



# K-Mac's Buffs need more from Spears

## Sophomore has struggled to score in Big 12 games

By Ryan Thorburn  
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BOULDER, Colo. — And the gauntlet continues in Austin tonight.

The Colorado women's basketball team -- which has opened Big 12 play with losses to No. 5 Baylor (63-50) and No. 22 Oklahoma State (79-43) -- will play No. 16 Texas at the Irwin Center (6 p.m., no television).

Win or lose, Kathy McConnell-Miller's team will have to put this game in the rear-view mirror immediately and begin preparing for No. 3 Oklahoma's visit to Boulder next Wednesday.

"That's the most difficult thing about this schedule is you can't really look back very long at what you did well and what you did wrong," McConnell-Miller said Friday after getting a last-minute one-on-one workout in with shooting guard Kelly Jo Mullaney before boarding the flight to Austin. "Because you have to quickly get ready for another great team in a few days."

The Buffs (8-6, 0-2) competed well at home in the conference opener against Baylor but allowed Oklahoma State to go on a 22-0 run during the lopsided loss in Stillwater.

CU was able to pick up a true road win at Hawaii in the non-conference finale but was also blown out in trips to Virginia (77-43) and Seton Hall (77-40).

"I would be more concerned if the players were frustrated or down after the games," McConnell-Miller said. "But the chemistry has been great and they just want to get back out there and keep playing and keep getting better."

After averaging about 20 points per game entering conference play Brittany Spears only scored a total of 25 points against Baylor and Oklahoma State. The Buffs need their most talented player to become a Big 12 star in order to make progress in the standings.

"They've really been focusing on trying to take Brittany away," McConnell-Miller said. "During non-conference play she was relying on her athleticism and now she's going to have to work within the framework of the offense to score."

The good news is 6-4 senior Kara Richards, who struggled with foul trouble throughout non-conference play, has stepped her game up in the Big 12 with 30 rebounds through two games.

CU has been working extensively on rebounding and defense during practices this week.

"Kara has really taken that focus to heart and worked at it," McConnell-Miller said. "That's a very positive thing because we've talked all season about how important she is to this basketball team."

The Longhorns (13-3, 1-1), despite a loss to Texas Tech on Wednesday, are averaging 77.8 points per game and lead the Big 12 in scoring margin (+23.4 ppg). Texas is also first in field-goal percentage defense (.332).

"We need to make sure that we play good transition defense and on offense if there is nothing there in transition we need to take care of the ball and run sets," McConnell-Miller said. "That's what we did in the second half at Oklahoma State and we were much better."

CU defeated Texas 67-52 last season at the Coors Events Center with Bianca Smith scoring 26 points to help her team snap a six-game losing streak.



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## CU women's preview: Texas

**TONIGHT:** Colorado travels to Austin to play No. 16 Texas at 6 p.m. at the Erwin Center.

**BROADCAST:** Television: None; Radio: KKZN AM 760 with Mike Rice (play-by-play) and Carol Callan (color).

**STORYLINE:** The Buffs (8-6, 0-2) are coming off a 79-43 loss at Oklahoma State in which they allowed a 22-0 run by the Cowgirls. ... The Longhorns (13-3, 1-1) are looking to bounce back from a 65-62 loss at Texas Tech.

**KEY STAT:** CU is 1-3 in true road games this season with a win at Hawaii and lopsided losses at Virginia (77-43), Seton Hall (77-40) and Oklahoma State (79-43).

**COACHES:** Kathy McConnell-Miller is 49-59 in her fourth season at CU. Gail Goestenkors is 35-16 in her second season at Texas.

### PROBABLE STARTERS:

**CU --** G Britney Blythe, 5-9, sophomore, 2.7 ppg, 1.6 rpg., G Bianca Smith, 5-9, junior, 10.2 ppg, 5.1 rpg, G Alyssa Fressle, 5-10, freshman, 9.1 ppg, 2.7 rpg, F Brittany Spears, 6-1, sophomore, 18.0 ppg, 7.6 rpg, C Kara Richards, 12.3 ppg, 7.0 rpg.

**UT --** F Earnesia Williams, 6-1, senior, 7.4 ppg, 5.1 rpg, G Carla Cortijo, 5-7, senior, 6.8 ppg, 3.2 rpg, G Erika Arriaran, 5-10, junior, 9.1 ppg, 3.3 rpg, G Brittainey Raven, 6-0, junior, 14.6 ppg, 3.0 rpg, F Ashley Lindsey, 6-4, senior, 7.4 ppg, 4.9 rpg.

**SERIES:** Texas leads 13-4 but lost 67-52 in Boulder last season.

**UP NEXT:** The Buffs will host No. Oklahoma on Wednesday at the Coors Events Center (7 p.m., FSN).



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