



K-Mac's Buffs win season opener

By Chris Shelton

Monday, November 17, 2008

Colorado opened the women's basketball season to mixed reviews following an 86-59 victory over Central Florida on Sunday.

Sophomore Brittany Spears took control on offense early and senior center Kara Richards produced a consistent effort to power the Colorado program to a 23-0 record in season home openers.

But the Buffs were pounded on the boards and the offense was far from a finished product. Colorado also benefited from the fact that Central Florida turned the ball over 30 times and shot 34.3 percent.

"Their style of play was difficult," CU coach Kathy McConnell-Miller said of the Knights (0-1). "The amount of pressure they put on the ball, full-court pressure, penetration -- it was a very physical game. It was a real tough opening game."

Spears scored 15 of CU's first 21 points to help build a 10-point lead less than 10 minutes into the game. Although the Knights never threatened to win, they wouldn't go away until the last 10 minutes of the second half.

Spears finished one point shy of her career high with 23 and Richards made 5-of-6 field goals and 3-of-4 free throws en route to 13 points. Richards added six rebounds and two blocks in 23 minutes, and avoided fouling out despite picking up her fourth foul with 16:27 remaining in the game.

It was the kind of effort McConnell-Miller wants to see out of her center in hopes of giving Richards some confidence.

"It's easy to build off of a win," Richards said. "Now we know some things we need to work on."

Central Florida outrebounded CU 52-35 and was led by sophomore forward Emma Cannon, who had 19 points and 16 rebounds.

The debut of CU freshman guard Alyssa Fressle, who scored a game-high 18 points in CU's lone exhibition game, was rough.

She picked up two quick fouls early in the game and spent much of the first half on the bench. She started to warm up in the second half and finished with 10 points and three steals.

"I could have done probably a little bit better," Fressle said. "I didn't expect to get two fouls at the start of the game. That might have shaken me up a little bit. ... That's something I'll have to go through as a freshman. Next game I'll have a different attitude going into it."

Notable

CU junior Bianca Smith added 16 points. ... Sophomore Kelly Jo Mullaney made her debut at point guard and finished with two points, one assist, three turnovers and one steal in 27 minutes. ...

Sophomore center Courtney Dunn was originally not expected to play due to a deep bone bruise, but came off the bench and saw 11 minutes of action, hitting two 3-pointers for six points. ... Spears had a career-high 18 points in the first half. ... Captains were named before the game and the honors went to Richards, Smith and senior forward Hannah Skildum.

Colorado 86, Central Florida 59**CENTRAL FLORIDA (59)****min fg-fga ft-fta rb ast pf tp**

Cannon 26 8-15 3-6 16 0 4 19

Head 26 3-11 2-4 8 1 4 8

Daniels 17 3-6 0-0 2 0 4 6

Patrick 37 5-14 2-4 10 1 1 12

White 26 2-7 3-5 0 1 5 7

Stovall 3 0-1 0-0 1 0 1 0

Mealing 6 0-1 0-0 0 0 2 0

Kelly 12 1-2 0-0 6 0 3 2

Davis 1 0-0 0-0 0 0 0 0

Wiley 22 0-3 2-6 0 1 1 2

Caldwell 13 0-6 1-2 4 0 1 1

Paige 11 1-1 0-0 2 1 1 2

Totals: 200 23-67 13-27 52 5 27 59

COLORADO (86)**min fg-fga ft-fta rb ast pf tp**

Spears 27 9-17 2-5 6 0 4 23

Richards 23 5-6 3-4 6 1 4 13

Fressle 27 4-10 2-5 3 1 3 10

Smith 27 6-13 1-1 6 2 3 16

Mullaney 27 0-4 2-2 3 1 3 2

Blythe 16 1-2 0-0 2 1 0 2

Skildum 22 3-8 3-4 3 3 2 9

Seabrook 16 1-2 3-5 4 0 1 5

Piterniece 4 0-0 0-0 0 0 0 0

Dunn 11 2-4 0-0 1 1 1 6

Totals: 200 31-66 16-26 35 10 21 86

Score by halves:

Central Florida 28 31 -- 59

Colorado 41 45 -- 86

3-point field goals -- Central Florida (0-7): Daniels 0-1, Patrick 0-2, White 0-2, Kelly 0-1, Caldwell 0-1; Colorado (8-20): Spears 3-6, Smith 3-8, Skildum 0-3, Dunn 2-3.

Officials --Parrish, Roberts, Muench.

Technical fouls -- None.

Attendance -- 1,231.

STEALS

Central Florida (5):Patrick 2, White, Wiley, Caldwell.

Colorado (12):Spears 3, Fressle 3, Smith 2, Mullaney, Blythe, Skildum, Dunn.

BLOCKED SHOTS

Central Florida (1):Head.

