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Longmont, Colorado  
Friday, November 30, 2007

DAILY TIMES-CALL

Publish Date: 11/25/2007

## Switch lifts CU

Putnina gets start, nets double-double

*By Brian Howell*

*Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — Kathy McConnell-Miller made her first lineup change of the 2007-08 season Saturday night, and it looks to be a permanent move.

One night after a shocking loss to Siena College, the University of Colorado head coach put sophomore Aija Putnina into the lineup instead of junior Kara Richards.

Putnina responded with 15 points and 12 rebounds to lead CU to a 72-55 win over Rice in the consolation game of the 21st Annual Coors Classic, played at the Coors Events Center.

"I came into this game thinking, 'Kara started three games, and I know what she's going to do starting,'" McConnell-Miller said. "'I don't know what Aija's going to do when she starts.' With that said, I felt like I needed to give her a look, and she came up with a double-double."

Richards had started the first three games for the Buffs (2-2), averaging 3.7 points and 2.7 rebounds in 13.3 minutes a game. She had also committed 10 fouls in her 40 minutes coming into Saturday.

Putnina had averaged 6.3 points and 5.7 points off the bench prior to Saturday. Her 15 points Saturday were a career-high.

"She's a challenge on the offensive and defensive end," McConnell-Miller said of Putnina. "I think that's the type of start we need to get off to, and not where somebody is backing off of Kara and sitting on (All-Big 12 forward Jackie McFarland). It gives us a more balanced attack, and it gave us good energy."

Energy was something the Buffaloes lacked Friday against Siena. After falling behind, 11-3, early against Rice, the Buffaloes took off and controlled the game.

McFarland, Putnina and Brittany Spears sparked a 22-4 run that put the Buffs comfortably ahead, and they never trailed again.

"We talked a lot (Friday) about playing as a team, sharing the ball and playing team defense," said McFarland, who had 12 points, 11 rebounds and a career-high seven assists. "We definitely improved on that."

Susie Powers (11 points) and Spears (10 points) also scored in double-digits, while Hannah Skildum (eight points, four rebounds) and Richards (seven points) provided sparks off the bench.

McConnell-Miller went most of the game with the rotation of Spears, Putnina, McFarland, Powers, Skildum and Bianca Smith.



Colorado's Aija Putnina shoots over Rice's Melissa Wittmayer during the first half Saturday night at the Coors Events Center in Boulder. **Joshua**

**Duplechian/Times-Call**

“When I settled on those six in and out, that it was probably our most effective lineup,” McConnell-Miller said. “I like that lineup, and I think once I settled with that lineup and stopped moving them in and out so much and substituting, I think that’s when we got into a better flow.”

Putnina was in a good flow from the start. She started five games last year, and in the first four, she averaged 13 rebounds and 10.5 points per game (she played just 10 minutes in her fifth start because of a stress fracture).

“Just being in the starting lineup makes me play better,” she said. “I just feel more confident when I’m starting than coming off the bench, because then I feel like coach has more confidence in me.”

**TIP-INS:** CU was 3-1 in the games Putnina started and finished last year. ... McFarland set a career-high in assists one night after tying her career high of six. She had one assist in the first two games combined. ... The Buffs shot .469 from the floor. They finished at .397 against Siena. “There was no doubt in my mind there was no way we could have shot the ball the same way (Saturday) as we did (Friday),” McConnell-Miller said. ... CU out-rebounded the Owls, 41-29. ... The Buffs will play host to Northern Colorado on Wednesday. ... In Saturday’s championship game, Clemson beat Siena, 77-67.



# CU women's basketball Putnina sparks Buffaloes

## CU bounces back to win consolation game in Coors Classic

Sunday, November 25, 2007

Aija Putnina's mind-set changes when she starts.

And the Colorado women's basketball team needed to make a change Saturday after losing to Siena the night before in the first round of the Coors Classic, Colorado's second loss ever in the first round of the 21-year-old tournament.

So with the sophomore forward receiving her sixth career start, and her first of this season, Putnina scored 15 points, grabbed 12 rebounds, blocked two shots and had three steals to help the Buffs bounce back with a 72-55 victory over Rice in the Coors Classic consolation game.

"It gave me a lot more confidence," Putnina said. "Being in the starting lineup makes me play better because I know coach (is) counting on me. It just gave me a lot more confidence."

Putnina's hustle in going after rebounds and loose balls, as well as her ability to score and play defense, changed the dynamic in the Coors Events Center paint.

