



Bufs rally to overcome UNC

3-point barrage a mixed bag for CU

By Chris Shelton
Thursday, November 29, 2007

When the Colorado women's basketball players were sent home this summer and told to work on their 3-point shooting, the Buffs took it to heart.

But CU coach Kathy McConnell-Miller feared Wednesday that her team didn't fully understand their assignment.

Colorado's first seven shots against Northern Colorado were from 3-point range and only two were made as CU fell behind 12-6, a lead which the Bears extended to 19-11.

But CU started getting the ball inside to Jackie McFarland, who finished with 26 points, and then started making their 3-pointers to beat Northern Colorado 69-60 at the Coors Events Center.

"They misunderstood me in thinking that is what we were going to rely on this season," McConnell-Miller said of CU taking 36 shots from 3-point range. "That's not what we're looking for. We're looking for a more balanced inside-outside attack." The Buffs (2-3) set a school record with 21 shots from 3-point range in the first half and were one shy of a school record for a game.

Sophomore Aija Putnina set a career high with 15 rebounds, and added four blocked shots.

Senior Susie Powers produced one of her better efforts. She set a career high in assists with eight and tied career highs in points with 12 and rebounds with seven. She had only one turnover to increase her season total to three, with 16 assists.

McConnell-Miller attributed Powers' improved play (she didn't score in the first three games) to moving Powers from shooting guard to point guard two games ago. McConnell-Miller said Powers is more comfortable and confident when she has the ball in her hands and makes better decisions than others with the ball.

"Playing point guard comes naturally to me, especially this being my third year under coach Miller," Powers said. "I know what she's thinking. I know what she wants."

As expected, Northern Colorado (3-3) employed a zone defense against CU, collapsing on McFarland inside and forcing the Buffs to win the game with 3-point shooting. Colorado responded by making 36 percent of their 3s, up from their season average of 30.9 percent.

Piterniece treated

Dina Piterniece did not attend the game. The CU junior forward, who is expected to be a contributor this year, was undergoing therapy for her plantar fasciitis, which caused her broken toe. She will have to stay off her foot for a week and could be out for another month. She has not played this season due to injuring her foot in practice on Oct. 19.

Changes

Hannah Skildum made her first start of the season and 10th of her career to give CU a taller defender on the perimeter. Skildum started two games last year and seven games her freshman season. ... Caley Dow was the first center to come off the bench, playing in favor of Kara Richards, who started the first three games of the season. Dow played because of her ability to defend Northern Colorado's post players out on the perimeter

Sheetz invited

Former Colorado star Shelley Sheetz has taken a leave of absence from her head coaching duties at Pepperdine to return to Boulder and attend to her mother, Carol, who has brain cancer. The two have been invited to attend CU's home game against Wyoming on Dec. 5. Sheetz needed (and was granted) permission from McConnell-Miller to attend the game, as per NCAA rules. The Buffs play Pepperdine on Jan. 4.



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Powers proves point

CU senior hits career highs in win over UNC

By Brian Howell

Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Five games into the 2007-08 season, University of Colorado women's basketball coach Kathy McConnell-Miller hasn't settled on a starting No. 2 guard.

She's pretty sure she knows who she wants playing point guard, though.

On Wednesday night, senior Susie Powers set a career high with eight assists, and matched her career highs in points (12) and rebounds (seven), helping the Buffaloes to a 69-60 win over the University of Northern Colorado at the Coors Events Center.

Through three games, Powers was scoreless on 0-for-9 shooting, and she had dished five assists. All of that came while starting at shooting guard.

In two games since she was moved back to the point, Powers has averaged 11.5 points, 6.0 rebounds and 5.5 assists per game. She's hit 8-of-18 shots from the floor in that time.

"Susie wasn't performing very well, so we moved her back to the point, particularly against the zone, because I think her decision-making was better," CU head coach Kathy McConnell-Miller said. "I think she's more productive with the ball in her hands."

Powers, who has been a point guard for years, proved that Wednesday. Leading the offense, she played all 40 minutes. In addition to her great numbers, she turned the ball over just once.

"Playing the point comes naturally to me, especially this being my third year under coach Miller," said Powers, who has 16 assists and just three turnovers on the season. "I feel like I know what she's thinking, I know what she wants. It's just a joy being an extension of her on the floor. As a two-guard, your focus and mindset is to score first, and as a player my mentality is more pass-first, score second. That's why I think the point guard position comes more natural to me."

Wednesday, Powers wasn't the only Buff to play well. Jackie McFarland had a game-high 26 points and pulled down eight rebounds, while Aija Putnina set a career high with 15 rebounds while also scoring seven points.

The Buffaloes are still a work in progress, however.

"We had some great individual performances, but I think collectively as a team we struggled with some combinations on the floor," McConnell-Miller said. "We just do a lot of things that don't really help us. We don't take advantage of opportunities. From turnovers to missed rebounds to missed free throws, it's just a situation where I'm learning a lot about this team. We're growing in certain areas, we're struggling in some."

One area in which the Buffs are struggling is at the two-guard position. Powers was ineffective there, Whitney Houston, who is also a natural point, hasn't worked out there, and Hannah Skildum didn't do much to nail down the job in her start Wednesday. McConnell-Miller said she hasn't yet figured out who to play at two-guard.

"I think we've got seven or eight players that we could start on any given night," she said. "We're just looking for a team that gets us off to the best start."

NOTES: CU's Dina Piterniece had treatment for chronic plantar fasciitis Wednesday and expected to be out of action for one to four weeks. The junior college transfer suffered a broken toe, caused by the plantar fasciitis, on Oct. 19 and had been practicing on a limited basis with the team. ... Whitley Cox led UNC with 21 points. ... The Buffs set a school record for 3-point attempts in the first half (21), and their 36 overall attempts fell one shy of tying the school record for a full game. ... Junior Kara Richards, who started the first three games, played just two minutes off the bench for CU.