Colorado (6):Spears, Richards 2, Skildum 2, Dunn.

TURNOVERS

Central Florida (30):Cannon 2, Head 2, Daniels 7, Patrick 5, White 6, Stovall, Mealing 3, Kelly 2, Wiley, Paige.

Colorado (19):Spears, Fressle 5, Smith 4, Mullaney 3, Seabrook 2, Dunn 3.



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cu women's basketball

4-guard offense claims opener

Spears' 23 points leads the revamped Buffs; Fressle debuts with 10.

By Theresa Smith
Special to The Denver Post

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BOULDER — While downing accuracy-challenged Central Florida 86-59 on Sunday, Colorado showed signs of promise, mixed with a few concerns.

In other words, it was a typical season opener, the debut of the 35th season of intercollegiate women's basketball at CU.

The Buffaloes unveiled a four-guard offense: freshman Alyssa Fressle, transfer point guard Kelly Jo Mullaney, hot-shooting Brittany Spears and versatile Bianca Smith, who heated up late.

Senior Kara Richards — a 6-foot-4 center bearing a heavier load since the graduation of Jackie McFarland, the second-leading scorer in CU history — made the most of limited shooting opportunities, going 5-for-6 from the field for 13 points with six rebounds, two blocked shots and zero turnovers.

CU Basketball

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- Visit the CU Stats Page for women's boxscores, Big 12 standings, player pages and more
- Visit Tom Kensler's All Things Buffs blog for a behind-the-scenes look at CU sports

"I think her consistency is going to be a major factor in the outcome of all of our games," fourth-year coach Kathy McConnell-Miller said.

Spears did the exterior damage, draining six of her first seven attempts to give CU a quick 21-11 lead en route to her game-high 23 points.

"It felt good to play against some girls," said Spears, reflecting on preseason scrimmages against male practice players.

The players from Central Florida, a 10-20 team in 2007-08, shot wildly, missing all seven of their 3-point attempts and finishing 34.3 percent from the field and 48.1 percent from the line.

The Knights did expose CU's poor boxing-out tendencies while outrebounding CU 52-35, including 23 offensive rebounds.

"With a four-guard starting lineup, I know rebounding is going to be a key every night," McConnell-Miller said.

Fressle, the newest backcourt addition, is a three-

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time Class 5A state champion from Highlands Ranch High School, who bucked the trend of recent prep superstars by staying in-state.

After admitting to being shaken up by early foul trouble, she exhibited a well-honed pull-up jumper and tenacious on-ball defense, particularly in the second half after McConnell-Miller changed her assignment.

"Probably the nerves were a little heightened, but that's what you go through as a freshman," said Fressle, who had 10 points and three steals in her debut.

Smith also grew stronger. After missing four treys and two layups, she swished a trio of second-half 3-pointers.

The Buffs return to action Wednesday at home against Colorado State (0-1).

UCF (0-1)

Cannon 8-15 3-6 19, Head 3-11 2-4 8, Daniels 3-6 0-0 6, Patrick 5-14 2-4 12, White 2-7 3-5 7, Stovall 0-1 0-0 0, Mealing 0-1 0-0 0, Kelly 1-2 0-0 2, Davis 0-0 0-0 0, Wiley 0-3 2-6 2, Caldwell 0-6 1-2 1, Paige 1-1 0-0 2. **Totals 23-67 13-27 59.**

COLORADO (1-0)

Spears 9-17 2-5 23, Richards 5-6 3-4 13, Fressle 4-10 2-5 10, Smith 6-13 1-1 16, Mullaney 0-4 2-2 2, Blythe 1-2 0-0 2, Skildum 3-8 3-4 9, Seabrook 1-2 3-5 5, Piterneice 0-0 0-0 0, Dunn 2-4 0-0 6. **Totals 31-66 16-26 86. Colorado 41-28. 3-point goals — UCF 0-7 (Patrick 0-2, White 0-2, Daniels 0-1, Kelly 0-1, Caldwell 0-1), Colorado 8-20 (Spears 3-6, Smith 3-8, Dunn 2-3, Skildum 0-3). Fouled out — White. Rebounds — UCF 52 (Cannon 16), Colorado 35 (Spears 6, Richards 6,**

Smith 6). Assists — UCF 5 (Head 1, Patrick 1, White 1, Wiley 1, Paige 1), Colorado 10 (Skildum 3). Total fouls — UCF 27, Colorado 21. A — 1,231.

Halftime —

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Small Buffs play tall in opener

Spears leads CU women to win over Central Florida

*By Ray Sobczyk
Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — Rebounding, rebounding, rebounding.

It's a battle Colorado women's basketball coach Kathy McConnell-Miller knows her team won't win that often.

"We're playing smaller than we've ever played," McConnell-Miller said. "So I know rebounding is going to be a key every night. I don't think we're ever going to have a height advantage."

