



McConnell-Miller eyes answers in exhibition game

Bufs host Regis today

By Chris Shelton

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The Buffs will take their revamped look for a test drive today when the Colorado women's basketball team hosts Regis in an exhibition game at 2 p.m. in the Coors Events Center.

Only one regular starter returns for Kathy McConnell-Miller's WNIT semifinals squad as the Buffs begin the post-Jackie McFarland era.

Today's game will give McConnell-Miller a chance to begin answering some questions.

First off, how will the Buffs fare at point guard?

Junior Whitney Houston emerged down the stretch last year as a promising point guard, but she suffered a torn ACL before the season began and is out for the year.

Sophomore Kelly Jo Mullaney earned the starting point guard job in preseason practices.

Freshman Alyssa Fressle, once a candidate for point guard, will begin the season as a starter on the wing.

"With Alyssa we missed a lot of her scoring when she ran the point," McConnell-Miller said. "I told her I reserve the right to bring her back over. I think she can eventually handle it when she gets a better feel for everything. You just don't want to lose what she does best, and that's score."

McConnell-Miller said she gave each candidate several days to run the team, and that Mullaney has had about a week of practice under her belt as the team's point guard.

"Kelly Jo has a better comfort level of being able to find her shots within the offense and leading the team," McConnell-Miller said. "She's really evolving into one that can really handle it."

Sophomore Britney Blythe will be Mullaney's backup at point guard.

"We need Britney to give us some minutes," McConnell-Miller said.

McConnell-Miller will also be watching to see how her four-guard lineup fares.

Mullaney, Fressle, junior sharp-shooter Bianca Smith and sophomore Brittany Spears are expected to

start at guard, with senior Kara Richards at center. Spears is CU's lone returning regular starter, although Smith and Richards started in some games throughout their careers.

Another question facing McConnell-Miller is whether Richards will emerge this season and reach her potential. Richards played in McFarland's shadow and has been hampered by foul trouble in years' past.

McConnell-Miller hopes games such as today's exhibition can build up the confidence level for Richards.

"Kara is a key for us," McConnell-Miller said. "She can dominate. She had a really strong scrimmage (earlier this year against Air Force). I hope that carries over."

McConnell-Miller will also be looking at freshman power forward Julie Seabrook, sophomore center Courtney Dunn and senior guard/forward Hannah Skildum to see where they fit into CU's rotation on offense.



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