



Fressle leads way for CU in exhibition

Freshman scores game-high 18, adds 7 rebounds

By Ryan Thorburn

Monday, November 10, 2008

Three doesn't seem to be a crowd in the Colorado backcourt.

Kathy McConnell-Miller's smaller, faster and more explosive lineup aced its only preseason test with an 86-44 exhibition victory over Regis on Sunday at the Coors Events Center.

The three-guard lineup of Kelly Jo Mullaney, Bianca Smith and Alyssa Fressle combined for 45 points on 15-for-24 shooting with 10 assists and five turnovers.

"I had some jitters before the game but I think that is normal," said Fressle, the highly touted freshman from Highlands Ranch High School who led all scorers with 18 points and also had seven rebounds, three assists, one block and a steal in 33 minutes. "It was good to get this one under our belt. Now I'm looking forward to the next game when it counts."

This was the Buffs' only exhibition game before next Sunday's regular-season opener against Central Florida at the Coors Events Center. The team also scrimmaged Air Force as part of its preseason preparations.

Since CU made its run to the WNIT's Final Four last April, the team has lost Big 12 legend Jackie McFarland to graduation and starting point guard Whitney Houston to a season-ending knee injury.

Mullaney, who sat out last season after transferring from Colorado State, appears to have smoothly moved into Houston's spot. She was 5-for-6 from the field with 16 points, three assists and three turnovers in 22 minutes.

"The chemistry on the court was amazing," said Mullaney, who scored a team-high 17 points for the Rams during a 56-51 CU victory in the rivalry on Nov. 29, 2006, at the Coors Events Center. "And it was great to be out there and to play a game after two years of sitting out basically."

Kara Richards was 3-for-5 from the field with nine points. The coaching staff doesn't expect her to be as productive as McFarland, but they do need to get more than one rebound from the 6-foot-4 senior center, especially against an under-sized Division II team.

"That was not what I think our expectations were for Kara. That's just not what we expected," McConnell-Miller said. "She had been having far better practices against our male practice squad and really dominating on the interior. We definitely expected her to do that today."

Sophomore Brittany Spears, perhaps the most talented player on the roster, picked up where she left off

last season with 14 points, five rebounds, five steals and a block.

"It's a work in progress," McConnell-Miller said. "I think it is a very compatible offense for our personnel. The way this group reacted and gelled was a good sign."

The players will be working on shot selection and free throws this week.

After the Buffs made their first four 3-pointers and stormed out to a 16-3 lead they went into a 1-for-8 funk and finished 8-for-23 (34.8 percent) from behind the arc. CU was also a disappointing 16-for-25 (64 percent) at the line.

"We definitely need to shoot a higher percentage because we've got the players who can make those shots," McConnell-Miller said.

The coaching staff will be fine-tuning the substitution patterns. The starting five appears to be a strong unit but something was missing when the rotations changed.

"I need to do a better job in practice of really integrating more rotations and getting more people playing together," McConnell-Miller said. "When we went to our bench we lost a little bit because we had players who hadn't played enough together."

Freshman Julie Seabrook was one very bright spot off the bench with 10 points on 4-for-5 shooting and a game-high eight rebounds in 19 minutes.

Notable

The tip time for the opener against Central Florida has been moved back to 2:30 p.m. ... The CU women's program is now 20-0 all-time in exhibition games. ... The Buffs' pressure defense forced 34 Regis turnovers. ... Melissa MacFarlane, a member of CU's 2008 recruiting class, attended Sunday's game. She is a 6-7 center from Omaha, Neb. ... Attendance was 1,080.



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