



Spears, Fressle honored by Big 12

CU's Richards makes honorable mention team

By Ryan Thorburn
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BOULDER, Colo. — The Colorado women's basketball team lost its last five regular-season games, eight of its last nine and finished 3-13 in Big 12 play.

So why is Kathy McConnell-Miller still smiling?

Well, probably because the best player on the roster is the hardest worker on the team and considered one of the top 10 players in the loaded Big 12.

And Brittany Spears is still only a sophomore.

Before Monday's practice the Buffs learned that Spears was named second-team All-Big 12 after averaging 18.1 points and 7.8 rebounds. The selections were made in voting by the league coaches.

"Spears is phenomenal," CU shooting guard Bianca Smith said. "She never stops going. She could play four or five games in a row and never stop. ... She's just determined to be on the court, and I love and admire her for that. She inspires us to want to win for her and for ourselves."

The Buffs finished the regular season 11-17 overall, but McConnell-Miller is excited about the future with Spears and freshman Alyssa Fressle, who was selected to the conference's All-Rookie team, leading the way.

"There were some ups and downs, but I think that was a little bit expected losing (point guard) Whitney (Houston)," said Fressle, who leads all Big 12 freshmen in steals (1.8 spg), assists (3.4 apg) and minutes played (31.3 mpg). "But I thought I did all right and I got a lot better throughout the season. I've really enjoyed it."

The talented former Highlands Ranch star said adjusting to the length of a college schedule and the physical nature of the Big 12 was her biggest challenge.

"It is such a longer season and my body feels like it's always tired," said Fressle said. "But we have a great training staff and you learn how to balance it and get a lot of rest."

McConnell-Miller, whose Buffs are the 12th seed at this week's conference tournament, believes the program will be ready to make a jump back into prominence in the next two seasons with Spears and Fressle playing together along with a highly touted recruiting.

"(Spears) is awesome to play with and go against in practice. She's the type of player that makes

everyone around her better with how hard she goes," Fressle said. "I see great things for her in the next few years and she has already done so much."

CU senior center Kara Richards was honorable mention All-Big 12. She was second in the conference in field-goal percentage (56.9 percent) while averaging 13.2 points and 7.3 rebounds.

The Buffs will face No. 5 Kansas State in the opening round of the Big 12 Tournament at 10 a.m. on Thursday at the Ford Center in Oklahoma City.



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