



Richards key to Buffs' turnaround vs. UMKC

Senior center missed much of first half with three fouls

By Ryan Thorburn
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Two different Colorado women's basketball teams showed up for Saturday night's game against Missouri-Kansas City.

The Buffs of the first half only led by one point at the intermission despite getting 16 turnovers from the Kangaroos. Bianca Smith was 4-for-8 from the field with 12 points but her teammates were a combined 5-for-21 from the field with 15 points.

The Buffs who played the second half -- including Smith, who finished with a game-high 21 points -- shot 48.1 percent from the field and outscored the visitors 44-23 en routeto a 71-49 victory.

What's the difference between the two versions of the 2008-09 Buffs?

"I think the difference was Kara Richards was in the game in the second half and she was a presence," CU head coach Kathy McConnell-Miller said. "And she wasn't in the first half."

Richards, a 6-4 senior center, picked up three quick fouls and only played nine minutes of the first half. She did not draw another whistle after the intermission and finished with 15 points on 5-for-7 shooting with a team-high eight rebounds and the Buffs' only blocked shot.

"I worked harder (in the second half)," Richards said. "When I get tired, fatigued, or just plain angry sometimes, I'll foul. I need to stop doing that."

Richards has scored 97 points through eight games, which equals her season output in 30 games last season. CU needs her to become a more dominant player in the paint to make up for the loss of Jackie McFarland.

"I think that's going to fall on Kara's shoulders and I think she has to realize that her role on this team is greater than she thinks it is," McConnell-Miller said. "We need to continue to emphasize that having her on the floor makes us better."

Even though the head coach believes her center can carry the Buffs inside, Richards believes her role is primarily to kick the ball out to Smith, Brittany Spears, Alyssa Fressle and the team's other promising perimeter players.

"Coach Miller has surrounded the post players with great guards," Richards said. "When the inside game is scoring, it opens it up for the outside game."

Smith was 6-for-8 from behind the arc against UMKC, and Spears was 7-for-16 from the field with 19 points.

Fressle, a talented freshman, will be trying to bounce back from a 1-for-11 shooting performance when the Buffs return

to action tonight against Saint Louis at the Coors Events Center (7 p.m., no television).

"Freshmen press. Alyssa's got that personality," McConnell-Miller said. "She wants greatness right away and she's going to strive for it every night out. So that 1-for-11 will turn into 5-for-7 here shortly. She'll turn it around."



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