Rice (5-3) couldn't double- or triple-team senior Jackie McFarland and ignore Putnina. The Owls paid for it as three players fouled out trying to match CU's physical presence inside.

"She's a challenge on the offensive and defensive end," CU coach Kathy McConnell-Miller said of Putnina. "It gives us a more balanced attack. She gave us good energy."

Putnina, who averaged 10.5 points and 13 rebounds in her first four starts last year but averaged 2.9 points and 4.3 rebounds overall, is expected to remain in the starting lineup in favor of junior Kara Richards.

Colorado fell behind 13-4 early to Rice, but the Buffs settled down when McConnell-Miller settled on a rotation of Putnina, McFarland, guards Susie Powers and Bianca Smith and forwards Brittany Spears and Hannah Skildum. That group went on a 13-0 run to take a 17-13 lead and the Buffs (2-2) went on to snap a two-game losing streak.

The Buffs began to emerge from their shooting slump, especially from the outside. In CU's two previous games, the Buffs shot 28.6 percent and 29 percent from 3-point range (Smith going 0-for-10 from 3-point range of Friday). Colorado improved to 33.3 percent against Rice.

McFarland also had a double-double with 15 points and 12 rebounds, while Powers scored her first points of the season to finish with 11. Spears added 10 points and seven rebounds.

"(Friday) there was no energy, no team play," Putnina said. "(Saturday) we were more as a team, together. We couldn't lose again on our home court. We won't let it happen again."

### **Clemson 77, Siena 67**

Forward April Parker earned Coors Classic MVP honors Saturday in leading Clemson past Siena in the championship game.

Parker finished with 15 points on 7-of-10 shooting against Siena, which suffered from 21 turnovers.

Clemson, which had 19 assists to 10 turnovers, also received 14 points from guard Christy Brown, while Siena was led by Laura Menty's 28 points.

### **Colorado 72, Rice 55**

#### **RICE (55)**

**min fg-fga ft-fta rb ast pf tp**

Loggins 20 2-4 0-0 2 2 5 5

Berezhynska 19 5-11 4-4 8 1 5 14

Riverin 33 6-13 2-2 4 3 1 14

Watts 32 1-3 0-0 4 2 1 2

Fulton 22 2-11 0-0 3 1 2 4

Hudson 13 2-7 2-2 0 0 1 7

Horne 11 0-1 0-0 1 3 0 0

Carmon 11 0-0 0-0 1 0 2 0

Wittmayer 18 2-6 1-1 2 0 5 5

Mayse 21 2-5 0-0 2 0 2 4

**Totals: 200 22-61 9-9 29 12 24 55**

#### **COLORADO (72)**

**min fg-fga ft-fta rb ast pf tp**

Spears 29 2-7 4-4 7 6 2 10

Putnina 34 4-8 7-9 12 0 3 15

McFarland 35 4-6 3-4 11 7 4 12

Houston 10 1-3 0-0 0 0 1 3

Powers 38 4-9 0-0 5 3 2 11

Smith 14 2-6 0-0 1 1 1 6

Blythe 5 0-1 0-0 1 0 0 0

Skildum 25 3-6 1-3 4 2 2 8

Richards 10 3-3 1-2 0 0 1 7

**Totals: 200 23-49 16-22 41 19 16 72**

**Score by halves:**

Rice 31 24 — 55

Colorado 39 33 — 72

**3-point field goals** — Rice (2-10): Loggins 1-1, Berezhynska 0-1, Riverin 0-1, Watts 0-1, Fulton 0-2, Hudson 1-1, Wittmayer 0-2, Mayse 0-1; Colorado (10-30): Spears 2-7, Putnina 0-1, McFarland 1-1, Houston 1-3, Powers 3-7, Smith 2-6, Blythe 0-1, Skildum 1-4.

**Officials** —Hermann, Dahlem, Courteau.

**Technical fouls** — None.

**Attendance** — 891

**STEALS**

**Rice (3):**Loggins 2, Riverin.

**Colorado (5):**Putnina 3, Powers, Blythe.

**BLOCKED SHOTS**

**Rice (0):**none.

**Colorado (3):**Putnina 2, Skildum.

**TURNOVERS**

**Rice (12):**Loggins, Berezhynska 3, Riverin 4, Fulton 3.

**Colorado (19):**Spears, Putnina 5, McFarland 4, Houston, Powers, Skildum 5, Richards 2.



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