

CU Buffs spend week regrouping

Bzdelik preaches positive attitude after tough losses to KU, MU

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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MANHATTAN, Kan. -- Heartbreaking. Agonizing. Painful.

These adjectives could be used to describe Colorado's overtime loss to No. 1 Kansas 10 days ago.

Jeff Bzdelik made sure his players had proper perspective this week as the Buffs regrouped for the season's stretch run.

CU's coach experienced true heartbreak, agony and personal pain the day after the KU game when he flew to Chicago to hold his mother's hand as she passed away.

A 2-7 record in the Big 12 has hurt the pride of a competitive group, but the Buffs (11-12 overall) remain positive about the possibilities ahead. Their goal of a winning season is still realistic if they can figure out a way to finish close games.

"We have eight games left. You're playing college basketball in front of thousands of people on TV in the Big 12. Why would anybody even think of putting their head down?" Bzdelik said. "I've never understood that rationale. We, in today's society, always look to the negative. Why don't we look to the positive? That's my point."

Point taken.

With a week to rest, heal and prepare for today's game against No. 9 Kansas State at Bramlage Coliseum (4:05 p.m., Altitude), the Buffs are feeling a lot better about themselves than they were following last Saturday's deflating 84-66 loss to Missouri last Saturday.

"We got some rest, got back focused and got back after it again pretty good (in practice). Our minds are right," Cory Higgins said. "We played K-State well here. We're still looking for that breakthrough win and it would be a great win to get."

CU lost 87-81 to the Wildcats (19-4, 6-3) on Jan. 16 at the Coors Events Center. Higgins scored 30 points in the game, which was spoiled by bad officiating as both teams had a difficult time getting into an offensive flow with a combined 68 fouls called and 94 free throws attempted in the first meeting.

"We take the positives and the things we did well out of the game as a reference," Austin Dufault said. "Hopefully, we'll be able to correct the mistakes that we made and play better."

The Buffs, suffering what Bzdelik called an "emotional hangover" from the upset that got away vs. the Jayhawks, laid an egg against Missouri. However, Alec Burks did return to the lineup after missing the majority of two games with a knee injury. The 6-6 guard, who ranks third nationally in scoring average among freshmen (16.8 ppg), put a career-high 27 points on the Tigers.

If Burks, Higgins, Marcus Relphorde and the role players are all taking good shots -- something CU did not do after falling behind early against Missouri -- the Buffs believe they can end the program's 33-game Big 12 road losing streak today in one of the conference's most intimidating venues.

K-State is 11-2 at Bramlage Coliseum this season with losses to Oklahoma State (73-69) and Kansas (81-79, OT). Today's game is sold out.

"They're going to know what's coming. It's just all about execution," Higgins said. "Our teammates in practice know what's coming, and we still execute."

CU missed 13 free throws, gave up 23 points on 17 turnovers and was out-rebounded 44-27 by the Wildcats in Boulder.

"At times it has been tough when you lose a close one to Kansas or some of the other close ones we've lost this year," Dufault said. "But that's a positive, how close we've been when you consider all the mistakes we made in those games. If we can correct a few of them, we can start pulling some games out."

The Buffs are excited about the opportunities ahead. A victory today would be CU's first road win over a top-10 opponent since an 81-79 overtime triumph at Missouri on Jan. 15, 1973.

"Why wouldn't your spirits be up?" Bzdelik said. "Why wouldn't you embrace today? Why wouldn't you embrace this opportunity? Why wouldn't you embrace this moment?"

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CU men's preview: at Kansas State

Camera staff
Boulder Daily Camera

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TODAY: Colorado travels to Manhattan, Kan., to take on No. 9 Kansas State at Bramlage Coliseum at 4:05 p.m.

BROADCAST: Television: Altitude with Mitch Holthus (play-by-play) and Rich Zvosec (analyst); Radio: KKZN (760 AM) with Mark Johnson (play-by-play) and Charles Johnson (color).

