



Marcus Relphorde finished with 13 points, 10 rebounds, and six assists.  
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



02/17/2010 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

## Bufs Regroup, Break Four-Game Losing Streak

**BOULDER** - Searching for something to help them snap a four-game losing streak, the Colorado Buffaloes found it with their legs Wednesday night. Good hands, smart decisions and a shot of late resolve helped a bit, too.

Pushing the tempo whenever possible, CU ushered Oklahoma out of the Coors Events Center with a 77-67 Big 12 Conference win that could prove critical for the Buffs in their tenuous run to make a postseason tournament.

"It was huge for us," junior Cory Higgins said of the win. "We let a couple of (games) slip away these past couple of weeks. It helps us to feel good about ourselves and get another win under our belt."

His coach, Jeff Bzdelik, credited the victory to "just a really solid team performance . . . and our student body was a part of that," once again acknowledging a CU student corps that finally seems to

### BUFFALO EXTRAS



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be warming to men's hoops.

The Buffs (12-13 overall, 3-8 Big 12) entered the game having lost four straight and seven of their past eight games. But in the Sooners (13-12, 4-7), Bzdelik saw an opponent he believed his team could outrun - especially at altitude.

"They're a team with big, wide bodies . . . and we felt like we could beat them down the court and create some advantages and wear on them," he said.

"That's really an important part of how we can be successful at home. If we can rebound, we're pretty good in the open court."

OU coach Jeff Capel, now 3-2 against CU, said the Buffs' up-tempo strategy worked: "They got away in transition and got some easy baskets - and really put us on our heels."

Usually accustomed to losing the board battle, the Buffs broke even (33-33) against the physically imposing Sooners. And that helped CU score its 22 fast-break points.

Bzdelik also pointed to only seven turnovers and 19 assists on his team's 28 field goals - numbers that helped four Buffs reach double figures and another come within a point of it.

Higgins scored 18 points, Alec Burks 17 and Nate Tomlinson and Marcus Relphorde 13 each. Dwight Thorne II added nine.

Tomlinson, playing in front of his father who had flown in from Beijing for the game, produced a solid statistical line to go with his 13 points: eight rebounds, three assists, one steal, only two missed field goals (four-for-six) and one missed free throw (three-for-four).

It surely was sweet redemption for Tomlinson, who didn't score in the 68-51 loss at K-State.

Relphorde, returning from a bout with tendinitis (knee) that kept him out of Saturday's loss at Kansas State, had his second double-double (13 points, 10 rebounds) of the season, and added six assists.

"Everybody contributed," Bzdelik said, and Burks, a freshman, is learning the importance of that. "We try to share the ball and get everybody involved in the game," he said. "When you do that, you win games - and you saw that tonight."

CU led for most of the first 20 minutes - and by as many as eight points before OU went on a 9-0 run and took a brief 28-27 lead. But the Buffs answered with a 6-2 run in the half's final 3:01 to go up 33-30 at intermission.

The Buffs opened the second half energetically, building their biggest lead to that point - 59-47 with 9:07 to play - with a 17-8 run that featured treys by Higgins and Relphorde, followed by Higgins' conventional three-point play and a back-door layup by Thorne.

Capel called a timeout to settle the Sooners, but the Buffs kept the accelerator down, running to a 15-point advantage (66-51) with just over 6 minutes remaining.

The Sooners cut the deficit to 69-60 on a Warren free throw with 2:41 left, then got two quick baskets - the last on an inbounds turnover - to pull to within 69-64 with 2:18 to play.

It was Bzdelik's turn to call a timeout, and Higgins said this of his coach's message: "I can't repeat most of what he said . . . He just kept saying, 'What are we doing?' and that we were letting the game slip away after playing so hard for 37 minutes."

Out of the timeout, Tomlinson responded with a three-pointer from the left corner to make it 72-64. Capel called Tomlinson's trey "huge . . . (he) called for the ball and made a really big shot."

But Warren trumped that trey with his own, bringing OU back to 72-67 at the 1:40 mark. The Sooners never got any closer, as Burks hit a pair of free throws and Higgins converted a layup after a steal by Tomlinson, who added one of two free throws for CU's final point with 43.5 seconds left.

Capel said CU "was really good tonight. You have to give them all the credit; those guys came ready to play - the shared the ball and did a lot of good things."

Capel's team lost for the third consecutive time and for the fourth time in five outings. The Sooners haven't won a road game since Dec. 12 at Utah and are 0-8 on trips since. Also, OU now has lost on its last four visits to Boulder, and on five of the past six trips.

The Sooners were without leading scorer Willie Warren (16.2) and freshman center Tiny Gallon, the team's leading rebounder (8.0), for Saturday's loss at archrival Oklahoma State.

Warren was out indefinitely with mononucleosis, while Gallon was suspended indefinitely for a violation of team rules. However, both traveled to Boulder, and although neither started, they entered the game with 15:43 remaining in the first half.

Warren scored six first-half points, Gallon none. Warren finished with 19, matching freshman Tommy Mason-Griffin, while Gallon managed only four.

