



# Women's hoops: Buffs open against a familiar coach

## Former CU assistant Haave at USF helm

By Chris Shelton

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When the Colorado coaching staff went to put together this year's women's basketball schedule, a friendly family dispute evolved.

CU head coach Kathy McConnell-Miller wanted to play Duquesne, where her sister, Suzie McConnell-Serio, was hired as head coach last April.

CU assistant coach Tom McConnell, brother to both Kathy and Suzie, said no way.

"It's a no-win," McConnell said. "Let's keep the peace in the family. We want to be able to go to Christmas outings, holidays and vacations and not have to worry about a basketball game. There are no winners in that one."

Influencing McConnell's take on the situation was the time Suzie and her husband Pete were both coaches of high school teams in Pittsburgh and they had to go against each other in a playoff game. Suzie's team won.

"I don't think that was much fun for her husband," McConnell said.

McConnell-Miller saw it differently.

"I don't see the problem and I don't think Suzie sees it," McConnell-Miller said. "You just have to go into it with the understanding that once you tip off it's not me vs. Suzie. But right now I'm being guided in another direction (by McConnell)."

Duquesne is not on CU's schedule this year, but the Buffs do begin the season tonight on the road against former CU assistant, Tanya Haave and her San Francisco Dons (1-1). The road trip continues with a game Sunday at USC. San Francisco began the season in Colorado, opening with a loss to Northern Colorado and finishing with a triple-overtime victory over Colorado State.

If the Buffs want to improve on last year's 13-17 record, the journey begins on the road. The Buffs struggled with turnovers and shooting on the road as they went 1-10 away from CU last year.

"It's really important, coming off last season, that we take our home game with us away on the road because last year we struggled with road wins," CU senior guard Susie Powers said. "We need to set a precedent right away this weekend with two road wins."

It's only the second time in CU history that the Buffs begin the season with two consecutive road games. It's the first time it has happened since starting the 1984-85 season with losses at Georgia Tech and Florida State.

McConnell-Miller said it was more of an accident that the schedule has the Buffs starting on the road. Most teams, too, have played at least one game, but the late start gave CU more time to practice with so many newcomers. Consider, freshman Brittany Spears will start and freshman Britney Blythe will see considerable minutes.

"We knew playing on the road was a focus, so let's attack it," McConnell-Miller said. "As the schedule fell that way, we realized we could use it as a positive for us and address the fact that we've talked about being road warriors."

Blythe and redshirt freshman Courtney Dunn hail from the Bay area, while Spears and freshman Chelsea Dale come from the Los Angeles area, so the two games will provide a homecoming for them.

Blythe expects 30-40 friends and family members at the game. Plus, her biggest high school game of the year was played on San Francisco's home court, just as Boulder and Fairview play at CU.

"I know a lot of the people that are playing on SF's team," Blythe said. "I've scrimmaged against them and I've played on their court. It's not going to be a shock to me to be on the court, and it should be interesting playing against my friends."



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# McConnell-Miller officially lands Fressle

## Bufs targeted Highlands Ranch star as top priority

By Chris Shelton  
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When it came time for Kathy McConnell-Miller to recruit Highlands Ranch senior guard Alyssa Fressle this offseason, the Colorado head coach turned to her earlier days as an assistant coach at both Illinois and Pittsburgh — places where recruiting played a heavy role in her job duties.

Taking the approach of an assistant coach who was charged with recruiting, McConnell-Miller went all-out to land Fressle and it paid off Thursday with Fressle's signature on a national letter of intent to play for CU next year.

Fressle was considered the best in-state player in the 2008 recruiting class and she's ranked No. 76 in the country. Landing Fressle is considered a major step forward in keeping the top players in Colorado for their college careers.

"I felt like she was such a high priority in so many ways for us that my objective over the summer was to not miss one of her games," McConnell-Miller said. "I was leaving halftimes of other games to make sure I was sitting there when (Fressle) tipped it off and I didn't leave until it was over. I made adjustments in my recruiting calendar to make sure I was where Alyssa was because when it came down to the end, I wanted her to know that from start to finish she was our No. 1 priority."

McConnell-Miller got to know Fressle's dad, Fressle's high school coach, Fressle's AAU coach — anyone who could help McConnell-Miller understand what made Fressle tick.

Her focus on Fressle may have hurt CU's chances to land other players, but it was worth it to McConnell-Miller.

"From the phone calls to the visits, it was very important that she knew what I was thinking — that there was no question how she was evaluated, what we thought of her as a player, how we thought she could help us, how we thought we could help her, challenging her, making her game better," McConnell-Miller said. "From that perspective, I just went back and thought about when I was an assistant and how I would approach someone like Fressle, and I got to know the most important people in her life."

Having former Connecticut and Highlands Ranch star Ann Strother on CU's staff has helped send a signal to high school players that CU is a special place, McConnell-Miller said, because Strother could be playing in Europe right now or coaching anywhere she wants, yet Strother chose to return to Colorado. Combined with Strother's return, Fressle's decision to come to CU could also help CU land players for next year's recruiting class — loaded with top-100 players.

"There's no doubt that Fressle's signing has impacted some of these younger players," McConnell-Miller

said. "I've been inundated with e-mails and calls that, that was a great 'get' for us. We just needed one player to step up and make that move. Alyssa is a leader. She does not follow. She knew when she came on campus that this environment here is one that she could be successful in and assist us in making us as competitive as we can be."

Colorado senior Susie Powers, a Highlands Ranch graduate, played in the same AAU program, Colorado Hoopsters, with Fressle when Fressle was much younger. Even then, Fressle made an impression and continued to make an impression on Powers last year when Powers would go home to watch Highlands Ranch games.

"I definitely knew who she was," Powers said. "She was the little blonde baller running around on the court with impressive skills for her age. ... The most impressive thing to me about Alyssa's game is her hustle. She is very scrappy. She's all over the place, diving for balls, and she's got a deadly shot."

The Buffs also received a signed letter of intent from Julie Seabrook, a forward from Canada. Seabrook hails from North Vancouver, B.C., but is spending the senior season of her high school career in Toronto to train with Canada's National Elite Development Academy — a center for the country's top 12 players.

Seabrook, who made recruiting visits to Rice, San Diego and CU, is viewed as a replacement for CU senior Jackie McFarland. Seabrook was originally recruited by new CU assistant Patrick Harrington.

The Buffs are saving one available scholarship this year for next year's class and will have five scholarships to hand out next year.



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