](#). "Kyleesha is a player we recruited to be a point . . . really the first true point we've had," Lappe said. "Chucky will benefit from Kyleesha playing point, allow her to move off the ball and do some different things she hasn't been able to do."

But that will be an evolution that takes time while Weston acclimates to her new surroundings and play at this level. "Kyleesha isn't ready yet," Lappe noted, "so Chucky will be playing a lot of point guard at the beginning of the year . . . hopefully as the year goes along, Chucky will be able to swing."

There are other point guard options - [Brittany Wilson](#), [Lexy Kresl](#) - but whoever winds up directing the offense, Lappe wants this known: "I feel like one of our downfalls last year were our turnovers (17 per game). Whoever plays it, whoever has the ball in their hands the majority of the time has to know the importance of taking care of the ball and understanding time, score and situation and what our team needs to get into."

In addition to Weston, Lappe signed forward [Jamee Swan](#) and wing player [Lauren Huggins](#) in the 2012 recruiting class. Lappe is not reluctant to play freshmen when they are ready, but said she wasn't sure how early that might be. The good news: "They're fighting for positions; that's really how you get better," she said.

Then there's 2011 signee [Arielle Roberson](#), who redshirted last season after undergoing preseason hip surgery. Roberson apparently is as athletic as her big brother Andre, a junior on the CU men's team.

Arielle, said Lappe, "is like an extra player in the freshman class with experience. She hasn't done everything the other sophomores were able to do, but she kind of has a different point of view. It made her smarter and hungrier."

Lappe called Roberson "potentially one of our best defenders - long and quick. She can guard two through five (positions) and that will allow us versatility. Offensively, she can finish around the basket, get rebounds and put-backs."

The lengthy stretch of not playing cost Roberson some of her quickness, but that's expected to return. "She's already gotten some of it back since August; she's getting back to game speed," Lappe noted.

Another returning player coming off an injury is sophomore forward [Jen Reese](#), who missed the final portion of last season due to an eye socket injury that required surgery. Reese returns in the best shape of her life, but her full vision hasn't come back.

"It's mostly when she looks up high . . . but for the most part she's pushed through it," Lappe said. "She's good enough around the rim that she doesn't have to see the basket perfectly; she can still make the shot. So that's good to know. I know right now there's a lot of shots she makes that she barely sees the rim."

Doctors have told Reese that her full vision will return. And on an even better note, headaches that Reese was suffering in September have decreased.

Two seniors - Jeffery and [Meagan Malcolm-Peck](#) - already have provided solid leadership and Lappe expects that to continue. Both have been around Lappe and her staff for two seasons and don't need to guess what is expected by the coaches.

Plus, this freshman class and Roberson's return "gives us something we haven't had before . . . I'm confident in the fact that we're going to be a much better team than we have been - and that's a good thing because we have a tough non-conference schedule. We'll have to make sure we're ready for that. We have to be further along than we've been; we've got some good teams to play early."

The Buffs open the regular season on Nov. 11 at home against Idaho, host the Omni Hotels Classic (Auburn, San Diego State, Texas A&M-Corpus Christi) a little less than two weeks later, then catch Wyoming, Illinois, Colorado State, the University of Denver and Louisville before Christmas.

Then the Pac-12 awaits, and Lappe believes having been through it once will increase her team's comfort level - if that's possible. Naturally, Stanford will be favored and California returns virtually its entire roster. Beyond that pair, it's an all-skate and Lappe believes her team can compete.

"Our players haven't wavered," she said. "We've had maybe one bad day since the beginning of August. You can see they have a sense of urgency. That's what you get when you have juniors and seniors who have played. It's easier for the freshmen to catch onto that and see what it means.

"I think this is the best group of freshmen we've had in terms of being ready and getting on the same page with everybody else. And some of that is the leadership of the upperclassmen bringing them along. We've never had that, that strong junior-senior class to help the freshmen . . . But at this point everybody is trying to do the exact same thing; there's so many unknowns for every team. It's always exciting, sometimes nerve-wracking."

But when your team is prepared and eager, as Lappe believes hers will be, it's not so hard on the nerves. She'll know whether she's right soon enough.

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SHOW MENU



Boyle-led Buffs charge ahead of Pac-12 hoops

Posted:

DenverPost.com

The Colorado men's basketball team last season was picked by most prognosticators to basically do nothing. Don't even bother lacing up the sneakers, seemed to be the consensus.

Tad Boyle's crew then went 24-12, won the Pac-12 Tournament, then won an NCAA Tournament game.

This season, the Buffaloes are picked somewhere in the Pac-12's midrange. So, where does that mean they'll really go this season?

Front Range hoops fans can get an early grasp on that question this weekend when the "Buffs Madness" starts. The opening of men's basketball practices tips off the season Friday night in Boulder for CU and on Monday night in Fort Collins for Colorado State.

Free of charge, fans can see the CU men's and women's basketball teams on Friday at the Coors Events Center, immediately following the 7 p.m. Buffs women's volleyball match against Pac-12 foe Arizona State. At about 8:30 p.m., Madness will feature men's and women's player introductions, scrimmages, C-Unit fan training, contests and other activities.

"I think we're ready. I know our staff is extremely excited about where we're going this year," CU women's coach Linda Lappe said. "We're excited about Buffs Madness. You'll get to see a lot of different things. I know we're going to scrimmage for about 10 minutes. And you'll see some of our shooters hoist it up from 3. I think it will be a lot of fun."

The CU women opened fall practices Tuesday afternoon, getting a jump on the men. (NCAA rules are different for men and women about when practices can start).

Colorado, 21-14 last season (6-12 in Pac-12) and a participant in the WNIT, has a good blend of experience and youth, Lappe said. The roster includes seniors Chucky Jeffery and Meagan Malcolm-Peck and four juniors. Jeffery (15.5 points, 8.0 rebounds) is among the top players in the Pac-12.

In Fort Collins on Monday, the Rams men's and women's team open their Madness at 7 p.m. Festivities include the introductions of both teams; a three-point shooting contest between the men and women; a skills competition, a slam dunk contest; and a meet-and-greet with the players.

Rams Madness will give fans a chance for their first look at two new coaches, Larry Eustachy and Ryun Williams, who took over the men's and women's teams, respectively, after last season.

The Rams men's team went 20-12 last season under former coach Tim Miles and earned an NCAA Tournament berth before falling in the first round to Murray State. The CSU women finished 13-17 last season under former coach Kristen Holt. Tom Kensler and Nick Groke, The Denver Post