

Buff men respond to Bzdelik's plea

CU bounces back from CSU debacle with easy victory

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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Casey Crawford couldn't put on the breaks.

The 6-foot-9, 245-pound runaway truck was headed straight for the Colorado bench on a hustle play and Jeff Bzdelik was in perfect position to take the contact.

"I tried to take (a charge) on Casey, but I turned my back," Bzdelik lamented. "I didn't set a good example."

The Buffs -- who had played with a lack of passion during a 15-point loss at Colorado State in their previous game -- still answered the coach's call for better execution offensively and more intensity on the defensive end on Tuesday night.

Five different players scored in double figures and everyone in the home silver played extremely hard and efficiently during CU's impressive 92-58 victory over Cal State Northridge in front of an appreciative holiday crowd of 5,838 at the Coors Events Center.

After living with the fiasco in Fort Collins for 12 days, the Buffs took care of business, shooting 56.1 percent from the field while holding the out-manned Matadors to 32.7 percent shooting.

Dwight Thorne scored 19 points in 18 minutes off the bench. Cory Higgins and Alec Burks each had 14 points and played 28 minutes. Marcus Relphorde (13 points), Austin Dufault (12 points) and Nate Tomlinson (eight points) were a combined 11-for-16 from the field, including 7-for-8 from behind the arc.

"We maintained our intensity better than we have all year," said Thorne, who had started the other nine games he had played in this season. "Unlike the CSU game, we shared the ball a lot better and defended a lot better. If we do those two things we'll be able to compete with anybody and we'll be hard to beat."

CU led 41-21 at halftime after shooting 53.8 percent (14-for-26) from the field and limiting Northridge to 26.9 percent (7-for-26).

The Matadors (4-7) -- who won the Big West last season and made an appearance in the NCAA Tournament -- committed 10 turnovers and shot two air balls in their first 14 possessions.

The inept play by the visitors helped the Buffs go on a 15-0 run that included a pair of 3-pointers by Tomlinson, who made his first start of the season in place of Thorne.

"We've had some very intense practices. Every day we mixed up the players and the players played with an edge for the last several days here in practice once we got through our final exams and just played basketball," Bzdelik said. "We had three consecutive three and a half hour workouts. We really went after each other."

Northridge took a 3-2 lead on a 3-pointer by Vinnie McGhee 45 seconds into the game and didn't score again until a basket by McGhee cut his team's deficit to 17-5 with 11:18 remaining in the half.

McGhee led the Matadors with 13 points on 5-for-14 shooting in 33 minutes.

Meanwhile, the Buffs (7-4) set season high marks for 3-pointers made (10) and assists (27). CU also had a 34-18 scoring edge in the paint and scored 32 points off 26 Northridge turnovers.

"I was very pleased," Bzdelik said. "Defensively, our positioning was better. We just need to continue to share the ball and play with high energy and totally sell out to one another."

CU, which improved to 6-0 at home, will return to action on Dec. 29 against Yale at the Coors Events Center (7 p.m., FSN).

Notable

Higgins had a career-high eight assists. ... Tuesday was the fifth time this season CU shot 50 percent or better in both halves (4-1 in those games; lost to Gonzaga). ... The Buffs now lead the all-time series against Cal State Northridge 3-0. ... CU's 35-point lead with 25.7 seconds left set a new season high in point differential. The previous high was 30 against Colorado Christian. ... The Buffs will take the next three days off before returning to practice on Dec. 26.

Colorado 92,

CS Northridge 58

CS NORTHRIDGE (58)

FG FT Reb

Min M-A M-A O-T A PF PT

Daniel 19 0-6 3-10 3-7 0 0 3

Galick 25 0-3 4-6 1-1 4 4 4

McGhee 33 5-14 0-0 1-6 2 4 13

Daniels 27 4-8 0-0 2-3 2 1 9

Cody 16 0-4 2-2 0-1 0 0 2

Cordell 11 1-2 0-0 1-1 0 1 2

Hill 22 3-5 4-4 0-2 0 3 12

Osunsmi 10 1-1 1-2 6-6 0 1 3

Taylor 14 2-6 0-0 0-0 0 2 4

Henson 3 0-1 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Lizarraga 20 2-5 2-2 3-7 0 2 6

Totals 200 18-55 16-26 17-36 8 18 58

Percentages: FG .327, FT .615.

