



Smith, Buffs bounce back vs. Kangaroos

CU junior hits six 3-pointers en route to 21 points

By Ryan Thorburn
Saturday, December 20, 2008

Bianca Smith wasn't feeling like herself for the first seven games of this season.

Colorado's junior shooting guard was only making 24.5 percent of her 3-pointers and averaging 7.7 points per game.

So with 10 days between CU's Dec. 9 loss at Seton Hall and Saturday's game against Missouri-Kansas City, Smith spent a lot of time in Kathy McConnell-Miller's office (also known as the Coors Events Center) working on a cure for the early-season slump.

"I made a couple of appointments with the Shot Doctor," Smith said.

"That would be me," McConnell-Miller said.

Whatever CU's head coach was prescribing worked, as Smith finished 6-for-8 from behind the arc and scored 21 points to lead the Buffs to a 71-49 victory over UMKC at the Coors Events Center.

"I just thought her confidence was really struggling," McConnell-Miller said. "I felt like the more time I spent working on her shot the better she was going to get. I think it was all about her shot, not anything technical."

The Buffs (4-4) built a 22-6 lead after Smith knocked down four 3-pointers right out of the gate.

"I thought we came out better than we've come out in a long time," McConnell-Miller said.

And then CU didn't score a single point for more six minutes.

The Kangaroos (4-7) -- who turned the ball over 11 times in their first 13 possessions -- rallied to tie the score 24-24 on a layup by Mariah Davis with 46.8 seconds remaining.

Brittany Spears finally stopped the 16-2 run by the visitors with a 3-pointer, and the Buffs limped into the locker room with a 27-26 lead.

"When we were only up one point at halftime and they had turned the ball over 19 times, that was very alarming to me," McConnell-Miller said.

The turnover-prone Kangaroos shot 50 percent from the field (11-for-22) and made both of their 3-point attempts while the Buffs shot 31 percent (9-for-29) from the field in the first 20 minutes.

In the second half CU turned up the heat defensively and started cashing in the UMKC gifts for easy transition baskets.

The Buffs shot 48.1 percent after the intermission and held the Kangaroos to 32.1 percent shooting.

Kara Richards only played nine minutes in the first half after picking up three quick fouls. The 6-4 center scored 10 of her 15 points in the second half and led CU with eight rebounds.

"For us to be successful we need Kara to be on the floor," McConnell-Miller said.

Sophomore point guard Britney Blythe made her first career start and scored seven points with five assists and no turnovers. Kelly Jo Mullaney came off the bench and scored just two points with two assists and one turnover.

CU finished with 18 assists and 16 turnovers compared to nine assists and 32 turnovers for UMKC.

The Buffs trailed 33-29 early in the second half before Smith answered with a 3-pointer, Richards converted in the paint and Spears scored two quick hoops to spark a 42-16 run over the final 16:27.

"We just turned the ball over way too much," UMKC head coach Candace White-Whitaker said. "I thought our team looked good at times, and then at times we looked like we have seven freshmen, which we do."

Notable

A moment of silence was observed before the game for Whitney Houston's father, who lost his battle with cancer on Thursday. The junior guard is in her hometown of Memphis, Tenn., mourning with her family. Funeral services are Dec. 26 and Houston will rejoin the Buffs after the holiday break. ... The game was delayed for three minutes after the lights went off just before the opening tap. Both coaches agreed to play in a dimly lit atmosphere and all of the lights came back on with 14:16 remaining in the first half. ... CU improved to 3-0 against UMKC and 9-1 against teams from the Summit League. ... Attendance was 1,389.

Colorado 71, UMKC 49

UMKC (49)

min fg-fga ft-fta rb ast pf tp

Nance 16 1-4 0-0 3 0 2 2

M.Davis 28 3-8 0-0 8 0 2 6

Wimberly 25 0-0 0-0 5 4 2 0

Morris 35 8-19 5-6 10 1 3 23

Bridges 11 2-3 0-0 0 0 3 4

Aldridge 15 0-3 0-0 0 2 4 0

H.Davis 20 3-7 0-0 2 1 0 8

Thomas 8 1-2 0-2 1 1 0 2

Eldridge 25 2-4 0-0 3 0 4 4

Tinner 14 0-0 0-0 5 0 1 0

Halsig 3 0-0 0-0 0 0 0 0

Totals: 200 20-50 4-11 37 9 21 49

COLORADO (71)

min fg-fga ft-fta rb ast pf tp

Spears 32 7-16 4-5 7 3 0 19

Richards 24 5-7 5-8 8 1 3 15

Fressle 28 1-11 2-2 6 4 2 4

Smith 34 6-12 3-4 1 2 2 21

Blythe 35 2-4 3-4 2 5 1 7

Skildum 8 0-2 1-2 2 1 3 1

Seabrook 9 0-1 0-0 0 0 1 0

Dale 2 0-0 0-0 0 0 0 0

Piterniece 3 0-0 2-2 0 0 0 2

Mullaney 16 1-2 0-0 3 2 3 2

Dunn 9 0-1 0-0 1 0 0 0

Totals: 200 22-56 20-27 30 18 15 71

Score by halves:

UMKC 26 23 -- 49

Colorado 27 44 -- 71

3-point field goals -- UMKC (4-11): Morris 2-5, H. Davis 2-5, Eldridge 0-1; Colorado (7-18): Smith 6-8, Spears 1-4, Fressle 0-2, Skildum 0-1, Mullaney 0-1, Dunn 0-1.