STORY LINES: The Buffs (11-12, 2-7) have lost six of their last seven games and had a week to regroup after last Saturday's 84-66 loss to Missouri. ... Alec Burks (16.8 ppg) ranks third in scoring nationally among all freshmen. ... CU has shot below 37.5 percent from the field in its previous three games, all losses. ... The Wildcats (19-4, 6-3) are 11-2 at home and defeated the Buffs 87-81 in Boulder on Jan. 16. ... There were 68 fouls called and 94 free throws attempted the last time these teams met.

KEY STAT: CU has lost 33 consecutive Big 12 road games and 25 consecutive true road games against Division I opponents.

COACHES: Jeff Bzdelik is 32-54 in his third season at CU. Frank Martin is 62-28 in his third season at Kansas State.

PROBABLE STARTERS:

Colorado -- G Nate Tomlinson, 6-3, sophomore, 5.8 ppg, 2.5 rpg; G Alec Burks, 6-6, freshman, 16.8 ppg, 4.8 rpg; G Cory Higgins, 6-5, junior, 18.0 ppg, 3.8 rpg; G Marcus Relphorde, 6-7, junior, 10.4 ppg, 4.0 rpg; F Austin Dufault, 6-9, sophomore, 6.5 ppg, 3.5 rpg.

Kansas State -- G Jacob Pullen, 6-0, junior, 18.8 ppg, 2.8 rpg; G Denis Clemente, 6-1, senior, 15.7 ppg, 2.4 rpg; F Dominique Sutton, 6-5, junior, 7.3 ppg, 5.3 rpg; F Curtis Kelly, 6-8, junior, 11.3 ppg, 6.2 rpg; C Luis Colon, 6-10, senior, 2.3 ppg, 3.6 rpg.

SERIES: Kansas State leads 96-44, including a 53-10 advantage in Manhattan.

UP NEXT: The Buffs host Oklahoma on Wednesday at the Coors Events Center (7 p.m., ESPNU).

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Longmont, Colorado
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Buffs holding their chins high

By Patrick Ridgell
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BOULDER — Toting myriad losing streaks with it to No. 9 Kansas State today (4 p.m., Altitude), the Colorado men's basketball program has reason to be discouraged. Coach Jeff Bzdelik won't have it.

There's CU's 33-game Big 12 road losing streak. Its 25 straight road losses against Division I foes. Its current three-game losing streak, and six losses in its past seven games. Worst of all, the Buffs believe they could have — should have, in some cases — won some of their more recent defeats. They still ache from losses to Iowa State, Texas A&M, Kansas and Kansas State.

Up next is another road game against a top-10 opponent that's brutal in more ways than one. CU (11-12, 2-7 Big 12) is a 121/2-point underdog. It's a game ahead of Nebraska for the Big 12 cellar, where the Buffs have finished the past three seasons.

The Buffs don't appear to be feeling sorry for themselves; they just want to win. Bzdelik got on a roll when asked how their spirits remain high.

"Why wouldn't (they) be?" Bzdelik said prior to Thursday's practice. "We have eight games left. We're playing college basketball in front of thousands of people on TV, in the Big 12. Why would anyone even think of putting their head down? I've never even understood that rationale.

"We in today's society always look for the negative. Why don't we look for the positive? That's my point. Why wouldn't your spirits be up? Why wouldn't you embrace today? Why wouldn't you embrace this opportunity? Why wouldn't you embrace this moment?"

Bzdelik said he intended to make those same points with his players before they began Thursday's work. He said he "never wants them to put their heads down."

CU hasn't played since last Saturday's 84-66 home loss to Missouri, a game after which the Buffs claimed they had become complacent and left with their heads down. They practiced all week, emphasizing blocking out and shot selection, Bzdelik said.

Some Buffs used the week to take stock of where they are.

