



Big 12 schedule looming for Buffs

CU aims to finish non-conference slate strong at Hawaii tourney

By Ryan Thorburn
Saturday, January 3, 2009

The Colorado women's basketball team is on the road in Honolulu to compete in the Paradise Classic this weekend.

The Buffs (6-4) plan on enjoying the experience, on and off the court, before entering a stretch of games against Big 12 opponents that might feel more like a road to perdition.

Kathy McConnell-Miller's team enters tonight's game against Pepperdine (6 p.m., no television) on a three-game win streak, including Tuesday's 73-57 victory over Idaho State.

"We're coaches that believe when you go on the road you enjoy the experience, you enjoy the culture, you enjoy what the opportunity brings you," McConnell-Miller said. "But we're going there to win two basketball games. That's what their focus needs to be."

The Buffs will play host Hawaii on Sunday before a grueling early conference slate that begins with consecutive games against No. 7 Baylor, No. 21 Oklahoma State, No. 4 Texas and No. 5 Oklahoma.

Five CU players scored in double figures against Idaho State and Kelly Jo Mullaney added eight points, five rebounds and two assists. That's the kind of balance and chemistry it will take for the Buffs to compete in the Big 12 this season.

"It seems like the points (against Idaho State) were scattered throughout our whole team and a lot of those came through assists," Mullaney said. "Which is very good because it shows we're playing together as a team."

Kara Richards scored 14 points in 15 minutes. After the senior center got into foul trouble freshman Julie Seabrook picked up the slack with 12 points and 13 rebounds.

The head coach hinted that both post players might be on the court at the same time during conference play when CU is facing bigger, faster and stronger lineups.

"I would truly like to see them play side by side more than one or the other, because I think they give us a pretty good inside-outside punch," McConnell-Miller said. "I would love to move Bianca (Smith) to the perimeter a little bit more and play a little more traditional high-low. But right now we're feeling good with the options we have."

Smith, who has been playing at forward, had 12 points and seven rebounds against the Bengals. Alyssa Fressle had 11 points and five assists.

And CU's best player, Brittany Spears, scored 14 points and grabbed 13 rebounds. The sophomore star was only 4-for-13 from the field with four assists and five turnovers.

"By Spears' standards that was an average game," McConnell-Miller said. "So for us to come out of here with a victory with an average game for Spears, only a good 10 minutes from Kara ... for the rest of them to be able to step up, we're feeling good about that."

The Buffs lost badly at Virginia (77-43) and Seton Hall (77-40) in their only two games outside of Boulder this season.

"I don't know how they're going to respond to all this travel," McConnell-Miller said. "Sometimes I know them on the floor and sometimes they present a lot of challenges for us."

CU will open Big 12 play on Jan. 10 against Baylor at the Coors Events Center.



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CU women's preview: Pepperdine

TODAY -- Colorado plays Pepperdine at 6 p.m. at the Paradise Classic in Honolulu.

BROADCAST -- Television: None; Radio: KKZN (760 AM) with Carol Callan.

STORYLINE -- The Buffs (6-4) have won three consecutive games and had five players score in double figures during Tuesday's 73-57 victory over Idaho State. ... The Waves (6-6) were blown out by Kansas (82-54) at home before arriving here and facing host Hawaii late Friday night.

KEY STAT -- CU is 0-2 this season outside of Boulder, losing badly at Virginia (77-43) and Seton Hall (77-40).

COACHES -- Kathy McConnell-Miller is 47-57 in her fourth season at CU. Julie Rousseau is 56-75 in her fifth season at Pepperdine.

PROBABLE STARTERS

CU -- G Britney Blythe, 5-9, sophomore, 2.1 ppg, 1.5 rpg,, G Bianca Smith, 5-9, junior, 10.3 ppg, 5.7 rpg, G Alyssa Fressle, 5-10, freshman, 9.0 ppg, 2.8 rpg, F Brittany Spears, 6-1, sophomore, 19.5 ppg, 8.0 rpg, C Kara Richards, 12.6 ppg, 5.4 rpg.

Pepperdine -- G/F Taylor Smith, 5-11, senior, 6.8 ppg, 3.3 rpg, F/C Miranda Ayim, 6-3, 11.6 ppg, 5.2 rpg, junior, G Nakeya Isabell, 5-4, senior, 5.2 ppg, 3.3 rpg, G Joy Lelo, 5-8, sophomore, 5.0 ppg, 1.8 rpg, G Jessica Ross, 5-10, senior, 7.2 ppg, 2.0 rpg.

SERIES -- CU leads 2-0, including a 65-53 victory at the Coors Events Center last season.

UP NEXT -- The Buffs will play host Hawaii on Sunday in the Paradise Classic.



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