



K-Mac's Buffs likely see postseason chances slip away

By Kyle Ringo
Saturday, February 28, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — There might have been more hope from the people in the stands at the Coors Events Center on Saturday than the players in Colorado uniforms for a dramatic late-season run of success.

In a game they had to have to keep any realistic hope of postseason play alive, the Buffs came out flat and never improved much. The result was a disheartening 66-55 loss to Missouri that left CU in the conference cellar (11-15, 3-11) with two games remaining in the regular season.

A confounded coach Kathy McConnell-Miller said she didn't have much to say to her team in the aftermath. She was upset with the performance and wanted first to analyze how she and her staff prepared before pointing fingers at players.

But her frustration was evident in the look on her face behind the postgame microphone.

"This is a very disappointing game," she said. "Not to take anything away from Missouri. Their game plan and execution was great.

"We started flat and I thought we finished flat. From a preparation standpoint, the players knew what they needed to do to win, but I was surprised how we came out and it carried through."

CU allowed the Tigers to build a 13-2 lead. In fact, they helped them. Three of Missouri's first six field goals came giftwrapped in sloppy turnovers from the Buffs, who have made a habit of that all year and in recent seasons, too. CU eventually gave the ball away 23 times.

"I don't think they understand the value of each possession because it hasn't improved dramatically over the course of the year," McConnell-Miller said.

Points on just one-third of those possessions could have led to a different outcome.

To the Buffs' credit, they worked their way back into it, trimming the lead to one point. They allowed it to balloon again before halftime.

Midway through the second half, CU had whittled it back to three points, but then came another ugly, undisciplined stretch in which they turned the ball over twice and committed an offensive foul in three of four possessions. The Tigers pushed the margin back to nine.

"The last time we played we had 20 shots we missed, and you can't do that," Missouri coach Cindy Stein said. "So we wanted to increase our percentage by getting more shots in the paint and have shot

selection, which I think we did a better job at today.”

Four Tigers scored in double figures led by forward Jessra Johnson who tallied 19 with seven rebounds. Alyssa Hollins and RaeShara Brown each scored 14 and the Tigers shot 49 percent for the game.

Missouri pulled to within a game of .500 at 13-14 overall and 4-10 in Big 12 play.

The Buffs had beaten the Tigers in Missouri last month on a night in which junior guard Bianca Smith tied her single-game school record with seven 3-pointers.

Smith was a nonfactor much of the game Saturday.

She played only 3 minutes in the first half and suffered a concussion, taking a blow to the head fighting for a rebound. She returned in the second half to score three points.

The Buffs were reliant on sophomore Brittany Spears and senior Kara Richards on the offensive end. They combined for 38 points and 15 rebounds but the other six Buffs who received playing time combined to make just seven of 23 shot attempts.

CU grabbed 18 rebounds to the Tigers' 12 in the first half, but Missouri badly outthustled the Buffs on the boards after intermission, finishing the game with a 35-31 rebounding advantage.

McConnell-Miller said her team failed to meet its top objective of the day which was limiting transition scoring. The Tigers athleticism led to fast breaks and layups too many times.

“From start to finish, they played with more energy than we did,” she said.



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CU falls to cellar in Big 12

*By Patrick Ridgell
Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — The Colorado women's basketball program fell into last place in the Big 12 Saturday. It's where the Buffs should be.

A 66-55 home loss to Missouri, a team that previously hadn't won a Big 12 road game this season, had a nasty effect on CU. It dropped the Buffs out of a tie with Missouri for 11th place. It also left coach Kathy McConnell-Miller red-faced and angry. Players looked confused.

The realization that this season is going nowhere must've dawned on them somewhere around the time Missouri grabbed its ninth offensive rebound of the second half, seconds before the game ended, while several Buffs just stood there, watching. Maybe they can't believe what's transpiring.

"You know you can beat this team, and when you lose to them, it's heartbreaking," CU's Brittany Spears said.

At 3-11 in the Big 12 and 11-15 overall, CU has two regular season games left — Tuesday at Nebraska and Saturday at home against No. 20 Kansas State. It'll take a much stronger effort than the one it mustered Saturday to win either. It hasn't finished last in the league since 2004-05, Ceal Barry's final year as coach.

The Buffs can pretty much kiss their postseason hopes goodbye. The Women's NIT automatically takes the highest-finishing team in each conference's final standings that does not receive an NCAA Tournament berth, and the Big 12 figures to receive several. But that next-best team must have at least a .500 record. And as of today, there are other Big 12 programs the WNIT should eye instead of CU, which has lost six of its past seven and is not improving.

Postseason prospects are the least of its problems, though. McConnell-Miller couldn't explain what troubled her most.

"This was a very disappointing game. ... I thought we started flat and I thought we finished flat," McConnell-Miller said.

"From start to finish, I thought they played with more energy than we did. ... The expectation is you come ready to play."

Missouri opened with a 13-2 run, and outscored CU 19-11 over the final 10 minutes, 14 seconds, thanks largely to rebounding. Missouri grabbed 23 to CU's 12 in the second half. As usual, turnovers — 23 of them Saturday — burdened CU.

When asked why CU was flat, center Kara Richards said she didn't know and added that Missouri (13-14, 4-10) is a "fantastic team."

MISSOURI 66, COLORADO 55

MISSOURI (13-14, 4-10)

Johnson 8-12 1-4 19, Jones 5-8 2-4 12, Mills 0-5 1-2 1, Hollins 6-18 0-0 14, Brown 7-9 0-0 14, Gee 0-0 0-0 0, Richbow 0-0 2-4 2, Scott 0-1 0-0 0, Flores 2-4 0-0 4. Totals 28-57 6-14 66.

COLORADO (11-15, 3-11)

Spears 10-22 3-6 26, Richards 4-6 4-4 12, Fressle 0-5 0-0 0, Smith 1-5 0-0 3, Mullaney 3-8 0-0 7, Skildum 0-1 0-0 0, Dale 1-1 0-0 2, Dunn 2-3 0-0 5. Totals 21-51 7-10 55.

Halftime—Missouri 33-29. 3-Point Goals— Missouri 4-13 (Johnson 2-3, Hollins 2-8, Mills 0-2), CU 6-19 (Spears 3-8, Smith 1-4, Mullaney 1-3, Dunn 1-2, Skildum 0-1, Fressle 0-1). Fouled Out—none. Rebounds— Missouri 35 (Brown 8), CU 31 (Richards 10). Assists— Missouri 10 (Mills 5), CU 10 (Fressle 5). Total Fouls— Missouri 13, CU 13. Technicals—none. A—2,931.

Missouri? Fantastic?

CU did not appear ready to play. McConnell-Miller said she was surprised by it all, and added she chose to say little about it after the game, opting to “take a step back” before reaching a conclusion.

TIP-INS: CU guard Bianca Smith banged her head battling for a rebound with 8:30 left in the first half. First feared to have a concussion, Smith returned after halftime, and CU reported after the game that she is fine.

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