



Bufs' win streak hits lucky No. 7

CU overcomes 22 turnovers against Dartmouth

By Ryan Thorburn

Saturday, December 22, 2007

I will not turn the ball over. I will not turn the ball over. I will not turn the ball over. ...

"I'm thinking about having them write it 1,000 times on the blackboard," Kathy McConnell-Miller said after Colorado's 57-43 victory over Dartmouth on Friday night at the Coors Events Center.

The Buffs (8-2) turned the ball over 22 more times to help the undersized Big Green (1-8) stay in the game into the second half.

The good news is that CU's pre-holiday generosity with the basketball might be the head coach's only real headache right now.

"We turn it over in practice, we turn it over getting on the bus, we turn it over," McConnell-Miller lamented. "The one thing I wish I could fix going into break and Big 12 play is turnovers. ... It's going to catch up to them."

Despite committing 195 turnovers this season, an average of 19.5 per game, the Buffs have won seven consecutive games and are on the verge of a top 25 ranking.

And the players who have suffered through the losing seasons in recent years aren't going to complain about sloppy or ugly wins in December.

"It has been a great season so far," senior Jackie McFarland said. "It's nice to see all the hard work finally paying off. I didn't see the results of our hard work in the win-loss column during my first three seasons here, but seeing it now makes it feel even more rewarding."

In the end, the combination of McFarland (12 points, 11rebounds), Brittany Spears (13 points, nine rebounds) and Kara Richards (season-high 11 points, seven rebounds) proved to be too much for a Dartmouth team that wasn't afraid to mix it up in the paint against a Big 12 opponent.

"They did a good job changing up their defenses," McFarland said. "They're one of the scrappiest and toughest teams we've played. ... We're going to have to play against teams like that where they're not going to go away."

The Buffs led 35-24 at the intermission thanks to a 14-0 run that turned a 22-18 deficit into a 32-22 advantage in 4:45. The Big Green shot 24.2 percent from the field in the first half and went without points of any kind for 6:37 during CU's run.

The visitors from the Ivy League cut the deficit to 35-29 early in the second half before a Bianca Smith 3-pointer finally got CU's offense restarted.

"It may not have been the prettiest game with all the turnovers," Richards said. "But we also need to look at the 13 assists and be happy with that."

Richards was 5-for-5 from the field. The rest of the team was 15-for-46.

"She had the best week of practice, she was off the charts," McConnell-Miller said. "We hoped she could translate it onto the court and she was able to do that."

This is the best start to a season and win streak the program has enjoyed since opening the 2003-04 campaign 12-2 with a nine-game win streak mixed in.

I will enjoy the holiday break. I will enjoy the holiday break. I will enjoy the holiday break. ...

"They should be really happy with an 8-2 record," McConnell-Miller said. "They've accomplished a lot and I'm proud of them."

Notable

McFarland was 6-for-6 at the foul line and passed Shelley Sheetz for third-place on CU's all-time free throws made list at 431 and counting. ... CU racked up 13 blocked shots, which is the second-highest total in team history. The Buffs blocked 16 shots during a 99-60 win over Sam Houston State on Dec. 14, 2000. ... Dartmouth was the fourth team CU has held under 50 points this season. The Buffs held opponents under 50 points a total of three times in the previous three seasons. ... The Buffs will take a holiday break before returning to practice on Dec. 26 to prepare for a home game against Southern Utah on Dec. 28.



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Win isn't pretty, but it's CU's 7th in row

*By Justin Williams
Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — For the past three years, ugly losses have been commonplace for the Colorado women's basketball team.

So an ugly win Friday night didn't feel so bad.

The Buffs outlasted Dartmouth, 57-43, at the Coors Events Center for their seventh straight win, in which CU committed 22 turnovers and shot 39 percent from the floor against a one-win team. But for players such as senior Jackie McFarland, who hasn't seen a winning season since she came to Boulder, getting any W is spectacular.

"The hard work is finally paying off," McFarland said. "Seeing this and looking back on the past three years — working day in and day out and not really seeing any results — it makes it so much sweeter and so much more valuable when you can know you've been working for three years and you can come out put together this kind of run."

At 8-2, CU is off to its best start since 2003-04, including two wins over ranked opponents — but Friday night's performance wasn't quite indicative of the special season Colorado hopes it's embarking upon.

Dartmouth (1-8) didn't come out shooting the ball particularly well, either, but it took a five-point lead midway through the first half. The Buffs went on a 20-4 run, however, to close out the half, and they never looked back.

Junior Kara Richards, who lost her starting job after the third game of the season, was a big part of the turnaround.

Richards' 11 points and seven rebounds were both season highs, and Buffs coach Kathy McConnell-Miller said it was Richards' preparation this week that set her apart.

"She of all people had a great week of practice. She was vocal; she was energetic," McConnell-Miller said. "She was off the charts as far as energy this week. We hoped as staff that that was going to carry over into the game, and it did."

Richards said it felt good to contribute the way she knows she can, especially after a tough couple weeks of finals.

"Being an upperclassman, I was able to focus more with exams, being an actual student-athlete instead of just an athlete," she said. "I think that was the biggest difference."

While the Buffaloes seem to be picking up a habit of winning, McConnell-Miller is none too pleased with another habit they're picking up.

"We can't credit anybody for turning us over. We turn it over in practice; we turn it over getting on the bus. We turn it over," the third-year coach said. "It's amazing to me. If it was one thing, as a coach I'd say it's easy to fix, but it's offensive fouls, it's travels, it's errant passes — and it's frustrating."

Colorado is averaging nearly 20 turnovers a game this season, and McConnell-Miller said that could be attributed to an overconfident team. But with the Big 12 schedule just a few weeks away, she said it's something the Buffs had better fix quickly.

"They feel like it hasn't hurt them so far, but it's going to catch up to them," she said.

NOTES: McConnell-Miller said the team will take the next four days off for the holidays. ... McFarland had 12 points and 11 rebounds Friday for her 41st career double-double. ... CU freshman Brittany Spears scored a game-high 13 points. ... CU tallied 13 blocks against Dartmouth, the second-highest mark in team history. The only better performance was a 16-block effort against Sam Houston State in 2000.