"I think we've lost a couple of games we should have won," forward Dwight Thorne said. "I think we've played hard. We've had good support from the crowd and the administration and everybody. It's been good so far, but we

Upcoming games

Colorado men (11-12, 2-7) at No. 9 Kansas State (19-4, 6-3)

When/Where: 4 p.m. today at Bramlage Coliseum in Manhattan, Kan.

TV/Radio: Altitude/KKZN 760 AM

The series: Kansas State leads 96-44, 53-10 in Manhattan. Kansas State has won the series' past eight meetings.

Leading scorers: CU — Cory Higgins (18 points per game); Kansas State — Jacob Pullen (18.8 points per game).

Notes: Neither team has played since last Saturday. ... Freshman guard Alec Burks returned to CU's lineup last Saturday from his sprained left knee to score 27 points against Missouri. Burks is third in the nation in scoring for freshmen, 16.8 points per game. ... Higgins scored 30 in CU's 87-81 loss to Kansas State last month in Boulder. ... CU has lost 26 straight road games to ranked teams. Its last win on the road against a ranked team came in January, 1997, when Chauncey Billups played in the program. ... Kansas State is 10-3 at home. It has lost its past two home games — to Oklahoma State and Kansas.

Colorado women (12-10, 2-7) at No. 12 Oklahoma (17-6, 6-3)

When/Where: 1 p.m. today at the Lloyd Noble Center in Norman, Okla.

TV/Radio: No TV/KVCU AM 1190

The series: CU leads 33-21. Oklahoma has won the past seven and 12 of the past 14 meetings.

haven't had happen what we have to have happen. We have eight games, at least, to get better and win some games."

The last time the Buffs played Kansas State, officials called 68 fouls — 36 on CU — and the teams combined for 94 free throws — Kansas State shot 54. Kansas State's tenacious style turns many of its games into physical contests in which officiating plays a pivotal role. Today should be no different.

"Hopefully, it'll be a little bit different ... but if that's the way the game's going to go again, that's the way we have to be ready to play it," CU's Cory Higgins said.

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

Leading scorers: CU — Brittany Spears (16.7 points per game); Oklahoma — Danielle Robinson (17.3 points per game)

Notes: CU has lost five in a row and seven of its past eight. ... Oklahoma is CU's fourth straight ranked opponent. CU has lost 14 games in a row to teams ranked in the AP and WBCA polls, as Oklahoma is. ... CU has lost 19 straight road games against Big 12 South programs. ... Spears has averaged eight points per game over her past three, and shot 8-for-30 over that span. ... Oklahoma has won six of its past eight. CU coach Kathy McConnell-Miller is 1-8 against Oklahoma.

— Patrick Ridgell



Kansas State vs. Colorado

[GameTracker](#) · [Box Score](#) · [Full Play-by-Play](#) · [Recap](#) · [Shot Chart](#)

TIME: 06:00 P.M. EST

Kansas State has played well on the road in the Big 12 of late. It's at home where it needs to get back on track.

The ninth-ranked Wildcats have a good chance to avoid a third straight home loss while trying for a ninth consecutive victory over Colorado on Saturday.

It's been a week since Kansas State (19-4, 6-3) took the floor, winning 79-75 at Iowa State last Saturday for its fourth straight road victory. Though the Wildcats are tied with Missouri and Texas A&M for second place in the Big 12, they return to Manhattan looking to avoid the school's first three-game home losing streak since Feb. 5-19, 2005.

Bramlage Coliseum has become one of the toughest places for an opposing team to win, and Kansas State is averaging 81.3 points there. However, after winning its first 11 there this season, it lost 73-69 to Oklahoma State on Jan. 23, and 81-79 in overtime to archrival and then-No. 2 Kansas seven days later.

Facing Colorado (11-12, 2-7), however, could help the Wildcats regain their home success. The Buffaloes, losers of three in a row and six of seven, haven't beaten Kansas State since Jan. 28, 2006. They've lost four in row at Manhattan since winning 70-60 there Feb. 5, 2005.

