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tom kensler

## Promoting CU, aiding coaches a trip for Tripp

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

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Tracy Tripp got a chuckle last August during her first day as director of operations for the Colorado women's basketball program when she realized Buffs players were not aware of her background.

Tripp still ranks eighth on Colorado's all-time scoring list (1,574 points from 1985-89), but the younger players don't seem much interested in sports history.

While introducing herself to CU's Whitney Houston, Tripp asked the junior guard what part of her game needs work. Tripp had been an assistant at the University of Denver for the previous 13 years.

"Our conversation was just basic stuff, about Whitney's game and what she wants to improve," Tripp said. "Then Whitney said, 'Coach, you seem to know a lot about basketball. Did you play

somewhere?' "

With a straight face, Tripp told Houston that, yes, she played a little hoops — for Colorado.

"Wow! Dang!" said Houston.

As director of operations, Tripp, 41, is prohibited from on-the-court coaching. But she can watch practices and offer advice. "Tracy is a real asset to our staff," CU assistant Tom McConnell said. "She has a passion for the game and she knows the game."

Tripp enjoys helping recruit a different level of player than was possible at DU and likes promoting her alma mater.

"I still know how it felt the first time I stepped on this campus and how amazing it was," said Tripp, a native of Fort Collins.

Tripp also can help boost the morale of a struggling team by comparing the rebuilding process with her own experiences. Under Ceal Barry, Colorado was 14-14 in Tripp's sophomore year but reached the NCAA Tournament her junior and senior seasons.

"The situation we're in now feels very much the same," Tripp said. "I can express that with our current players and with recruits. We're trying to recreate that success."

Tripp said she would not have taken the job if she didn't believe restoring Colorado's winning tradition is possible.

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"It's all about recruiting," Tripp said. "I think with the high school talent we have in this state and what we have to offer at CU, this program can be special again."

## Distinguished visitor.

Don Meyer, coach at Division II Northern State in Aberdeen, S.D., was inducted Friday into the University of Northern Colorado Athletic Hall of Fame, along with his 1965-66 UNC teammates. This season, Meyer passed Bob Knight to become the winningest coach in the history of NCAA men's college basketball. He continues to recover from a serious auto accident on Sept. 5.

The Bears (13-17, 7-8 Big Sky) have clinched a spot in the conference tournament.

## Footnotes.

DU's men's squad outrebounded only one of its first 24 opponents but has won the board battle in three of its past four games. The other was a tie. . . . Wyoming senior guard Sean Ogirri has etched his name into the school's record book in his only season in Laramie after transferring from Wichita State. The former Denver East star already has surpassed the single-season record for 3-pointers, formerly held by Wyoming legend Fennis Dembo. Ogirri has made 85 treys. Dembo had 78 in his best season, 1986-87.

Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280 or [tkensler@denverpost.com](mailto:tkensler@denverpost.com)

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# CU women play host to Mizzou

## Bufs aim to put 'big picture' aside, focus on Tigers

By Kyle Ringo

Saturday, February 28, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — Focus on today and worry later about the big picture. That is the message Colorado women's basketball coach Kathy McConnell-Miller has given her team the past two days since a midweek loss at Iowa State.

The setback dropped the Buffs three games below .500 and into a situation that requires three wins to cap the regular season or a surprise run in the Big 12 Conference tournament if it hopes to play deep into March.

"There is no doubt I've sort of heard them talking about the rest of the way, and who plays who, and I think it's on their minds," McConnell-Miller said. "But I can't do anything about the fact that Kansas is playing Nebraska. We've got to control what we can control, and that's what I keep telling them right now."

Today's task is beating the Missouri Tigers in a 4 p.m. game at the Coors Events Center (FSN). The Buffs should enter the contest with plenty of confidence, having played some of their best basketball recently and having beaten the Tigers on the road early in conference play.

The game matches the two teams tied in the conference cellar. Junior guard Bianca Smith had a memorable night the last time she saw Missouri. Smith tied her CU single-game record with seven 3-pointers and led the Buffs to a rare conference road win.

McConnell-Miller has pointed to Smith's play as being integral to the success of the team down the stretch because she is the most likely option to provide complementary scoring to what is produced by senior Kara Richards and sophomore Brittany Spears, the third leading scorer in the Big 12 Conference.

Smith has been streaky in that regard this year, producing 20 points one night and three or four the next. Smith said she is aware the team needs more consistency from her or another player to put together the kind of winning streak the team so badly needs now. She said the Buffs are feeling good about the way they are playing despite having lost five of their past six games.

"Actually we're in pretty good spirits," Smith said. "You would think after the season we've had and a tough loss at Iowa State, that people would be down. But practice was very competitive (Thursday) with smiles on faces. It's been good morale in the locker room."

McConnell-Miller said the team the Buffs beat in Mizzou Arena last month has matured. Coach Cindy Stein has cut down her rotation and the Tigers are doing a better job of getting the ball into the hands of their best offensive players.

Alyssa Hollins, Jessra Johnson and Shakara Jones are each averaging double figures in scoring. Missouri has proven it can play at a high level when players are focused. The Tigers upset then-No. 14 Kansas State two weeks ago.



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## CU women's preview

By Kyle Ringo

Saturday, February 28, 2009

**BOULDER, Colo. — TODAY** -- Colorado (11-14, 3-10) plays host to Missouri (12-14, 3-10) at 4 p.m. at the Coors Events Center.

**BROADCAST -- Television:** Fox Sports Net with Mark Stout and Ceal Barry and Alanno Rizzo;

**Radio:** KVCU (1190 AM) with Mike Rice and Carol Callan.

**STORYLINE** -- The Buffs need a victory to keep alive hopes of finishing .500 or better and advance to the postseason.

**KEY STAT** -- The Buffs are averaging 17.4 turnovers and must take care of the ball today against an aggressive defense forcing an average of 19 turnovers per game.

**COACHES** -- Kathy McConnell-Miller is 52-67 in her fourth season at CU. Cindy Stein is 145-121 in nine seasons at Missouri.

### PROBABLE STARTERS:

**CU** -- G Kelly Jo Mullaney, 5-8, sophomore, 5.3 ppg, 1.5 apg.; G Bianca Smith, 5-9, junior, 10.0 ppg, 4.2 rpg; G Alyssa Fressle, 5-10, freshman, 8.0 ppg, 2.6 rpg; F Brittany Spears, 6-1, sophomore, 17.8 ppg, 8.0 rpg; C Kara Richards, 12.6 ppg, 7.2 rpg.

**MU** -- G Bekah Mills, 5-9, freshman, 5.9 ppg, 3.0 rpg; G Alyssa Hollins, 5-11, senior, 13.0 ppg, 3.4 rpg; G RaeShara Brown, 5-8, sophomore, 5.7 ppg, 6.0 rpg; F Jessra Johnson, 6-1, junior, 13.2 ppg, 6.9 rpg; F Shakara Jones, 6-2, sophomore, 10.4 ppg, 4.3 rpg.

**SERIES** -- CU leads 38-26, including the current three-game winning streak. A CU win would give the Buffs 39 victories over the Tigers, tying the program record for most over any team. CU has beaten Nebraska 39 times as well.

**UP NEXT** -- The Buffs travel to Nebraska on Tuesday for a 6:05 p.m. game. It is the last regular season road game of the year season.



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