3-Point Goals: 6-23, .261 (McGhee 3-8, Hill 2-4, Daniels 1-5, Cordell 0-1, Cody 0-2, Taylor 0-3).

Team Rebounds: 2.

Blocked Shots: 1 (Lizarraga).

Turnovers: 26 (Daniels 6, Galick 5, Cody 3, Daniel 3, Cordell 2, Taylor 2, McGhee 2, Lizarraga 2, Hill).

Steals: 10 (McGhee 4, Hill, Daniels, Lizarraga, Cordell, Galick, Taylor).

Technical Fouls: None.

COLORADO (92)

FG FT Reb

Min M-A M-A O-T A PF PT

Dufault 23 4-7 2-2 0-3 1 2 12

Tomlinson 30 3-3 0-0 0-1 4 1 8

Relphorde 27 4-6 2-2 1-4 4 4 13

Burks 28 4-10 6-6 2-6 3 2 14

CHiggins 28 5-11 3-3 0-3 8 2 14

Thorne II 18 6-10 5-5 0-1 5 2 19

Hrs-Tnks 12 2-2 0-1 0-3 0 1 4

Coney 3 0-0 0-0 1-2 0 2 0

Knutson 8 1-2 0-0 0-2 0 0 2

Crawford 7 0-2 0-0 0-0 0 1 0

Hrnbackle 11 2-3 0-0 0-1 1 1 4

Eckloff 5 1-1 0-0 1-2 1 2 2

Totals 200 32-57 18-19 7-31 27 20 92

Percentages: FG .561, FT .947.

3-Point Goals: 10-25, .400 (Relphorde 3-3, Tomlinson 2-2, Dufault 2-3, Thorne II 2-6, [C.Higgins](#) 1-5, Crawford 0-1, Knutson 0-1, Burks 0-4).

Team Rebounds: 3.

Blocked Shots: 4 (Relphorde, Hornbuckle, Burks, Dufault).

Turnovers: 20 (Harris-Tunks 5, Burks 4, Thorne II 4, Relphorde 3, Tomlinson 2, Knutson, Dufault).

Steals: 15 (Dufault 3, Relphorde 3, [C.Higgins](#) 2, Tomlinson 2, Burks 2, Hornbuckle, Harris-Tunks, Thorne II).

Technical Fouls: None.

CS Northridge 21 37--58

Colorado 41 51--92

A -- 5,838.

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sports

Thorne leads CU Buffs to 92-58 rout of Cal State Northridge

By Natalie Meisler
The Denver Post

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Updated: 12/23/2009 01:14:12 AM MST

BOULDER — Dwight Thorne II, the lone senior on Colorado's roster, learned at about 1:30 p.m. Tuesday he was going to come off the bench instead of being a starter.

After a 92-58 whipping of Cal State Northridge, Thorne and his teammates learned maybe CU coach Jeff Bzdelik was on to something with his "share the ball" philosophy.

In 18 minutes of playing time, Thorne scored a team-high 19 points (twice his season average) and also contributed five assists to the rout.

"Coach said he would make changes and I was the change," Thorne said. "I'm a grown man, so I have to respond to it."

CU's biggest winning margin of a 7-4 season came after Bzdelik turned up the heat in the last three practices as soon as final exams ended.

"We had three straight practices of three and a half hours. We worked really hard and went after each other," Bzdelik said.

Bzdelik dial up the intensity in part to get the most out of CU's one game in an 18-day stretch. The other part was exorcising a dismal showing, especially on the defensive end, at Colorado State on Dec. 10.

The game was decided early when the Buffs took off from an 8-3 edge and poured in five consecutive 3-pointers for a 23-10 lead.

Nate Tomlinson, making just his second start of the season, led the opening 17-3 run.

CU finished 10-of-25 behind the arc. Marcus Relphorde led with a 3-for-3 effort, but the scoring was evenly spread with five in double figures.

The most glaring difference in the scoring summary was CU's 27 assists (including a season-high eight from Cory Higgins) to just eight assists by the Matadors.

"Defensively our position was better. This team (Northridge) was a very high-scoring team," Bzdelik said. "We keep working to get better, play with high energy and share the ball."

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THE DENVER POST

The defending Big West champion, 4-7 in a grueling nonleague schedule, was no measure of what lies ahead for CU in the Big 12 opener Jan. 9 at Texas, ranked No. 2 in the country. CU players get a brief Christmas break before playing Yale next Tuesday and going to Tulsa on Jan. 2.

