



Bufs' exhibition an evaluation tool

McConnell-Miller will use game to gauge team's grasp of new offense

By Chris Shelton

Thursday, November 8, 2007

With a new offense and several young players expected to contribute to this year's Colorado women's basketball team, today's exhibition game against the Colorado School of Mines will be a useful evaluating tool for the CU coaching staff.

The Buffs host the Orediggers at 7 p.m. in the Coors Events Center in what will be CU's only exhibition game before the season starts on Nov. 16 at San Francisco.

"It's going to help us see who's really adjusted to the offense, the flow of the offense, where the shots come from, and who really understands it," CU coach Kathy McConnell-Miller said. "It's going to help (the coaching staff) the most to really evaluate our players."

McConnell-Miller and her staff will be taking an extra long look at the guards. Senior Susie Powers is slated to start at point guard and sophomore Bianca Smith at shooting guard. Freshman Brittany Spears, who plays as if a guard, will start at small forward.

But McConnell-Miller admitted that she doesn't yet know who will be her regular starters. Sophomore Whitney Houston started the last 11 games last year at point guard and freshman point guard Britney Blythe has been receiving rave reviews in practices. Spears could move to shooting guard and either sophomore Aija Putnina or junior Hannah Skildum could play small forward. Junior college transfer Dina Piterniece would be another option if she weren't suffering from a foot injury and out until early December.

McConnell-Miller is looking for a guard combination that can score and not turn the ball over. Turnovers were CU's Achilles heel last year in going 13-17.

"It's going to be a test for the guards to see what we've worked on and how that translates to game situations," McConnell-Miller said. "We need our backcourt to really take care of the ball. This year we have some players that can shoot it. ... Our backcourt has the least amount of experience and we have really focused on taking care of the basketball."

"All of the coaches carry this little card. It has last year's turnovers and where we were in the conference. That's what's keeping us from making the biggest jump, the fact that we need to take care of it better."



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interview - ann strother

CU finally gets star to assist Buffaloes

Strother returns to her Colorado basketball roots

By Chris Dempsey
The Denver Post

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A former Highlands Ranch prep All-American and UConn star, Ann Strother returns to her Colorado roots as director of basketball operations for the University of Colorado women's team. (Post / John Leyba)

The last time Ann Strother was in Colorado, she was busy winning basketball state titles with Highlands Ranch High School. Now back - and on the staff of University of Colorado's women's coach Kathy McConnell-Miller - Strother took time to sit down with Denver Post

staff writer Chris Dempsey for a quick question-and-answer session.

Q: CU recruited you out of high school but couldn't get you then. How did the Buffs get you now?

A: (Laughs.) That's a hard question. Well, all my family's here. I've always wanted to come back to Colorado since I left. This just seemed like a perfect opportunity to be back here. I'm just really excited and happy and looking forward to it.

Q: So you eventually want to coach?

A: Yeah, I'm definitely interested in coaching. This is a really good position, because I get to see the business side of things as well as the coaching. I love what I do.

Q: You still play for the WNBA's Indiana Fever, right?

A: Yeah. It's good. This will be my second year in Indiana, and I love the team, the girls, the coaches and everything. So, I'm looking forward to getting back there.

Q: Now, you also played in Spain and Siberia?

A: Yeah, I was in Spain when I found out about the (CU) job. Kathy got ahold of my mom and was like, "We have this job open; would you be interested in it?" It took a couple days to think about it, and I said, "Yeah, I'd love to be back here."

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Q: So you were on the next flight smokin' out of Spain?

A: Yeah. I was there 10 days and I came home.

Q: How cold was Siberia?

A: It was freezing. I was in Siberia for four months. It was really different from what I thought it would be. But it snowed all the time, and there were ice sculptures on every corner. Have you ever seen "The Chronicles of Narnia"? It was like being in Narnia.

Q: But I bet you got a great coat.

A: I did. I bought a big coat. A huge fur coat.

Q: Which is too warm for Colorado, right?

A: Yeah. I'll probably never wear it again, but it was freezing there. It had to go below my knees. And the gyms were heated, but not very well. So we'd practice in full sweats. Sometimes you'd come to the bench and put gloves on, and they served tea. They don't serve water, they serve tea at the end of the bench.

Q: Who's your favorite coach to play for?

A: Geno (Auriemma). I just loved playing for him at UConn and loved him as a person.

Q: Lady-killer Geno, eh?

A: Yeah, he's a ladies man. (Laughs.) No, I

think what I enjoyed so much about playing for him is he's tough and he's going to tell you exactly what he's thinking. Sometimes you don't want to hear it, but he's also going to turn around and kid with you and joke around. He makes it fun and intense at the same time.

Q: Tell me about your charity organization, Outward Bounce.

A: I'm raising money for a basketball court in Costa Rica. I have a friend who lived down there for a while and said the kids came to her and wanted basketball. It's kind of in a tropical area where there's really nothing for the kids to do. It's an \$8,000 project, just to put a court in outside, kind of a community activity.

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