



## CU women hold off Kansas

By Kyle Ringo

Wednesday, February 18, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — Toughness hasn't been a hallmark of the Colorado women's basketball team this season, but the Buffs proved Wednesday night they do have some fight in them.

In a 69-62 rough-around-the-edges victory over Kansas at the Coors Events Center, they outrebounded the Jayhawks, nabbed 12 steals, gave up the lead late in the game, but fought to take it back and hit their free throws down the stretch.

In a game in which the two teams combined for 42 turnovers -- that's more than one per minute -- the Buffs showed some signs that they might be maturing despite the sloppiness.

They were motivated by film sessions before the game showing a lack of physical aggressive play in a loss to the Jayhawks two weeks ago. It was the first in a three-game losing streak they carried into Wednesday's rematch.

If one Buff personified that toughness most, it was guard Kelly Jo Mullaney, who started for the first time in 15 games and shook off six turnovers by diving to the floor for loose balls multiple times. One of those instances came in the final 2 minutes.

"One of the biggest possessions of the game was when Kelly Jo dove on the floor and it was a big stop," CU coach Kathy McConnell-Miller said. "We watched film (Tuesday) and there were a few times at Kansas that we didn't dive on the floor."

McConnell-Miller said the play reminded her of watching Mullaney compete against her teammates in preseason conditioning work on Fridays, when the team played flag football at Folsom Field and the lower practice fields.

"When I think of Kelly Jo, I think of flag football," McConnell-Miller said. "She's really physical and not afraid to get hurt, not afraid to get hit and sort of finds a way."

Mullaney, who reclaimed a starting guard spot from Britney Blythe, was one of four Buffs to score in double figures, registering 13 points, one off her career best and a season-best in Big 12 play.

Sophomore Brittany Spears and junior Bianca Smith each scored 18. They combined for 22 in the second half. Spears became the fifth player in CU history to score 400 or more points in each of her first two seasons in the program.

All of Spears' 10 second-half points came in the final 5 minutes as the Buffs fought to recapture the lead they had played with most of the night. They led by 12 points at one time in the first half.

Spears also made a key steal of a Kansas inbound pass late in the game that helped the Buffs find a

little breathing room.

Four Jayhawks scored in double figures, led by forward Nicolette Smith, who finished with 15. The Jayhawks held a four-point lead after chipping away for more than 30 minutes, but they couldn't overcome 22 turnovers.

"It ended up who was going to turn it over last," KU coach Bonnie Henrickson said. "Our point guard turned it over a bunch early and then the point guard turned it over at a two-point game with 1:15 seconds left after inbounding the ball."

McConnell-Miller said the Buffs needed to do a better job of getting Spears the ball on a more consistent basis. Spears' teammates went back to her late and it paid off. Spears often plays most or all of the game and she was on the floor for 38 minutes again Wednesday.

McConnell-Miller said she would like to give the sophomore more rest, but each time she takes Spears out of the game, Spears sits next to her coach and asks, "What can I do for you here?"

Spears said she asked out of Wednesday's game at one point because her lungs were burning.

"It will never happen again," she joked.

Players from both teams wore pink T-shirts while on the bench and pink laces in their sneakers on PinkZone night, aimed at helping to fight breast cancer. McConnell-Miller and her assistants wore either pink tops or pink neck ties.

## **Colorado 69, Kansas 62**

### **KANSAS (62)**

#### **min fg-fga ft-fta rb ast pf tp**

McCray 22 5-13 0-2 5 3 4 11

Smith 37 5-7 4-6 2 1 3 15

Boogaard 29 6-9 1-2 4 0 3 13

Catic 24 0-0 0-0 0 4 3 0

Morris 39 4-9 1-2 2 2 5 10

Jacobs 31 2-6 3-3 10 3 2 7

Sutherland 14 2-4 0-1 2 0 1 4

Kohn 4 1-1 0-0 1 0 1 2

**Totals: 200 25-49 9-16 28 13 22 62**

### **COLORADO (69)**

**min fg-fga ft-fta rb ast pf tp**

Spears 38 6-13 6-6 7 0 1 18

Richards 37 3-4 4-7 10 2 3 10

Fressle 33 1-7 2-2 3 4 2 4

Smith 30 5-9 4-5 1 1 3 18

Mullaney 38 5-11 3-4 3 1 2 13

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

Skildum 14 2-4 0-0 2 1 3 4

Seabrook 4 0-0 2-2 1 0 2 2

Dale 2 0-1 0-0 0 0 0 0

Dunn 2 0-0 0-0 0 0 0 0

**Totals: 200 22-49 21-26 30 10 16 69**

**Score by halves:**

Kansas 28 34 -- 62

Colorado 31 38 -- 69

**3-point field goals** -- Kansas (3-11): McCray 1-7, Smith 1-2, Morris 1-2; Colorado (4-9): Fressle 0-2, Smith 4-6, Skildum 0-1.

**Officials** --Barlow, Day, Fountain.

**Technical fouls** -- None.

**Attendance** -- 1,425.

**STEALS**

**Kansas (3):**Morris, Jacobs 2.

**Colorado (12):**Spears 3, Richards 3, Fressle, Smith 3, Mullaney, Skildum.

**BLOCKED SHOTS**

**Kansas (3):**Boogaard, Jacobs.

**Colorado (4):**Spears, Skildum 3.

## **TURNOVERS**

**Kansas (22):**McCray 2, Smith 4, Boogaard, Catic 4, Morris 3, Jacobs 6, Sutherland 2.

**Colorado (20):**Spears 4, Richards 5, Fressle, Mullaney 6, Blythe, Skildum, Dunn.



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65°

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**By B.G. Brooks, Rocky Mountain News (Contact)**

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BOULDER — Point guard Kelly Jo Mullaney's basketball game is a little rough around the edges.

And her coach at the University of Colorado, Kathy McConnell-Miller, apparently likes it that way — maybe not the turnovers or a propensity for dribbling when trying to set the Buffaloes in their offense, but more so in Mullaney's hard-nosed style.

In CU's 69-62 victory against Kansas Wednesday night, Mullaney and the Coors Events Center court became very well acquainted. She was all over it, recklessly tossing herself around whenever the situation demanded. And sometimes otherwise.

"When I think of Kelly Jo, I think of flag football," McConnell-Miller said. "She's like the little sister of three older brothers ... she's down on the floor a lot."

Asked if she thought of herself as a flag-football player, Mullaney grinned and said, "Yeah, it was like that (Wednesday night). . . . I know I have to stay tough and be aggressive."

Mullaney, a transfer from Colorado State who sat out last season and returned to the starting lineup against the Jayhawks after a long stretch as a reserve, finished the KU game with 13 points (a personal Big 12 best and one point shy of her career best), three rebounds, an assist and a steal.

But she also committed a team-high six turnovers — the part of her game McConnell-Miller hopes will smooth out.

As for the rough stuff, though, the coach wants the player's flag-football mentality to remain. "I meant that as a compliment," McConnell-Miller said.

No one took it as anything else — especially Mullaney.

**ETC.:** With 18 points, Brittany Spears became the fifth CU player to score 400 points in each of her first two seasons. . . . Bianca Smith also scored 18 for the Buffs, who improved to 11-12 overall and 3-8 in the Big 12 Conference. ... CU's next two games are at Kansas State (Saturday) and at Iowa State (Wednesday). Then the Buffs play two of their final three at home (Missouri, Feb. 28; Kansas State, March 7) before going to the Big 12 postseason tournament (March 12-15, Oklahoma City).

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