

# denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

college basketball

## Revival in Boulder for CU women

On verge of entering top 25, women's program eager to re-establish success

By Chris Dempsey  
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 12/21/2007 01:15:38 AM MST



In her third season as CU coach, Kathy McConnell-Miller is rebuilding the Buffs into a national force. (Cyrus McCrimmon, The Denver Post)

BOULDER — In retrospect, it hasn't been that long since Colorado women's basketball registered mention on a national scale. It only seems like it's been forever.

USA Today had the 2003-04 Buffs ranked No. 19 in its final poll. But three seasons of lows can

feel like an eternity, and few know this perception vs. reality struggle as intimately as CU senior forward Jackie McFarland. She is a Ceal Barry recruit, the last link to a coach and a time when Colorado women's basketball was a force. But McFarland has never had a chance to live it up on the court.

That, however, is changing.

The Buffaloes (7-2) have won six consecutive games going into tonight's game against visiting Dartmouth and are on the verge of breaking into



Colorado forward Jackie McFarland (45). (Daily Camera file | Joshua Lawton)

the top 25. Two wins came over ranked opponents, including then-No. 20 Vanderbilt in

Advertisement

TARGET COUPON
EXPIRES 3/3/08

## FREE

### Twenty 4x6" basic prints

9856-0113-2647-5849-0376-5806-89

Offer available at Target One-hour Photo Labs. Go to Target.com/photo for the location nearest you. One-hour service limited to machine capacity. Limit one item or offer per coupon. Offer not available for prints made on the Kodak Picture Kiosk. Void if copied, transferred, purchased, sold or prohibited by law. No cash value. Maximum retail value \$4.40 for combined free offer.

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™

# denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

Nashville.

"After that Vanderbilt game, it almost brings tears to my eyes just knowing the past three years, the struggles; low point after low point after low point, waiting to get here and get back to that Colorado tradition of winning," McFarland said. "Now it's finally here. To see that team chemistry going, it's like everyone is excited and wanting to be here and wanting to play basketball. It's awesome. It's what I came here for."

Kathy McConnell-Miller, hired before the 2005-06 season, has slowly breathed life back into a program that, under Barry, won four conference titles and went to 12 NCAA Tournaments, including six Sweet Sixteens and three Elite Eights.

"I've always said that it's a process," McConnell-Miller said. "I didn't expect it to happen overnight, and I don't think anyone, at least in our basketball circle here, expected it to happen overnight. It's an ongoing process. We're happy right now, excited about the progress that's been made."

Until now in McFarland's career at CU, wins have been scarce. There were nine, nine and 13 before this season.

It led to a sitdown between McFarland and McConnell-Miller late last season. McFarland's name is peppered throughout the CU record book. When she leaves, she'll own marks that will show her to be one of the

best players the Buffs have ever had. But when she approached the coach, only wins were on her mind.

"More than anything, you're not going to remember those games where you had 27 points," McFarland said. "The games you remember are like the Vanderbilt game, when you beat a top-25 team on their floor. I haven't been to the postseason, not even the WNIT, and that's something that I really, really want to do."

"Not being able to do that has been really frustrating for me, and I've been telling (Coach) this whole year, I don't care what my numbers are as long as we get to the postseason."

The coach has no problem with that.

"She wants to see the wins and losses improvement," McConnell-Miller said. "In a very respectful way, that was communicated with both of us. I told her that by addition through the recruiting process that was going to happen, but it also needed to happen through her leadership."

No one is getting overexcited within the program knowing the majority of the season remains, including a rugged Big 12 conference schedule. Ten teams have 7-2 or better records, five are ranked in both polls, and four others, including CU, are receiving votes.

"That's no joke," McConnell-Miller said.

Advertisement

TARGET COUPON		EXPIRES 3/3/06	
<b>FREE</b>	<b>Twenty 4x6" basic prints</b>		
<small>Offer available at Target One-hour Photo Labs. Go to Target.com/photo for the location nearest you. One-hour service limited to machine capacity. Limit one item or offer per coupon. Offer not available for prints made on the Kodak Picture Kiosk. Void if copied, transferred, purchased, sold or prohibited by law. No cash value. Maximum retail value \$4.40 for combined free offer.</small>			<b>9856-0113-2647-5849-0376-5806-89</b>

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

# denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

"It's RPI strong, it's frontline strong, it's depth strong, it's quickness strong. It's, in my opinion, the strongest conference in the country top to bottom."

