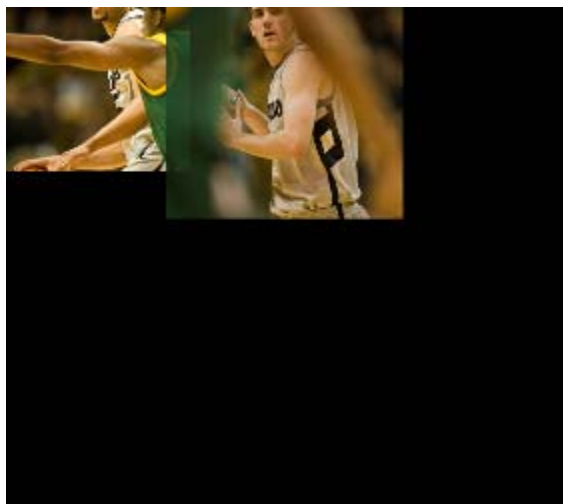


CU Buffs show their killer instinct

By Ryan Thorburn, Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 12/01/2009 09:01:59 PM MST



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Nice guys finish last.

The Buffs are tired of that storyline.

A year ago this team would have taken a deep breath at halftime and allowed the opponent to make things interesting in crunch time.

Perhaps those long nights are finally over.

Colorado showed no mercy on Tuesday night, building a 10-point lead by the intermission and then opening the second half with a 12-0 run during an impressive 78-54 victory over San Francisco at the Coors Events Center.

The Buffs (5-2) shot 61.5 percent in the first half and made their first six shots of the second half to improve to 4-0 at home this season.

"We just wanted to basically stomp on them," explained Cory Higgins, who scored a game-high 22 points on 9-for-12 shooting with three rebounds, three steals and an assist in 30 minutes. "In the past we've had leads and relaxed a little bit and let teams get back into games. In this game we made a big step to show that we have that killer instinct. ...

"Good teams don't let teams have any life when they have them down."

Higgins, who entered the game third in the Big 12 in scoring (20.5 ppg), made his first eight shots. Backcourt mates Alec Burks, Dwight Thorne and Nate Tomlinson were a combined 11-for-17 from the field with 28 points.

CU finished the game with 20 assists on 31 made baskets and only six turnovers. Those are the kinds of numbers Air Force was putting up three years ago.

"I know that offense is a variable, but we have some guys who can score," said CU head coach Jeff Bzdelik, who returned to the bench after missing the EA Sports Maui Invitational to attend to his ailing mother in Chicago. "So if we are unselfish and the spacing is good and the ap-proprate cuts are made and we don't turn it over, then we will get opportunities to score efficiently."

The Dons (2-5) from the West Coast Conference didn't make their first field goal of the second half until Michael Williams finally splashed a 3-pointer with 12:53 remaining to cut the deficit to 59-37.

The visitors, coming off a disheartening double-overtime loss at Colorado State on Sunday, shot 34 percent from the field and gave up 23 points off 15 turnovers.

"Our guys have a lot of stuff going on in their heads right now," said San Francisco head coach Rex Walters, a former standout player at Kansas. "This is a Big 12 school with a very well coached team. They do some things with their defense to make you think."

CU went on a 16-2 run midway through the first half after falling behind 18-16 on a 3-pointer by Williams with 12:05 remaining. Tomlinson answered with his second make from behind the arc and after a layup by Thorne the Buffs led 32-20 with 6:22 left.

Higgins made all six shots he took and scored 16 points in the first half. The Buffs led 42-32 at the intermission.

"Last year I think people just ran offense to run offense," Higgins said. "This year people are being aggressive at all times and it's putting pressure on the defense. So it's a lot different."

CU had four players score in double figures for the seventh consecutive game and has scored over 70 points in all seven games this season.

"Horse races are won by horses that go wire to wire," Bzdelik said. "You have to attack and be aggressive for all 40 minutes. We started the second half very well, I think we hit our first six shots. That's a good thing."

