



Bufs look to bounce back in Coors Classic

K-Mac calls Virginia loss an 'eye opener' for her hoops team

By Ryan Thorburn
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Kathy McConnell-Miller enjoyed the trip back to Virginia to face her alma mater.

Well, except for the final 16 minutes of Colorado's 77-43 loss to the No. 11 Cavaliers on Monday.

Despite a tough night shooting, the Bufs (2-1) were only trailing 33-25 about four minutes into the second half before Virginia -- a team that upset Tennessee in Knoxville earlier this season -- exploded with a 23-5 run.

CU had drubbed its first two opponents, Central Florida (86-59) and Colorado State (93-63), at home to open the season.

"I learned a lot more about this team in the loss than I did in the first two wins," McConnell-Miller said. "And they learned a lot about themselves. I think it was an eye opener. But a good one."

The Bufs were able to regroup on a quiet campus this week and return to action at 7:30 p.m. today againstUMass in the opening round of the Coors Classic. The first game between Minnesota and Drexel will kick the tournament off at 5 p.m.

"It's really important for us to respond after a tough road loss. It was easy to identify what we needed to improve on, where our weaknesses were and what Virginia was able to take away from us," McConnell-Miller said. "(The players') spirits are good. They're young, they don't hold on to things too long, and we're not going to let them hold on to things too long. It's time to focus on this tournament and focus on UMass."

The Bufs believe the lopsided loss in Charlottesville was more about what they didn't do than what the Cavaliers were able to do to them.

Brittany Spears, who scored 47 points in the first two games, was 0-for-6 from the field with four points. Bianca Smith, a capable shooting guard, was 3-for-17 from the field (1-for-13 from behind the arc) with seven points.

Kelly Jo Mullaney was the only CU player to score in double figures with 10 points on 3-for-10 shooting.

"I think after walking away from the game they realized that they can control how successful we can be by translating what we do in practice and how we prepare to game speed and game conditions," McConnell-Miller said. "That element is definitely there. I think they walked away disappointed with

the way they played with the knowledge and understanding that they can control that."

This will be the first meeting between CU and UMass. The Minutewomen are 2-2 with a pair of home wins (over Manhattan and New Hampshire) and road losses (at Vermont and Maine).

Minnesota has won four consecutive games since losing its opener at No. 5 Stanford. Drexel is 2-2.

"I think it's a really good field and I think it's important that we continue to bring different challenges to Coors," McConnell-Miller said. "We've got some experienced teams coming in.

"UMass is a tough team with a very experienced coach. Of these four teams, whoever is up for the challenge is going to come away with two victories."

The Buffs lost to Siena in the opening round of the Coors Classic last season.



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