



McConnell-Miller played for ranked team as well

No. 25 Buffs play host to Southern Utah

Thursday, December 27, 2007

When Colorado joined the AP Top 25 poll earlier this week, coach Kathy McConnell-Miller joined some elite company.

McConnell-Miller became the 22nd person in women's basketball history to both coach and play for a Top-25 team.

The CU coach played for Virginia from 1986-90 and helped the Top-25 ranked Cavaliers to two Sweet 16 appearances and a trip to the Elite Eight in 1988.

McConnell-Miller said she hasn't talked to her players, who returned to Boulder on Wednesday after a four-day holiday break, about her experiences playing for a ranked team 20 years ago.

"If they feel good about it, great," McConnell-Miller said. "But they can't rest on that and they can't think this is exactly where we need to be because there are so many areas where we need to be better."

McConnell-Miller is in her third season at CU. In her first season, she inherited a team that went 9-19 in former coach Ceal Barry's final season (2004-05). The Buffs went 9-21 in McConnell-Miller's first season and improved to 13-17 last season.

The Buffs are off to an 8-2 start this year and are riding a seven-game win streak heading into today's 7 p.m. FSN televised game at home against Southern Utah (2-8).

To reach the Top 25 in her third season at CU is an important stepping stone in the program's rebuilding. But the coach knows her team's visit to the rankings could be short lived if the Buffs don't improve their offensive execution by the time the Big 12 season starts on Jan. 9 at Missouri.

"I feel good about the progress that's being made, no doubt," McConnell-Miller said. "But I know what's around the corner."

The Buffs have shot under 40 percent since knocking off then-No. 20 Vanderbilt on the road three games ago on Dec. 9. Since then, the Buffs beat Texas Southern 64-29 despite shooting 32.3 percent and Dartmouth 57-43 with 39.2 percent for a combined 35.4 percent.

More specifically, CU's 3-point shooting has fallen off in the last three games. After making 40 percent of their treys in knocking off then-No. 21 Wyoming, the Buffs have made just 20.3 percent of their 3-

pointers.

Colorado has made just 15 shots from 3-point range in its last three games and the Buffs lead the Big 12 in 3-point shots made with 85 this season.

"We watched an edit of our offensive sets to see where we're good and where we need to improve," McConnell-Miller said, referring to a film session on Thursday.

The Buffs need to better identify when opponents make changes on defense, and to better anticipate when teams are going to double- and triple-team CU forward Jackie McFarland so that they can find other ways to score.

The Buffs have three games left to work out the offensive kinks before the Big 12 season starts. But it certainly helps to go into this final nonconference stretch ranked in the Top 25.

"To me, it doesn't matter if it's 25 or if it's 50," McConnell-Miller said. "We prepare the same way for every team and the players have to know that."



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