The Buffs play at No. 1 Kansas on Saturday (2 p.m., MST, Big 12 Network) and at Missouri on Wednesday (5:30 p.m., MST). Their next home game is Saturday, Feb. 27 against Iowa State (11:30 a.m., Big 12 Network).

Counting that contest, CU has two home games (Texas Tech is the other) remaining, and Relphorde remains optimistic about winning both.

"We have Iowa State at home (the Cyclones edged the Buffs 64-63 in Ames) so we can definitely get a win there," he said. "We all feel like we can win every game, if we just start clicking, get on the same page and play as hard as we can every night.

"I feel like we can definitely make a little run."

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SHOW MENU

## Bzdelik's CU Buffs back on track

### CU ends 4-game losing streak with balanced effort against OU

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

Posted: 02/17/2010 09:08:35 PM MST



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We're No. 10!

Colorado took another small but important step up the daunting Big 12 ladder on Wednesday night with a 77-67 victory over Oklahoma at the Coors Events Center.

The Buffs (12-13 overall, 3-8 conference) are now looking down at two teams -- Iowa State (2-9) and Nebraska (1-10) -- in the standings with three more favorable matchups remaining on the schedule.

When Jeff Bzdelik's three stars -- Cory Higgins, Alec Burks and Marcus Relphorde -- are all healthy CU is a difficult team to play.

And if point guard Nate Tomlinson continues to play like he did against the Sooners ... well, the program could rise to much greater heights.

"We all feel like we can win every game," Relphorde said. "We're just trying to get on the same page and play hard every night, and I feel like we're definitely going to make a little run."

Relphorde sat out of Saturday's 68-51 loss at Kansas State. Higgins and Burks combined for 38 points but didn't get much help in Manhattan from the rest of the Buffs.

Against the slumping Sooners (13-12, 4-7), Relphorde made a spectacular return to the starting lineup with 13 points, 10 rebounds, six assists, two blocks and only two turnovers in 36 minutes.

"When everybody is healthy, we're pretty tough to guard," said Higgins, who had 18 points, four rebounds, three assists and no turnovers. "There's going to be a matchup problem somewhere, they're not going to be able to handle all three of us. When all three of us are healthy, it just makes the game so much easier."

Burks could have been the difference in close losses to Iowa State and No. 1 Kansas had the talented freshman not suffered a knee injury. The 6-6 guard scored 17 points on 5-for-6 shooting against OU.

"We try to share the ball and get everybody involved," Burks said. "When we do that we win games."

CU broke open a nip-and-tuck affair with an 8-0 run midway through the second half to take a 59-47 lead on a layup by Dwight Thorne with 9:08 remaining. Another transition hoop by Higgins with 6:18 left gave the Buffs their largest lead (66-51).

The Buffs led 69-56 after a 3-pointer by Burks. The crowd was celebrating early and the young home team might have got caught up in excitement as OU answered with an 8-0 run to cut the deficit to five points with 2:18 left.

"I can't repeat most of what he was saying," Higgins said of Bzdelik's message in the ensuing timeout. "He just said we were letting the game slip away and we had worked too hard for 35 minutes and played good enough basketball. To let it slip away would just be stupid, so we had to get it together."

CU answered with a key 3-pointer by Tomlinson and scored the final five points of the game in the final minute to snap its four-game losing streak in style.

Tomlinson (13 points) was the fourth player to score in double figures for the Buffs. He also added a career-high eight rebounds as CU matched OU on the boards (33-33).

Thorne added nine points, and Austin Dufault scored five points in the first two and a half minutes before getting called for his second foul.

"I get animated out there on the sideline and I told them it's because we need to understand how important each possession is in a basketball game," Bzdelik said. "You can't be careless with the ball and you have to value the possession itself because so many of these games come down to the very end."

OU was led by freshman point guard Tommy Mason-Griffin's 19 points. Willie Warren (also 19 points) and Tiny Gallon (10 rebounds) returned to the lineup for OU after missing Saturday's loss at Oklahoma State.

"Colorado was really good tonight," OU coach Jeff Capel said. "You have to give them all the credit. Those guys came ready to play. They shared the ball and did a lot of good things."

The Buffs will face top-ranked Kansas on Saturday at Allen Fieldhouse. CU lost the first meeting with the Jayhawks 72-66 in overtime on Feb. 3.

**Colorado 77, Oklahoma 67**

#### **OKLAHOMA**

#### **FG FT Reb**

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

Wright 17 1-4 2-2 2-4 0 1 4

Fitzgrld 22 4-6 1-2 0-1 1 1 9

Crocker 28 2-10 0-0 0-5 3 5 4

M-Grffn 39 7-12 2-2 1-3 3 2 19

Davis 39 3-7 1-1 0-7 1 2 8

Pledger 1 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Franklin 1 0-1 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Warren 30 5-9 6-9 0-0 2 3 19