The Buffs return to action at Oregon State on Friday (9 p.m., FSN) as part of the Big 12/Pac-10 Hardwood Series.

Colorado 78, San Francisco 54

SAN FRANCISCO 54

FG FT Reb

Min M-A M-A O-T A PF PTS

Blackwell 25 4-8 2-6 5-9 1 3 10

Caloiaro 20 2-5 2-2 2-5 0 2 7

Lowhorn 16 1-7 4-4 0-0 0 0 6

Vaughn 28 3-12 5-6 0-2 2 3 11

Green 24 2-5 0-0 1-4 1 0 4

Williams 25 4-8 0-0 0-1 1 1 12

Bryant 20 0-0 1-2 0-2 2 2 1

Bruha 20 0-0 0-0 1-4 1 3 0

Stojiljkovic 7 0-2 0-0 0-3 0 0 0

Diarra 15 1-3 1-1 1-2 0 0 3

Totals 200 17-50 15-21 11-33 8 14 54

Percentages: FG .340, FT .714.

3-Point Goals: 5-17, .294 (Williams 4-7, Caloiaro 1-3, Stojiljkovic 0-1, Lowhorn 0-1, Green 0-1, Vaughn 0-4).

Team Rebounds: 1.

Blocked Shots: 0.

Turnovers: 15 (Green 4, Vaughn 4, Diarra 3, Bryant, Williams, Caloiaro).

Steals: 2 (Blackwell, Lowhorn).

Technical Fouls: None.

COLORADO**FG FT Reb****Min M-A M-A O-T A PF PTS**

Dufault 23 2-3 1-2 0-5 1 2 5

Rlphrd 28 4-10 1-2 0-2 6 2 10

Burks 21 5-10 1-1 1-3 1 3 12

Higgins 30 9-12 2-2 0-3 1 2 22

Thorne II 22 4-5 0-0 0-4 2 3 10

Tmlinsn 26 2-2 0-0 0-3 6 1 6

Hrs-Tnks 17 2-4 0-1 0-1 0 3 4

Coney 3 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Knutson 4 0-2 2-3 2-3 0 1 2

Crawford 7 0-2 0-0 0-3 0 1 0

Hrnbckl 15 2-4 0-0 1-2 3 0 5

Eckloff 4 1-2 0-0 0-0 0 0 2

Totals 200 31-56 7-11 5-30 20 18 78

Percentages: FG .554, FT .636.

3-Point Goals: 9-16, .563 (C.Higgins 2-2, Tomlinson 2-2, Thorne II 2-3, Hornbuckle 1-1, Burks 1-3, Relphorde 1-3, Eckloff 0-1, Dufault 0-1).

Team Rebounds: 1.

Blocked Shots: 5 (Dufault 3, Relphorde 2).

Turnovers: 6 (Relphorde, C.Higgins, Harris-Tunks, Tomlinson, Burks, Dufault).

Steals: 9 (C.Higgins 3, Tomlinson 2, Burks, Harris-Tunks, Relphorde, Dufault).

Technical Fouls: None.

San Francisco 32 22--54

Colorado 42 36--78

A -- 4,898.

Officials -- Scott Thornley, Mike Thibodeaux, Kipp Kissinger.

Hornbuckle turns in highlight dunk

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 12/01/2009 11:56:38 PM MST

Keegan Hornbuckle got the Coors Events Center crowd of 4,898 on its collective feet with Colorado's dunk of the year so far.

The freshman's rim-rocker off a nice lob pass from Nate Tomlinson put an exclamation point on the Buffs' 78-54 victory over San Francisco on Tuesday night.

Jeff Bzdelik was also giving Hornbuckle a standing ovation after the play. CU's head coach wants to see encore after encore as the talented 6-7 forward develops.

