



CU women overcome Nebraska

By Kyle Ringo

Saturday, January 31, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — They still haven't played a complete 40 minutes, but the Colorado women's basketball team got the most out of the second half Saturday afternoon at the Coors Events Center, earning a victory over Nebraska for the first time since 2005.

The Buffs overcame an ugly first half and a double-digit deficit winning 75-73 in the waning moments when sophomore Brittany Spears drove the baseline and hit a floating runner with 5 seconds remaining.

Nebraska guard Yvonne Turner raced the length of the floor but missed a runner of her own to tie as the horn sounded. The Buffs darted to center court to celebrate finally winning a hard-fought game.

"I like pressure," Spears said. "It was like when you're little and you're always shooting the game-winning free throw or something like that. So it was fun."

The victory was the first over Nebraska for fourth-year coach Kathy McConnell-Miller, who entered the team meeting room afterward yelling, "We got a W ladies."

Nebraska had won seven straight against the Buffs, with the last CU victory coming in the final home game off former coach Ceal Barry's career. Saturday's win happened despite the Buffs committing 26 turnovers, more than twice as many as the Cornhuskers.

"I have no idea," McConnell-Miller said when asked how her team won with such significant ball-handling problems. "I think when we had the ball in our hands, when we were able to make plays and when we were able to execute our stuff, I thought we did a really good job of taking the ball to the rim. I thought we took high-percentage shots."

The Buffs committed 18 of those miscues in the first half as McConnell-Miller played with a variety of point guards hoping to find someone with confidence to bring the ball up the court against a feisty press led by Turner and Dominique Kelley. Nebraska led by as many as 14 points.

CU settled down in the second half after coaches re-worked their approach to breaking the Nebraska press.

"The second half, there is no doubt we came out with a sense of purpose," McConnell-Miller said. "We came out with energy. The adjustments that we made on the press breaker and some of our offensive sets, they really responded to. "Most importantly, they started to take care of the basketball and had the confidence they could win."

Colorado made nearly 60 percent of its shots in the second half.

Four players score in double figures for CU. Spears led all scorers with 25. Smith added 21 and Kelly Jo

Mullaney broke through with 10 points off the bench.

Mullaney is the first Buff to come off the bench with double-digit points in Big 12 play this season. She accounted for all of CU's points from reserves, a sore spot all season.

"As a player, you always want to be in the game and be able to help your team out, and I was able to do it today," she said.

The Buffs have suffered through scoreless stretches all season and another one came early Saturday. They fell behind by 10 points when they failed to score for more than four minutes.

Junior Bianca Smith almost single-handedly kept CU in the game with five first-half 3-pointers en route to seven for the game. It is the second time in the past three games she has made seven 3-pointers in a contest, tying the school record she shares with multiple former Buffs.

The only player to have earned a victory over Nebraska prior to Saturday was CU senior center Kara Richards, who was a true freshman in 2005. So beating the Cornhuskers was a special moment and small sign of progress for the Buffs.

The victory also propelled the Buffs (10-9, 2-5) ahead of the Huskers (10-10, 1-6) in the conference standings.

"To us, it's a rivalry game," Smith said. "With Nebraska, it's always a big game."

Three players scored in double figures for Nebraska. Forward Cory Montgomery finished with 24 points and nine rebounds and center Catheryn Redmon scored 12 with nine rebounds.

CU came into the game as the worst rebounding team in the league, but outrebounded the Huskers by 10.

Colorado 75, Nebraska 73

NEBRASKA (73)

min fg-fga ft-fta rb ast pf tp

Montgomery 30 9-16 4-4 9 1 4 24

Redmon 31 5-7 2-3 9 0 4 12

Burke 16 0-2 0-0 1 2 2 0

Turner 37 3-16 3-7 2 7 2 9

Kelley 29 5-11 3-4 2 4 4 16

Neals 15 1-3 0-0 1 1 1 3

Kuhlmann 14 1-2 0-0 2 0 0 2

Sidhu 2 0-0 0-0 0 0 1 0

Hester 23 2-4 3-4 2 1 1 7

Periago 3 0-1 0-0 0 0 0 0

Totals: 200 26-62 15-22 29 16 19 73

COLORADO (75)

min fg-fga ft-fta rb ast pf tp

Spears 40 10-17 4-5 9 3 1 25

Richards 37 4-6 6-10 6 2 6 14

Fressle 27 0-5 1-2 7 3 4 1

Smith 38 7-11 0-1 5 1 3 21

Blythe 23 2-4 0-1 0 0 2 4

Skildum 3 0-1 0-0 0 0 0 0

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

Mullaney 22 4-5 2-2 4 0 3 10

Dunn 9 0-0 0-0 1 0 1 0

Totals: 200 27-49 13-21 39 9 16 75

Score by halves:

Nebraska 42 31 -- 73

Colorado 34 41 -- 75

3-point field goals -- Nebraska (6-17): Montgomery 2-3, Burke 0-1, Turner 0-8, Kelley 3-3, Neals 1-2; Colorado (8-18): Spears 1-6, Fressle 0-1, Smith 7-10, Blythe 0-1.

Officials --Courteau, Stevens, Murray.

Technical fouls -- None.

Attendance -- 2,324.

STEALS

Nebraska (9):Turner 4, Kuhlmann 3, Hester 2.

Colorado (7):Spears 3, Fressle, Smith 3.

BLOCKED SHOTS

Nebraska (2):Redmon, Turner.

Colorado (4):Spears, Fressle, Smith, Mullaney.

TURNOVERS

Nebraska (12):Montgomery 3, Redmon, Turner 3, Kelley, Neals, Kuhlmann, Hester 2.

Colorado (26):Spears 1, Richards 3, Fressle 6, Smith 4, Blythe 2, Skildum 4, Mullaney 3, Dunn 2.



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