

Men`s team laments another tough loss

Defensive lapses down stretch cost Buffs at Oregon State

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 12/06/2009 12:18:49 AM MST

CORVALLIS, Ore. -- Jeff Bzdelik thought he`d left these kinds of problems behind in the NBA.

Colorado is suddenly a fun offensive team to watch.

And seemingly not interested in paying the price defensively to win difficult games, especially on the road.

That was clearly the difference during the Buffs` disappointing 74-69 loss to Oregon State late Friday at Gill Coliseum in the Big 12/Pac-10 Hardwood Series.

Alec Burks scored 19 points, Cory Higgins added 15 points and Marcus Relphorde made back-to-back 3-pointers to turn a 64-61 deficit into a 67-64 lead with 2:33 remaining.

The offensive fireworks have been present throughout the season. But the more aggressive and determined Beavers outscored CU 10-2 in crunch time, despite making just one field goal in the final four minutes.

"We can`t have certain guys go without defensive rebounds the entire game," Bzdelik lamented.

Higgins, the team`s leading rebounder last season, had two defensive rebounds in 39 minutes. Relphorde had one rebound in 29 minutes.

CU out-rebounded Oregon State 32-30 thanks to 15 offensive rebounds, including six by Burks. However, the Buffs allowed 12 costly second-chance points and sent the Beavers to the foul line 34 times.

"It`s real simple: We need to rebound and defend," Relphorde admitted. "We gave them a lot of free points off offensive rebounds. I know I did a terrible job on the defensive glass. We`re scoring the ball. We need to rebound."

CU entered the game second in the Big 12 in scoring offense (81.1 ppg) and field goal percentage (51.5 percent) behind Kansas (91.8 ppg, 52.2 percent).

Bzdelik`s team is now 11th in scoring defense (70.0 ppg) and last in rebounding (30.8 rpg).

"There`s no reason why we shouldn`t be a good defensive team," Higgins said. "It`s completely mental."

The Buffs are 5-3 with winnable games against Colorado Christian and Colorado State looming next week.

But the program desperately needs a win over a quality opponent and a road victory.

CU lost heartbreakers to Gonzaga (76-72) and Arizona (91-87) at the EA Sports Maui Invitational. Bzdelik`s team has also lost 19 consecutive road games against Division I opponents dating back to the 73-70 victory at CSU on Dec. 22, 2007.

"It can change if they want it to change," Bzdelik said. "I can`t rebound for them. We`ve taught them how to defend. We only took one charge against a team that put their head down and drove. Our post players have to move their feet and get in front of people and not play behind people.

"Ninety-percent of fouls are defensive mistakes, and we had a lot of defensive mistakes out there."

The Buffs only had 12 turnovers against Oregon State, but those miscues led directly to 18 points for the Beavers, who

shot 59.1 percent while outscoring CU 43-33 in the second half.

"We threw that one away. It was real disappointing," said point guard Nate Tomlinson, who missed two free throws with 46.9 seconds remaining that could have given the Buffs the lead. "We need to realize there's a way to win by rebounding and playing defense without fouling.

"That's why the good teams win, they do those things. When we do them we will win."

Close Window

Send To Printer