An infusion of young talent and a switch from a plodding high-low offense to more free-flowing sets have been a plus for the Buffs. Freshman forward Brittany Spears is one of three young players who rank among the top four on the team in scoring and rebounding.

"Everybody's feeling pretty good, but they know we have to work harder, don't be happy with the wins," Spears said. "Don't act like you can't lose. Just work hard everyday in practice."

The team is aware of the history it seeks to relive, McConnell-Miller said.

"It's all over the media guide, it's in the locker room," she said. "They know the program that they've come to. They know the rich tradition, the championships, the NCAA Tournaments, and it's not talked about a whole lot, but there's the underlying message that the potential for this program to year in and year out be ranked is there. And it's up to them to continue that. They know it."

Chris Dempsey: 303-954-1279 or [cdempsey@denverpost.com](mailto:cdempsey@denverpost.com)

Advertisement

TARGET COUPON		EXPIRES 3/3/06	
<b>FREE</b>	<b>Twenty 4x6" basic prints</b>		
<small>Offer available at Target One-hour Photo Labs. Go to Target.com/photo for the location nearest you. One-hour service limited to machine capacity. Limit one item or offer per coupon. Offer not available for prints made on the Kodak Picture Kiosk. Void if copied, transferred, purchased, sold or prohibited by law. No cash value. Maximum retail value \$4.40 for combined free offer.</small>			<b>9856-0113-2647-5849-0376-5806-89</b>

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™



# Bufs turn attention strictly to basketball

## CU hosts Dartmouth with pressure of final exams over

By Chris Shelton

Friday, December 21, 2007

File away the distractions and what's left?

For the Colorado women's basketball team, what's left are four games before the Big 12 season starts.

With finals out of the way, the Buffs can leave behind their worries over grades and focus on this final stretch of nonconference games, which begins with today's 7 p.m. home game against the Dartmouth Big Green (1-7).

"It's a time now when you don't have anything else going on except for basketball," senior forward Jackie McFarland said. "For me, it was one of the hardest semesters (this fall) because I missed a lot of practices due to my class schedule. Now I feel relieved. I feel like I can get focused on basketball and get in a flow. It's hard to get in a flow when there's so many people here one day and gone the next."

McFarland, one of the top students on the team, missed at least one practice a week, sometimes two, this semester due to scheduling conflicts with classes. She conducted individual workouts on her own time to make up for missing practice.

McFarland was held below her averages for scoring and rebounding in last week's 64-29 win over Texas Southern. But several players had finals the afternoon before the game or the next day, which was distracting, to say the least.

"It's a bit of relief not having to go to class -- it's one less ball you have to juggle," said sophomore guard BiancaSmith, who has become a key part of CU's offense this season with her 3-point shooting. "We have to put that behind us now. We have to focus on winning these games."

The Buffs (7-2) have a chance to enter the Associated Press' Top 25 if they win tonight. Fellow Big 12 up-and-comer Oklahoma State suffered a big loss to TCU on Tuesday and the No. 20 Cowgirls could fall out of the rankings, opening up a spot for CU, which is sitting at No. 26.

To take advantage of this opportunity, CU will try to improve the way it ran its offense against Texas Southern. The Buffs shot just 32.3 percent for the game, including 16.1 percent from 3-point territory. Colorado needs to score from the outside because opponents have been employing a zone defense against the Buffs. The best way to get teams out of the zone defense is to knock down outside shots so that defenders have to come outside and can't collapse on the post players, such as McFarland.

The key may be Smith, who went 0-for-11 from the field in CU's loss to Siena last month. She shot much better in CU's wins over ranked opponents Wyoming and Vanderbilt, but slid back to 4-for-11 last

week against Texas Southern.

"I just shoot and if goes it in, it goes in," Smith said. "If it doesn't, just continue to shoot -- as we can see from Siena. ... If you don't put up shots, they don't have a chance to go in. Regardless of whether you are 0-for-11 or 11-for-11, you have to shoot the ball, especially against zone defenses. If I'm not hitting, I have to get the ball to those who are."



© 2006 Daily Camera and Boulder Publishing, LLC.