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Bouncing back

CU men gore opponents with altered starting lineup

By Patrick Ridgell
© 2009 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — A minor change came Tuesday to the Colorado men's basketball program. It's unclear if that change is a permanent one.

Dwight Thorne, the program's lone senior and one of its steadier players over the past two seasons, did not start in CU's 92-58 defeat of Cal State Northridge. It was the Buffs' first game since their embarrassing 77-62 loss Dec. 10 at Colorado State.

Thorne finished with a team-high 19 points and five assists in 18 minutes. He started the season's first eight games prior to spraining his ankle late in the team's Dec. 4 loss at Oregon State. He missed the Dec. 7 win over Colorado Christian but started at Colorado State three days later.

Exactly why coach Jeff Bzdelik inserted point guard Nate Tomlinson into the starting five in Thorne's spot was unclear. All the coach would say after Tuesday's win was that change should be expected.

Coming off their performance Dec. 10, that shouldn't be a surprise. But Thorne?

"The players didn't even know who would start until (Tuesday) at 1:30 p.m.," Bzdelik said. "It's going to change. What we need to do is sustain energy for 40 minutes.

"Dwight, in all fairness to him, is more of a combo guard, and he responded great."

Thorne said he did not know if the move to the bench is permanent. He entered averaging 21.3 minutes and 7.4 points a game. The co-captain has made 47 career starts.

"Coach said he was going to make changes, I was the change," Thorne said. "I'm a grown man, and I had to respond to it. I had to come out and do what I do."

Thorne said he'll take things "day by day." He added that he believes Bzdelik is trying to match personnel with opponents and reward who's playing well.

"That was beautiful," Bzdelik said about Thorne's effort. "It's not about who starts. The starters' only job is to get you off to a good start. ... Your effort on the floor and quality of play will determine how long you play."



Colorado freshman guard Alec Burks goes up for a basket as Cal State Northridge's Kenny Daniels, left, and Willie Galick attempt to block him during their game Tuesday at Coors Events Center in Boulder. **Morgan Varon/Times Call**

Colorado 92, Cal St. Northridge 58

CS NORTHRIDGE (4-7)

Daniel 0-6 3-10 3, Galick 0-3 4-6 4, McGhee 5-14 0-0 13, Daniels 4-8 0-0 9, Cody 0-4 2-2 2, Cordell 1-2 0-0 2, Hill 3-5 4-4 12, Osunsanmi 1-1 1-2 3, Taylor 2-6 0-0 4, Henson 0-1 0-0 0, Lizarraga 2-5 2-2 6. Totals 18-55 16-26 58.

COLORADO (7-4)

Dufault 4-7 2-2 12, Tomlinson 3-3 0-0 8, Relphorde 4-6 2-2 13, Burks 4-10 6-6 14, C.Higgins 5-11 3-3 14, Thorne II 6-10 5-5 19, Harris-Tunks 2-2 0-1 4, Coney 0-0 0-0 0, Knutson 1-2 0-0 2, Crawford 0-2 0-0 0, Hornbuckle 2-3 0-0 4, Eckloff 1-1 0-0 2. Totals 32-57 18-19 92.

Halftime—Colorado 41-21.

3-Point Goals—CS Northridge 6-23 (McGhee 3-8, Hill 2-4, Daniels 1-5, Cordell 0-1, Cody 0-2, Taylor 0-3), **Colorado 10-25** (Relphorde 3-3,

Playing time, Thorne said, is “going to be at (Bzdelik’s) discretion, as everybody knows.”

For his part, “I try to come in and focus and give energy,” Thorne said. “That’s my mindset. Just come out and play hard.”

CU (7-4) recorded season highs in points, 3-point attempts, steals and forced turnovers in rolling to an easy win. Five Buffs scored in double figures. Cory Higgins had a career-best eight assists. Alec Burks had 14 points, a highlight-reel dunk on an alley-oop, and a soaring blocked shot that also got the crowd of 5,838 going.

Tomlinson 2-2, Dufault 2-3, Thorne II 2-6, C.Higgins 1-5, Crawford 0-1, Knutson 0-1, Burks 0-4). **Fouled Out**—None. **Rebounds**—CS Northridge 36 (Daniel, Lizarraga 7), Colorado 31 (Burks 6). **Assists**—CS Northridge 8 (Galick 4), Colorado 27 (C.Higgins 8). **Total Fouls**—CS Northridge 18, Colorado 20. **A**—5,838.