"We just need Keegan to be very aggressive," Bzdelik said. "Keegan has great skill. I think you got evidence of that with his dunk. I mean, he's very athletic. He just needs to get ticked off. He needs to have that ticked-off attitude, and we've talked about that.

"He sometimes kind of goes with the flow instead of making it happen."

Hornbuckle has been a part of Bzdelik's rotation all season but was averaging 2.7 points and 2.0 rebounds through the first six games. He finished with five points, three assists, two rebounds and the No. 1 highlight against the Dons.

"I'm starting to feel a lot more comfortable," Hornbuckle said. "Making big plays makes me feel even more comfortable than just going out there and running around."

The ally-oop wasn't even a set play, just a product of the on-court chemistry between CU's sophomore point guard and Hornbuckle.

"I was supposed to go to the elbow and I looked up and saw Nate motioning me to run to the basket," Hornbuckle said. "I just ran to the basket and hoped for the best."

Pupil to peer

When Bzdelik was with the Miami Heat as an assistant to Pat Riley he used to coach Rex Walters. The current San Francisco head coach, who played collegiately at Kansas, was famous for his pre- and post-practice shooting regiment.

"When people asked me what I did to work out I pretty much rebounded for Rex," Bzdelik said. "He'd get up thousands of shots."

Walters is now 13-23 in his second season coaching the Dons.

Glass half-full

CU was out-rebounded 17-12 in the first half and allowed San Francisco to score nine second-chance points off seven offensive rebounds. The Buffs won the battle of the boards 18-16 in the second half and didn't allow the visitors any second-chance points over the final 20 minutes.

Series

San Francisco still leads the all-time series 2-1 thanks to some of the program's legendary names.

On Dec. 16, 1946, Pete Newell coached the Dons to a 34-30 victory in Boulder, and on March 19, 1955, Bill Russell scored 24 points to lead the Dons to a victory over CU in the NCAA Tournament semifinals.

Notable

CU outscored USF 30-24 in the paint, 10-0 in fast break points and 19-16 in bench points. ... San Francisco is now 12-18 all-time against teams from the Big 12. ... CU junior Marcus Relphorde celebrated his 21st birthday on Tuesday with 10 points, six assists, two blocks and one turnover in 28 minutes. ... The Buffs' largest lead was 27 points (74-47) with 3:46 remaining.

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2010

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On-fire offense gets win for CU

By Patrick Ridgell
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BOULDER — It's pretty simple.

If the Colorado men's basketball team keeps shooting like it did during Tuesday's 78-54 defeat of San Francisco, it'll win some games this year. Maybe a bunch. Who knows?

Of course, concerns linger about its defense and rebounding, concerns that Tuesday's first half did little to alleviate when San Francisco created nine second-chance scoring opportunities. Those concerns were addressed at halftime, and San Francisco had none in the second half.

But Tuesday night's story was CU's offense, which at one point was 22-for-32 from the field. It finished 31-for-56. The Buffs (5-2) shot 61.5 percent in the first half, a season high for a half. CU's assist-to-turnover ratio was 20-6, showing the Buffs just might be getting the hang of the offense coach Jeff Bzdelik wants to run.

"If you share it and not turn it over, you're going to put yourselves in position to get great opportunities to score," said Bzdelik, who missed CU's three games in Maui last week to tend to his ailing mother.

CU started a little slow, trailing San Francisco (2-5) for most of the opening eight minutes. It used a 16-2 run midway through the first half to build a 10-point lead. It started the second half by making its first six shots to go up by 22 with 15 minutes, 39 seconds left in the game.

"We wanted to basically stomp on them," CU guard Cory Higgins said about the Buffs' second-half approach. "In the past, we've had leads and relaxed a little bit and let them back in the game.

"Good teams can't let other teams have any life when you already have them down."

Higgins led CU with 22 points. He made his first eight shots from the field and finished 9-for-12.

