

# Bufs end USD's season

By Keith A. Brockberg  
P&D Correspondent

The University of Colorado Buffaloes used a break just before halftime, a strong second-half start and a gaudy rebounding edge to end the University of South Dakota's season with a 64-55 Women's National Invitation Tournament win over the Coyotes at the DakotaDome Monday night.

The Coyotes, who reached the second round of the WNIT with a 61-53 win over Drake Thursday night, got a taste of the next level in facing the lengthy and athletic Buffaloes of the Pac 12.

They also saw a cold-blooded shooter in Chucky Jeffery, who stabbed at the Coyotes' heart whenever they grasped at momentum.

"You saw their athleticism; you saw the next level of talent," USD head coach Ryun Williams said. "Every time they needed a basket, there was Chucky; every time they needed a rebound, they went out and got it."

"We knew they were a good team coming in," Coyote guard Annie Roche said. "Their athleticism and length isn't something we've seen this year."

"We beared down; it was a tough atmosphere out there," CU's Jeffery said. "When we needed some scores, we came up big."

Colorado won the opening tip, but the game's initial sparks belonged to the Coyotes as Amber Hegge blocked Jasmine Sborov's shot on the defensive end and converted on the offensive end with an easy drive for a lay-up and a 3-point play.

But the Buffalo rebounding took hold, and Colorado used it to maximize their possessions.

Colorado built a double-digit advantage as Brittany Wilson sped the baseline for a hoop and some harm. The 5-7 guard swished the free throw for the old-school 3-point play and a 24-14 Buff lead at the 6:34 mark.

The Coyotes and Hegge brought the DakotaDome to their feet with a 9-0 run.

Hegge rose above the crowd for an in-the-lane jumper and, on the return trip, battled for a rebound deep under the basket and kicked out to Kelly Stewart for a cool jumper.

The senior from Crofton continued to show the Buffaloes her skillset by pulling up for a jumper and then stepping outside for a 3-point shot.

Hegge's spree pulled the Coyotes to within 26-23 with 1:09 left in the half.

Chucky Jeffery answered the

USD run with a scoop shot and closed the half with a controversial jumper.

The Bufs played for the last shot, and though they missed a 3-point attempt, Colorado was given possession on a held-ball call on the rebound and awarded an extra half-second to work with. CU capitalized as the inbound pass went to Jeffery, who canned the jumper and sent the visitors to the locker room with a 30-23 lead.

"We had a little momentum going near the end of the half, and they made a couple of buckets," Hegge said.

Jeffery and Wilson each had 10 points at the break for the Bufs as Hegge had 10 points for the 'Yotes.

Colorado opened the second half four of five from the field to open up the game.

Jeffery canned a 3-pointer and raced in for a lay-up off a Coyote turnover. Wilson scored on a lay-up to put the Bufs in front 39-26.

With their home crowd faithfully and vocally behind them, the Coyotes continued to fight and trimmed the Buffalo lead under double digits with a 3-pointer from Alexis Yackley with 7:03 remaining.

Roche cued up for another trey and Yackley rifled in a pass to Jodie Boss to draw USD to within 53-47.

Jeffery pulled the trigger on a long jumper to again thwart the USD run, but the Coyotes continued to hang around.

Even though USD was trying to extend the game by sending the Buffaloes to the free-throw line, USD ended up shooting six of six from the charity stripe in the final 53 seconds.

USD got as close as 58-53 on a pair of free throws from Tempestt Wilson with 50.3 seconds left, but Jeffery got free on the fly pattern and went in for a lay-up, securing the 64-55 win for Colorado.

Jeffery led all scorers with 23 points while also grabbing 10 rebounds. Wilson added 15 points for Colorado (20-13).

Hegge finished with 20 points, seven rebounds, three assists and three blocked shots.

"Amber Hegge's a great player," Jeffery said of the Crofton Warrior. "She's 6-1 and she can do a lot of things."

Roche scored 14 points and moved into 15th place on the USD scoring chart, passing Jodi Beavers with 1,175 counters. Wilson scored 12 points.

The Buffaloes held a 47-25 advantage on the boards with 19 rebounds coming on the offensive end.

"Our rebounding has been a



South Dakota's Amber Hegge drives past Colorado's Meagan Malcolm-Peck (14) early in the first half of action in the DakotaDome Monday. Colorado downed USD 64-55 in the second round of the Women's National Invitational Tournament, ending the Coyotes' season with a 23-8 mark.

(David Lias/Vermillion Plain Talk)

staple for us all season," Colorado head coach Linda Lappe said. "We did a nice job of getting extra possessions and making them play defense for some times 60 seconds at a time."

The DakotaDome crowd kept the Coyotes believing while making the Buffaloes feeling unwelcome.

"Our fans did an awesome job," Roche said. "Even when we would get a little bit back in it,

they were right there backing us up."

"It was a neat environment," Lappe said. "They didn't like us and that made it fun."

The Buffaloes, who reached the 20-win mark for the first time since 2004, will host Villanova Thursday in the third round.

USD finished their final NCAA Division I transitional season with a 23-8 mark while bidding farewell to seniors

Hegge, Boss and Roche.

"What a treat to be able to come here and coach Amber Hegge," Williams said. "I couldn't get her at Wayne State so I had to come here so I could coach her."

Boss followed Williams from Wayne State to block a school-record 230 shots while Roche stayed home for her 1,100-point Coyote career.

Hegge finished with 1,759 points, second behind Mandy

Koupal in the USD annals while also finishing fifth with 841 rebounds, second to Boss with 176 blocks and ninth in assists with 314.

"I've learned more from Amber Hegge, Annie Roche and Jodie Boss than I could have ever taught them as a coach," Williams said of the departing trio.

## VHS

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end the threat. The Iowans got only one more run off Garrett the rest of the way, and he finished strong, retiring eight of the last nine men he faced.

Meanwhile, the Tanagers tacked on an insurance run on a walk, a stolen base, an infield out and a wild pitch in the fifth. Vermillion put the game in the bag with a three-run seventh, an inning in which Tanner Settles' single and Mirtz's double produced runs as did an infield error.

Bertram struck out six and allowed six hits during his 3 2/3 innings, and Garrett fanned one and gave up two hits in his 3 1/3 innings of relief. Robert Kron, the second of four Bancroft hurlers, took the loss.

Mirtz and Fore had two hits apiece among Vermillion's eight. Mirtz drove in a pair of runs while Settles, Chayse Meierkort, Tanner Anderson, Mazour and Garrett each had one RBI.

In the second game, at the same time pitcher Meierkort was holding the Iowans to a lone run in the fifth inning, the Tanagers were wasting opportunities, stranding eight men on base in the second through fifth innings while scoring only one run themselves. That came in the third when Fore doubled and scored on Meierkort's base knock.

Three singles and a walk off sixth-inning reliever Nile Morecraft lifted the Bancrofts into the lead, and an extra run scored when the Tanager infield committed two errors on the same play as they tried in vain to complete a double play at first and to then nab an advancing runner at third.

Bancrofts reliever Miles

Kleinhesselink, who pitched the sixth and seventh innings, got five of his six outs on strikeouts and picked up the win in relief.

Fore had three hits and Mirtz and Meierkort two apiece among the Tanagers' total of nine.

The Tanager season continues with more non-league action

against Dakota Valley in North Sioux City on Saturday. The JV game starts at 2 p.m. with the varsity to follow at 4. VHS will have five more road games after that before finally opening its home season on April 16 against Dakota Valley.




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