Officials --Luis Gonzalez, Bill Larance, Michol Murray

Technical fouls -- None.

Attendance -- 1,389

STEALS

UMKC (4):Nance, Wimberly, Morris, Aldridge

Colorado (14):Smith 4, Spears 3, Richards 2, Fressle 2, Blythe 2, Skildum.

BLOCKED SHOTS

UMKC (1):Morris

Colorado (1):Richards

TURNOVERS

UMKC (32):Wimberly 5, H. Davis 4, Nance 3, Morris 3, Eldridge 3, Halsig 3, Bridges 2, Aldridge 2, Thomas 2, Tinner 2, H. Davis, 2 team

Colorado (16):Fressle 4, Spears 3, Richards 2, Smith 2, Seabrook, Piterniece, Mullaney, Dunn, 1 team



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Strong second half carries CU

*By Patrick Ridgell
 Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — It alarmed Colorado women's basketball coach Kathy McConnell-Miller on Saturday night when her team led by only a point at halftime against a visitor that had committed 16 turnovers by the break, and 12 on its first 16 possessions of the night.

Fortunately for the Buffs' coach, things didn't get worse.

CU beat Missouri-Kansas City, 71-49, after struggling with the Kangaroos, who finished with 32 turnovers, until about 8 minutes remained. CU outscored UMKC, 21-5, from there and averted what would have been a scary loss.

Guard Bianca Smith led CU with 21 points. She hit six of eight 3s. Brittany Spears had 19 for the Buffs (4-4), who hadn't played since a 77-40 loss at Seton Hall on Dec. 9.

But the key for CU was keeping 6-foot-4 center Kara Richards on the floor in the second half. Three fouls limited her to nine minutes and five points before halftime. She finished with 15 points and a team-high eight rebounds.

"The difference in the game was Kara being on the floor in the second half," McConnell-Miller said. "That's going to have to fall on her shoulders. We need to emphasize her being on the floor for us to be successful."

Richards dwarfed the Kangaroos, whose roster does not list a player taller than 6 feet. She'll be bigger than a lot of opponents in 2008-09, but she'll need to be on the floor to allow CU's guards, whom she called "great," the space to work.

Richards said she was able to play 15 minutes in the second half without committing a foul because she worked harder.

"When I get tired, fatigued or just plain angry sometimes, I'll foul," she said. "I need to stop doing that."

After its first 16 possessions, UMKC (4-7) it settled down and starting handling CU's press better. It used a 13-1 run to get back into the game by the break.

McConnell-Miller pinpointed four first-half possessions that kept CU from opening a wider margin. Three ended with turnovers when the chance to score was easy, and a fourth came when forward Julie Seabrook missed an open layup. Individually, they weren't a big problem. Collectively, they were.

"Back to back to back to back is an issue," McConnell-Miller said. "That's a concern for us."

EXTRA POINTS: CU held a moment of silence before the game for Larry Houston, the father of guard Whitney Houston. He died Thursday morning. Whitney Houston, who's out for the year with a knee injury, has left Boulder to be with her family in Memphis until

COLORADO 71, MISSOURI-KANSAS CITY 49

UMKC (4-7)

Nance 1-4 0-0 2, Davis 3-8 0-0 6, Wimberly 0-0 0-0 0, Morris 8-19 5-6 23, Bridges 2-3 0-0 4, Aldridge 0-3 0-0 0, Davis 3-7 0-0 8, Thomas 1-2 0-2 2, Eldridge 2-4 0-0 4, Tinner 0-0 0-0 0, Halsig 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 20-50 5-8 49.

COLORADO (4-4)

Spears 7-16 4-5 19, Richards 5-7 5-8 15, Fressle 1-11 2-2 4, Smith 6-12 3-4 21, Blythe 2-4 3-4 7, Skildum 0-2 1-2 1, Seabrook 0-1 0-0 0, Dale 0-0 0-0 0, Piteriece 0-0 2-2 2, Mullaney 1-2 0-0 2, Dunn 0-1 0-0 0. Totals 22-56 20-27 71.

Halftime—CU 27-26. 3-Point Goals—UMKC 4-11 (Morris 2-5, Davis 2-5, Eldridge 0-1), CU 7-18 (Smith 6-8, Spears 1-4, Fressle 0-2, Blythe 0-1, Skildum 0-1, Mullaney 0-1, Dunn 0-1). Fouled Out—none. Rebounds—UMKC 37 (Morris 10), CU 30 (Richards 8). Assists—UMKC 9 (Wimberly 4), CU 18 (Blythe 5). Total Fouls—UMKC 21, CU 15. Technicals—none. A—1,389.

classes resume next month. ... CU started guard Britney Blythe at point for Kelly Jo Mullaney. Blythe finished with seven points, five assists and no turnovers in 35 minutes.

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