The Buffs play next at Oregon State on Friday as part of the Big 12/Pac 10 Hardwood Series. They have not been a strong road team during Bzdelik's tenure. But they haven't been this good on offense, either.

"I think people know to be aggressive with the offense," Higgins said. "Last year, people were just running the offense to run the offense. This year, people are being aggressive at all times to put pressure on the defense.

"So it's a lot different."

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

Colorado 78, San Francisco
54

SAN FRANCISCO (2-5)

Blackwell 4-8 2-6 10, Caloiaro 2-5 2-2 7, Lowhorn 1-7 4-4 6, Vaughn 3-12 5-6 11, Green 2-5 0-0 4, Williams 4-8 0-0 12, Bryant 0-0 1-2 1, Bruha 0-0 0-0 0, Stojiljkovic 0-2 0-0 0, Diarra 1-3 1-1 3. Totals 17-50 15-21 54.

COLORADO (5-2)

Dufault 2-3 1-2 5, Relphorde 4-10 1-2 10, Burks 5-10 1-1 12, C.Higgins 9-12 2-2 22, Thorne II 4-5 0-0 10, Tomlinson 2-2 0-0 6, Harris-Tunks 2-4 0-1 4, Coney 0-0 0-0 0, Knutson 0-2 2-3 2, Crawford 0-2 0-0 0, Hornbuckle 2-4 0-0 5, Eckloff 1-2 0-0 2. Totals 31-56 7-11 78.

Halftime—Colorado 42-32.

3-Point Goals—San Francisco 5-17 (Williams 4-7, Caloiaro 1-3, Stojiljkovic 0-1, Lowhorn 0-1, Green 0-1, Vaughn 0-4), Colorado 9-16 (C.Higgins 2-2, Tomlinson 2-2, Thorne II 2-3, Hornbuckle 1-1, Burks 1-3, Relphorde 1-3, Eckloff 0-1, Dufault 0-1). **Fouled Out**—None.

Rebounds—San Francisco 33 (Blackwell 9), Colorado 30 (Dufault 5).

Assists—San Francisco 8 (Bryant, Tomlinson 6). **Total Fouls**—San

Francisco 14, Colorado 18. **A**—4,898.

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Bufs run over Dons

Men's basketball moves record to 5-2 on the season

By Ron Knabenbauer on December 2, 2009

Colorado Buffaloes head coach Jeff Bzdelik's return to the bench seem to give his team an extra boost.

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After missing the EA Sports Maui Invitational last week in Hawaii to be with his ill mother in Chicago, Bzdelik watched his CU men's basketball team run the San Francisco Dons out of the Coors Events Center on Tuesday with a 78-54 victory.

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Junior guard Cory Higgins led the Buffs (5-2) with 22 points while freshman guard Alec Burks finished with 11 points. Senior guard Dwight Thorne II and junior forward Marcus Relphorde ended up with 10 points apiece.

The Dons (2-5) were led by Michael Williams' 12 points while Kwame Vaughn had 11 and Perris Blackwell added 10.

Colorado outshot the Dons, hitting 55.4 percent from the field compared to SFU's 34 percent.

CU was once again solid from the beyond the arc as they went 9-of-16 from three-point range. San Francisco made five of their 17 three-point attempts.

The Buffs also took advantage of turnovers as they scored 23 points off of 15 giveaways by the Dons. SFU only managed three points as CU turned the ball over just six times.

Colorado will head to Corvallis, Ore. on Friday to face the Oregon State Beavers (2-3) as part of the Big 12/Pac-10 Hardwood Series at 9 p.m.

Contact CU Independent Sports Editor Ron Knabenbauer at Ronald.knabenbauer@colorado.edu.

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Last season, guard Cory Higgins powers through two Kansas State defenders in a 77-75 overtime loss on Jan. 24. Higgins led CU to victory over the San Francisco Dons in the Coors Events Center on Tuesday, 78-54. (CU Independent file/Molly Maher)