

Coach Jeff Bzdelik looking for more intensity from CU Buffs

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 12/21/2009 11:29:41 PM MST

The Buffs are an average basketball team right now, according to Colorado's top hoops professor.

Through 10 games, Jeff Bzdelik gives his team "a solid B" offensively and a D on the other end of the court.

"And D doesn't stand for defense," the head coach quipped.

When Bzdelik isn't coaching he's usually watching basketball. Unfortunately, he has to watch Colorado State film or an ACC team in action or NBA highlights to see players diving on the floor for loose balls or sacrificing their bodies to take a charge.

Bzdelik appreciates the fact that his players are the type of kids who study for exams and hold doors open for old ladies. Still, he's clearly growing tired of having to remind them that nice guys on the court finish last in the Big 12.

CU will have to play with more of an edge tonight to beat a respectable Cal State Northridge program at the Coors Events Center (5:30 p.m., FSN).

"People are probably sick of me saying this, and I'm sick of saying it, but we've only taken eight charges in 10 games," Bzdelik said. "We just lack grit defensively."

Entering Monday's action, CU ranked 11th in scoring defense (70.2 ppg), last in field goal percentage defense (.439) and last in rebounding (30.7 rpg) in the Big 12.

The Matadors (4-6) played in the NCAA Tournament last season and have faced a difficult non-conference schedule this year that has included road losses at Purdue, Western Kentucky, Washington and Denver.

"We'll see a quick assault on the rim," Bzdelik said. "They're a high-scoring team, a very aggressive, attacking team on offense. They'll throw it up there and they'll go get it. ...[This](#) will be, I would think, a high energy game."

It will if CU matches the visitors' intensity. So far that hasn't been a problem at home, where Bzdelik's team is off to a 5-0 start with an average margin of victory of 18.8 points.

"I give us about a C-plus," senior guard Dwight Thorne said of CU's 6-4 start. "I think we let some games slip away we should have won. If we play with the right intensity, we should be OK."

That wasn't the case during a 77-62 loss at CSU on Dec. 10.

"They wanted the game more than we did, that's the bottom line," Thorne said of the Rams.

Even during the best of performances -- like the 76-72 loss to Gonzaga at the Maui Invitational -- the Buffs have been unwilling to draw offensive fouls on the opposition. Bzdelik still can't get over seeing Matt Bouldin drive to the hoop while watching the game in his mother's hospital room in Chicago.

"I was throwing things at the TV," Bzdelik said. "Think about if you took those three charges in the first five minutes of the Gonzaga game that we could have taken. Maybe it's two fouls on Matt Bouldin and six less points (for Gonzaga). And we lost by four."

Cory Higgins, CU's best all-around player, believes more of his teammates will be willing to do whatever it takes to improve their defensive grades now that final exams are over and the focus is on basketball.

"It just has to come within. It has to be something you want to do," Higgins said. "I think most guys have turned that corner

because we want to stop losing these close games."

TODAY'S GAME: Colorado plays Cal State Northridge at 5:37 p.m. at the Coors Events Center.

BROADCAST: Television: FSN with Drew Goodman (play-by-play), Ceal Barry (color) and Alanna Rizzo (sideline); Radio: KKZN (760 AM) with Mark Johnson (play-by-play) and Charles Johnson (color).

STORYLINES: The Buffs (6-4) haven't played since a humbling 77-62 loss at Colorado State on Dec. 10. ... Alec Burks scored 22 points on 9-for-14 shooting against the Rams. CU's other players were a combined 10-for-37 shooting with 40 points. ... The Matadors (4-6) are the defending Big West champions and are coming off an appearance in the NCAA Tournament last season. ... Cal State Northridge is 0-4 on the road while CU is 5-0 at home this season.

KEY STAT: Only Chauncey Billups (204 points, 1995-96) and Emmett Lewis (175 points, 1975-76) have scored more points through 10 games as a true freshman at CU than Alec Burks (161 points).

COACHES: Jeff Bzdelik is 27-46 in his third season at CU. Bobby Braswell is 209-187 in his 14th season at Cal State Northridge.

PROBABLE STARTERS:

Colorado -- G Dwight Thorne, 6-3, senior, 7.4 ppg, 2.3 rpg, G Alec Burks, 6-6, freshman, 16.1 ppg, 4.3 rpg, G Cory Higgins, 6-5, junior, 19.7 ppg, 3.4 rpg, F Austin Dufault, 6-9, sophomore, 7.8 ppg, 4.4 rpg, F Marcus Relphorde, 6-6, junior, 9.4 ppg, 3.0 rpg.

Cal State Northridge -- G Mark Hill, 5-11, senior, 5.2 ppg, 1.3 rpg, G Raymond Cody, 6-5, junior, 6.4 ppg, 1.9 rpg, F Lenny Daniel, 6-7, junior, 10.7 ppg, 7.3 rpg, F Kenny Daniels, 6-4, senior, 16.0 ppg, 3.6 rpg, F Michael Lizarraga, 6-7, junior, 3.0 ppg, 3.1 rpg.

SERIES: Colorado leads 2-0 -- a 100-85 victory on Jan. 17, 1994, and a 113-89 victory on Nov. 23, 1990. Both games were played in Boulder.

UP NEXT: The Buffs will host Yale on Dec. 29 at the Coors Events Center (7 p.m., FSN).

Close Window

Send To Printer

Ryan Thorburn's Big 12 men's basketball power rankings: Dec. 22

By **Ryan Thorburn** Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 12/21/2009 11:26:46 PM MST

(Last week's ranking and record)

1. Kansas (1/10-0) -- The Jayhawks are winning by an average of 30.5 points per game so far. **Up next:** Tonight vs. Cal.

2. Texas (2/10-0) -- The Longhorns looked like a Final Four team during 103-90 victory over North Carolina. **Up next:** Tonight vs. Michigan State.

3. Kansas State (3/11-1) -- Jacob Pullen scored 30 points on 10-for-15 shooting during `Cats victory at Alabama. **Up next:** Dec. 29 vs. Cleveland State.

4. Texas A&M (5/9-2) -- Big test for the Aggies looming in the Great Northwest. **Up next:** Tonight at Washington.

5. Oklahoma State (6/10-1) -- James Anderson, the conference's leading scorer, has reached double figures in his last 25 games. **Up next:** Dec. 29 vs. Pacific.

6. Texas Tech (4/9-1) -- Pat Knight's team is looking to rebound from its first loss against a quality opponent. **Up next:** Tonight vs. Stanford.

7. Iowa State (7/8-3) -- Craig Brackins is averaging 18.0 points and 8.0 rebounds per game. **Up next:** Tonight vs. North Dakota.

8. Baylor (9/9-1) -- The Bears have won 18 consecutive games in December. **Up next:** Dec. 30 at Arkansas.

9. Missouri (10/7-3) -- Zaire Taylor makes the Tigers fun to watch and hell to play. **Up next:** Wednesday vs. Illinois.

10. Oklahoma (8/8-4) -- The Sooners needed a little help from the officials to beat Northern Colorado in Norman and were outclassed by UTEP in Oklahoma City. **Up next:** Dec. 31 at Gonzaga.

11. Nebraska (11/8-2) -- The Huskers are last in scoring offense (66.5 ppg) but first in scoring defense (53.5 ppg) among Big 12 teams. **Up next:** Tonight vs. Tulsa.

12. Colorado (12/6-4) -- The Buffs are 5-0 at home and still perfectly bad on the road. **Up next:** Tonight vs. Cal State Northridge.

-- Ryan Thorburn

Close Window

Send To Printer