A victory Saturday would give the Wildcats a school-record four straight 20-win seasons.

Kansas State senior Denis Clemente had 15 points in an 87-81 win at Colorado on Jan. 16. He's coming off a season-high 30-point effort against Iowa State. Averaging 15.7 points, Clemente has totaled 53 points while going 11 of 17 from 3-point range in his last two contests. He's averaging 18.0 points in three career games versus Colorado.

"Denis shoots five million shots a day," said coach Frank Martin, who looks to become the first coach in Kansas State history to post 20 wins in each of his first three seasons. "He's got unbelievable pride and an unbelievable work ethic."

Clemente's hot shooting and 15 points off turnovers in the second half helped Kansas State build a big enough cushion to eventually hold off Iowa State.

"It's what we do. We really get into teams and really make them uncomfortable," said junior guard Jacob Pullen, who's averaging a team-leading 18.8 points.

Colorado knows that well after turning the ball over 17 times against the Wildcats last month. The Buffaloes committed 16 in an 84-66 home loss to Missouri last Saturday. After taking No. 1 Kansas to overtime before losing 72-66 at home Feb. 3, Colorado shot 35.7 percent and trailed by 13 at half against the Tigers.

One positive in the loss was the return of freshman guard Alec Burks, who scored a season-high 27 points after missing the Kansas game with a knee injury.

"I felt good," said Burks, who's averaging 16.8 points and had 14 against Kansas State. "My knee was feeling really good. No pain and no stiffness. I just went out there and competed."

Colorado's Cory Higgins, averaging a team-leading 18.0 points, had a season-high 30 on 12-of-18 shooting against Kansas State last month.

Though Colorado beat then-No. 22 Baylor at home last month, it's lost 31 consecutive road games against Top 25 opponents since winning 80-78 at then-No. 20 Texas Tech on Jan. 11, 1997.

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Big 12

| Team | Conf. W-L | Tot. W-L |
|--------------|-----------|----------|
| Kansas | 15-1 | 33-3 |
| Kansas St. | 11-5 | 29-8 |
| Baylor | 11-5 | 28-8 |
| Texas A&M | 11-5 | 24-10 |
| Missouri | 10-6 | 23-11 |
| Texas | 9-7 | 24-10 |
| Oklahoma St. | 9-7 | 22-11 |
| Colorado | 6-10 | 15-16 |
| Texas Tech | 4-12 | 19-16 |
| Iowa St. | 4-12 | 15-17 |
| Oklahoma | 4-12 | 13-18 |
| Nebraska | 2-14 | 15-18 |

Expanded Standings

Key Players



| | | |
|------|---------------|------|
| 33.0 | Min. Per Game | 30.7 |
| 18.0 | Pts. Per Game | 18.8 |
| 2.5 | Ast. Per Game | 3.4 |
| 3.8 | Reb. Per Game | 2.8 |
| 48.6 | Field Goal % | 41.2 |
| 30.3 | Three Point % | 40.5 |
| 83.2 | Free Throw % | 79.9 |

Cory Higgins G, CO



Jacob Pullen G, KSST

Head to Head



Colorado Buffaloes
11-12



Kansas State Wildcats
19-4

SCORING

| | | |
|------|---------------|------|
| 75.0 | Points/Game | 81.0 |
| 46.7 | Field Goal % | 45.8 |
| 76.2 | Free Throw % | 65.4 |
| 37.4 | Three Point % | 36.2 |

DEFENSE

| | | |
|------|---------------|------|
| 31.4 | Rebounds/Game | 43.7 |
| 8.5 | Steals/Game | 7.1 |
| 2.3 | Blocks/Game | 5.2 |