“Yeah, he’s entertaining,” Bzdelik said.

CU had a season-high 27 assists. Its previous high was 20.

Cal State Northridge (4-7) returned three starters and eight letter winners from its 2008-09 Big West Championship team that advanced to the NCAA Tournament. It didn’t look anything like a championship team Tuesday.

The Matadors committed 10 turnovers and shot two air balls on their first 15 possessions. CU took advantage by running off 15 straight points to take a 17-3 lead. Its lead never dropped below 10 points the rest of the night, and it hovered around 30 for the final 7 minutes.

Cal State Northridge finished with 26 turnovers. CU scored 32 points off those turnovers.

It was the kind of the night the Buffs can use to rebuild some confidence.

“We played well,” Thorne said. “We executed from the beginning, especially on the defensive end.” Said Bzdelik: “I was very pleased.”

Read Patrick Ridgell’s CU sports blog at www.timescall.com/blogs/ridgell. He can be reached at pridgell@timescall.com.



Colorado vs. Northridge

[Box Score](#) · [Recap](#)

Colorado 92, CS Northridge 58

Dec. 22, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) -Dwight Thorne had 19 points, leading five Colorado players in double figures, and the Buffaloes scored a season high in routing Cal State Northridge 92-58 Tuesday night.

Alec Burks and Cory Higgins added 14 points each for Colorado (7-4), which improved to 6-0 at home - its best season-opening run since starting 7-0 at the Coors Events Center in 2005-06.

Northridge (4-7), which has lost all five of its road games this season, was led by Vinnie McGhee with 13 points and Mark Hill with 12.

Colorado outshot Northridge 56.1 percent to 32.7 percent from the field and made 10 of its 25 3-point attempts, one shy of its season high.

The Buffaloes hit seven 3-pointers in the opening 20 minutes, helping them take a 41-21 halftime lead. During one seven-minute sequence, four Colorado players hit five 3-pointers in a row as the Buffaloes stretched their lead from 8-3 to 23-10.

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Scoreboard

Final	1	2	T
Northridge (4-7)	21	37	58
Colorado (7-4) «	41	51	92

NORTHBRIDGE MATADORS

	M	FG	FT	TR	A	PF	PTS
W. Galick, F	25	0-3	4-6	1	4	4	4
L. Daniel, F	19	0-6	3-10	7	0	0	3
V. McGhee, G	33	5-14	0-0	6	2	4	13
K. Daniels, G	27	4-8	0-0	3	2	1	9
R. Cody, G	16	0-4	2-2	1	0	0	2
M. Hill, G	22	3-5	4-4	2	0	3	12
M. Lizarraga, F	20	2-5	2-2	7	0	2	6
T. Taylor, G-F	14	2-6	0-0	0	0	2	4
V. Cordell, F	11	1-2	0-0	1	0	1	2
T. Osunsanmi, G-F	10	1-1	1-2	6	0	1	3
A. Henson, F	3	0-1	0-0	0	0	0	0
Total		18-55	16-26	36	8	18	58
		32.7%	61.5%				

COLORADO BUFFALOES

	M	FG	FT	TR	A	PF	PTS
A. Dufault, F	23	4-7	2-2	3	1	2	12
N. Tomlinson, G	30	3-3	0-0	1	4	1	8
A. Burks, G	28	4-10	6-6	6	3	2	14
C. Higgins, G	28	5-11	3-3	3	8	2	14
M. Relphorde, F	27	4-6	2-2	4	4	4	13
D. Thorne II, G	18	6-10	5-5	1	5	2	19
S. Harris-Tunks, F-C	12	2-2	0-1	3	0	1	4
K. Hornbuckle, F	11	2-3	0-0	1	1	1	4
L. Knutson, G	8	1-2	0-0	2	0	0	2
C. Crawford, F	7	0-2	0-0	0	0	1	0
T. Eckloff, F	5	1-1	0-0	2	1	2	2
J. Coney, G	3	0-0	0-0	2	0	2	0
Total		32-57	18-19	31	27	20	92
		56.1%	94.7%				

Big West

Team	Conf. W-L	Tot. W-L
Pacific	12-4	23-11