That didn't matter against Central Florida, however. Despite being handily out-rebounded, the Buffaloes (1-0) cruised to an 86-59 victory in their season opener Sunday at the Coors Event Center in Boulder.

Who needs rebounding, right?

"We're not going to have the ability to out-jump anybody the rest of the season," said McConnell-Miller, whose squad was out-rebounded 52-37. "We're going to struggle on the boards."

The Buffs have only two centers and two true forwards on their roster this season, and just three players over 6-foot-3. But CU proved Sunday against the Knights that they have plenty of explosive players to overcome its lack of height.

Sophomore Brittany Spears totaled a game-high 23 points and converted three 3-pointers. The 6-foot-1 forward is CU's top returning scorer from last season.

Spears got the Buffs rolling early as she drained six of her first seven shots from the field to give CU a 21-11 lead nine minutes into the game. She displayed both her outside range and driving ability with 15 points during that span.

"It felt good to be out there," Spears said. "It felt good to play against different girls."

Spears cooled off and finished with 18 points in the first half, handing the Buffs a 41-28 advantage at the break. In fact, she missed seven of her final 10 shots from the field.

But that was fine with Spears.



Colorado's Kara Richards, right, is fouled by Central Florida's Marcquitta Head during the first half Sunday at the Coors Events Center. **Lewis Geyer/Times-Call**

COLORADO 86, CENTRAL FLORIDA 59

CENTRAL FLORIDA (0-1)
Cannon 8-15 3-6 19, Head 3-11 2-4 8, Daniels 3-6 0-0 6, Patrick 5-14 2-4 12, White 2-7 3-5 7, Stovall 0-1 0-0 0, Mealing 0-1 0-0 0, Kelly 1-2 0-0 2, Davis 0-0 0-0 0, Wiley 0-3 2-6 2, Caldwell 0-6 1-2 1, Paige 1-1 0-0 2.
Totals 23-67 13-27 59.

COLORADO (1-0)
Spears 9-17 2-5 23, Richards 506 3-4 13, Fressle 4-10 2-5 10, Smith 6-13 1-1 16, Mullaney 0-4 2-2 2, Blythe 1-2 0-0 2, Skildum 3-8 3-4 9, Seabrook 1-2 3-5 5, Piternece 0-0 0-0 0, Dunn 2-4 0-0 6. Totals 31-66 16-26 86.

Halftime — CU 41-28. 3-point goals — Central Florida 0-7; CU 8-20 (Spears 3-6, Smith 3-8, Skildum 0-3, Dunn 2-3). Fouled Out — None. Rebounds — Central Florida 52 (Cannon 16, Patrick 10); CU 37 (Spears 6, Richards 6, Smith 6). Assists — Central Florida 5; CU 10 (Skildum 3). Total Fouls — Central Florida 27; CU 21. A — 1231.

"I just depend on my teammates," she said. "It's a team sport and we have to play together. So it's not like I'm taking over."

Her teammates had no trouble taking over.

Freshman guard Alyssa Fressle tallied 10 points for the game, six after halftime, and junior Bianca Smith shook off a rough start by posting three 3s in the second half, including a dagger to give the Buffs a 57-38 lead with 9:46 left in the game.

"The chemistry was good," said McConnell-Miller, whose team iced the game with a 25-12 run late in the second half.

For the Buffs to be good this season, though, McConnell-Miller believes it will rest on the shoulders of senior Kara Richards. The center did her part with 13 points and six rebounds, and she missed only one of her six shots.

"That's what we see every day in practice," McConnell-Miller said. "She has the heart of a lion. She has the work ethic of a Division I athlete and the energy of a 5-year-old. She has all of that."

Richards was matched up against Central Florida center Marcquitta Head for most of the night. Head, who stands at 6-foot-4, grabbed eight boards but was held to 3-of-11 shooting, while committing four fouls.

"I find it easier to play against other big players as opposed to other smaller (players)," Richards said. "They're easier to post up on. They get confident without having to move their feet on defense. They don't try to work around you."

Richards is CU's lone force inside, standing at 6-foot-4. Last season, she averaged only 3.2 points and two rebounds per game in 30 contests.

If the Buffs want to be competitive in the Big 12 this year, McConnell-Miller knows Richards must continue to play the defense and put up the numbers she did Sunday.

For the record, there will be more physical and taller teams in league action than what Central Florida posed. The Knights played only three players over 6-foot-1.

"For us to be able to move forward and to continue to advance and do what we want to do, I think Kara is a huge key to that," the coach said. "Her consistency is going to be major factor in all of our games."

Her rebounding will be, too.

NOTES: Spears reached the 20-point plateau for the seventh time in her career. ... Her 18 in the first half Sunday was a career-best. Richards, Smith and Hannah Skildum were named team captains before the game. ... CU has now won nine straight season openers.