Other Games

| | | | | | | | | |
|------|----|-------|------|----|-------|------|----|-------|
| MIST | 65 | Final | MD | 56 | Final | LSU | 69 | Final |
| PSU | 54 | | DUKE | 77 | | VAND | 77 | |
| MO | 62 | Final | BUT | 70 | Final | PROV | 81 | Final |
| BAY | 64 | | CLEV | 59 | | NOVA | 92 | |
| IND | 55 | Final | NIA | 59 | Final | RI | 56 | Final |
| WISC | 83 | | BRAD | 68 | | TEMP | 78 | |
| UNLV | 58 | | NEB | 51 | | IOWA | 40 | |
| SDGS | 68 | Final | TX | 91 | Final | PUR | 63 | Final |
| AF | 48 | | IAST | 59 | | GT | 64 | |
| BYU | 91 | Final | KAN | 73 | Final | WAKE | 75 | Final |
| TENN | 62 | Final | NM | 68 | Final | SDG | 65 | Final |
| KY | 73 | | UTAH | 65 | | ZAGS | 82 | |

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Wildcats face Buffaloes to begin two-game homestand

By Ashley Dunkak

Published: Friday, February 12, 2010

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The rematch between No. 9 K-State and Colorado will take place at 5 p.m. on Saturday in Bramlage Coliseum. At the Buffaloes' own Coors Events Center, they took No. 1 Kansas to overtime, but they have struggled mightily on the road in recent years, with 33 straight road losses in league play.

The Buffs (11-12, 2-7 Big 12) gave the Wildcats (19-4, 6-3 Big 12) a scare in the Jan. 16 game in Boulder, Colo., only relinquishing the game by six points, 87-81. K-State's largest lead was nine points, and it was a close contest all the way. The bench was key for K-State, providing 32 points and 18 rebounds. Also, the last time the teams met, it was an absolute foul-fest, with 68 calls total. Three Colorado players fouled out of the game.

In that game Buffs junior forward Cory Higgins shot 12 of 18 for 30 points, and three other Colorado players scored in double figures. Collectively, the team shot 53.2 percent from the field.

Teams usually improve over the course of a season, and Wildcats Coach Frank Martin said the Buffs are better because they have played more games and also because freshman forward Alec Burks, who scored 27 points against Missouri in the team's last game, is healthy and playing again.

"Early in the Big 12 season, they're still trying to figure out they can do it," Martin said of Colorado. "And they've figured out they can, and now they've just got to get over the hump."



Jonathan Knight

Senior guard Denis Clemente drives to the basket in a 73-69 loss to Oklahoma State on Jan. 23. Clemente received the distinction of Big 12 player of the week this past week after averaging more than 26 points in the past two games.

Colorado's most recent game ended as a 66-84 loss. Associate head coach Steve McClain said after the loss that the big men did not give the team enough defensively.

"Defensively in the post, we have to do the little things," McClain said. "We have to slide our feet better, make guys make shots over us. We gave them some angles in there, but that's just part of where we need to improve."

After three straight losses, Colorado is looking to bounce back.

"We're going to practice hard so we don't have a drop-off like we did today," senior guard Dwight Thorne II said after the loss. "I think if we get in the gym and we compete with each other and practice hard for Kansas State on Saturday, I think we'll be alright."

Both the Buffs and the Wildcats are coming off a week of rest, at least in the sense that neither team had a midweek game.

After last Saturday's four-point win over Iowa State, Martin said the Wildcats had Sunday off practice and came back Monday with a lot of film, teaching and individual work with players. He said they had a full-bore practice on Tuesday and treated it like a game day. On Wednesday, they spent time on film, shooting and break-down drills that they have not been able to incorporate into practice since Christmas. Thursday and Friday were full-blown preparation for Colorado.

"Instead of looking at it as a vacation, you look at it as a time to educate through the mind, not so much through the physical competitiveness of it, which after six months, you've got to be fresh mentally, emotionally and physically," Martin said. "And if we approach this week the right way, we should be able to take advantage of this week to keep ourselves fresh."