

Women's basketball: Lappe's CU Buffs depending on improved Jeffery

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Decked out in hipster glasses, Colorado's Chucky Jeffery has adopted the look made popular recently by NBA players.

The Buffaloes are hoping it's not just her fashion sense that copies the stars.

Tuesday, CU will hold its first official practice of the 2012-13 season. The Buffs are full of promise, but may only go as far Jeffery takes them.

"To get to where we want to go as a team, I think Chucky has to take that next step," CU head coach Linda Lappe said.

The Buffs went 21-14 a year ago and reached the Women's NIT for the second year in a row. Jeffery earned All-Pac-12 honors after leading the team in scoring (15.5 points per game), rebounding (8.0), assists (3.8), steals (2.3) and blocks (0.8).

Now a senior, Jeffery knows that what she did as a junior won't be good enough.

"I have to be on my Ps and Qs all the time," said Jeffery, a 5-foot-10 point guard from Sierra High School in Colorado Springs. "There's not a game where I can have a slip up and if I do, I have to be able to change that and maintain a good level of play all the time."

Jeffery had several great games a year ago, including three straight double-doubles, a 30-point night and a 17-rebound effort. She also averaged 4.5 turnovers a game, and posted at least five turnovers in 16 games. Eliminating those mistakes is important in order for Jeffery -- and the Buffs -- to take the next step.

"As a senior, a player can't have more than four turnovers. Four turnovers is a lot," Lappe said. "As a senior who is a very good player, you have to make sure that you're doing your part in knowing how important the ball is."

Jeffery said she has been focused throughout the offseason on protecting the ball.

"It just all boils down to me being smarter," she said.

In addition to being smarter, Jeffery figures to benefit from the addition of freshman Ky Weston, who gives the Buffs a true point guard to take some pressure off of her. Lappe believes that having Weston on the court will save Jeffery's legs and mind, and hopefully help Jeffery become a better player on offense and defense.

"I think it's going to be great for our team to have that ability to move some people around and move Chucky around," Lappe said.

While working on her ball-handling, Jeffery has also worked on her demeanor. The ability to hide her frustration on the court has been a point of emphasis because her teammates have told her they need better body language from her at times, Jeffery said.

"My teammates go off on me; when I get frustrated, everybody gets uptight and frazzled," she said. "I have to be able to recognize that and be able to change it quickly in order to benefit the team."

If Jeffery truly is more composed on the court and better at protecting the ball, the Buffs should be a better team. Lappe won't know what kind of improvement her star guard has made until practice starts, though.

"I think the level that she needs to take is going to happen during practice and during the season," Lappe said.

It helps Jeffery that the team's other senior, Meagan Malcolm-Peck, has taken the leadership reins. Being a vocal leader is not Jeffery's strength, but she said her style "meshes well" with Malcolm-Peck's to make a solid senior duo.

"I think Chucky's role is more once we start to really get into things, she's got to perform and I think she's ready for that," Lappe said.

Jeffery certainly seems ready. With CU hosting a portion of the first round of the NCAA Tournament in March, she is determined to make sure the Buffs are participating, and not just sitting in the stands watching other teams have fun.

"I know if we host that tournament here, it's going to be sold out," she said. "That's something a player dreams about.

"I'm just ready to go. I'm ready to get better, ready to see how the team looks together."

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