Gallon 23 2-6 0-0 0-10 0 2 4

Totals 200 24-55 12-16 3-33 10 16 67

**Percentages:** FG .436, FT .750.

**3-Point Goals:** 7-20, .350 (Warren 3-3, Mason-Griffin 3-7, Davis 1-5, Gallon 0-1, Franklin 0-1, Crocker 0-3).

**Team Rebounds:** 3.

**Blocked Shots:** 2 (Gallon, Davis).

**Turnovers:** 11 (Mason-Griffin 7, Gallon 2, Warren 2).

**Steals:** 5 (Davis 2, Warren 2, Gallon).

**Technical Fouls:** None.

## COLORADO

### FG FT Reb

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

Dufault 15 2-3 1-1 0-0 0 2 5

Tmlnsn 28 4-6 3-4 0-8 3 4 13

Relphrd 36 6-13 0-1 0-10 6 1 13

Burks 32 5-6 6-7 1-3 2 3 17

CHiggins 33 7-17 3-3 0-4 3 3 18

Thorne 21 3-7 2-2 0-1 3 0 9

Hrs-Tnks 23 0-2 0-0 0-5 1 2 0

Knutson 9 1-1 0-0 0-2 1 0 2

Eckloff 3 0-1 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Totals 200 28-56 15-18 1-33 19 15 77

**Percentages:** FG .500, FT .833.

**3-Point Goals:** 6-14, .429 (Tomlinson 2-4, Burks 1-1, Thorne II 1-2, Relphorde 1-3, [C.Higgins](#) 1-4).

**Team Rebounds:** 0.

**Blocked Shots:** 5 (Harris-Tunks 2, Burks, Thorne II, Dufault).

**Turnovers:** 7 (Burks 3, Relphorde 2, Tomlinson 2).

**Steals:** 5 (Relphorde 2, Tomlinson, Burks, [C.Higgins](#)).

**Technical Fouls:** None.

**Oklahoma 30 37--67**

**Colorado 33 44--77**

**A --** 5,976.

**Officials --** Duke Edsall, Terry Davis, Don Daily.



# CU pushes pace to wear out OU

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

Posted: 02/17/2010 11:51:09 PM MST

In the Oklahoma media packet there is a note in Tiny Gallon's bio which reveals the now 6-foot-9, 290-pound freshman weighed 12 pounds and 11 ounces at birth.

As usual, Colorado was facing a sizable problem in the Big 12 again on Wednesday against the much larger Sooners.

This time the Buffs had an answer -- run, run and run some more.

CU managed to hold its own on the glass (both teams had 33 rebounds) and had a 22-6 edge in fast-break points during a much-needed 77-67 victory over OU at the Coors Events Center.

"We really wanted to push the ball and create a very quick tempo against Oklahoma," Jeff Bzdelik said. "Their bigs are big, wide bodies, and I thought we could beat them down the court and create some advantages. ... Everytime you run them you kind of wear on them."

Gallon, who returned to the lineup after being suspended for the Sooners' game at Oklahoma State last Saturday, led the visitors with 10 rebounds but only finished with four points.

OU's gifted backcourt of Tommy Mason-Griffin and Willie Warren combined for 38 points (19 each), but no other OU player scored in double figures. The Buffs had four players score at least 13 points and outscored the visitors 34-26 in the paint.

"They have changed their style a little bit," OU coach Jeff Capel said. "Last year they would hold to ball for 25 or 30 seconds. This year they mix it up a little bit. ... You have to give them all the credit. They got away in transition and got some easy buckets and really put us on our heels."

Marcus Relphorde led CU with 10 rebounds, and point guard Nate Tomlinson added a career-high eight boards.

"If we can rebound the ball we're pretty good in the open court," Bzdelik said.

## Burks rolls on

Alec Burks scored 17 points and has scored in double-digits in every CU game that he has finished this year (23 times in 24 games). He left the game at Iowa State in the first half with an injury and did not return.

The 6-6 guard now has 404 points, becoming only the fourth CU freshman to score over 400 points in his first year. Burks joins Richard Roby (2004-05, 480), Chauncey Billups (1995-96, 465) and Donnie Boyce (1991-92, 417) in that exclusive club.

## Notable

Relphorde notched his second career double-double (13 points to go with the 10 rebounds). He had a double-double against Kansas. ... Shane Harris-Tunks, who did not play at Kansas State last Saturday, had two blocks. The 6-11 freshman leads the team in that category with 14. ... The Buffs wore their all-gold uniforms. ... CU improved to 11-3 at home (most wins at home since 14-2 mark 2005-06). ... OU is 1-7 in true road games. ... The Buffs have won four straight over Oklahoma at the Coors Events Center (5-2 overall in Big 12 play).

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## Woelk: CU's effort catches OU flat-footed

**Neill Woelk** Camera Sports Writer  
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 02/17/2010 11:56:20 PM MST

Oklahoma coach Jeff Capel didn't have to say it on this trip to Boulder.

I'll say it for him: That was an embarrassing effort by the Oklahoma Sooners on Wednesday.

Capel's Sooners -- the same Sooners that beat Oklahoma State, Texas and Missouri earlier this season -- were outplayed, outhustled and outclassed by the Colorado Buffaloes in a 77-67 CU win.

The Buffs didn't just want to win, they were desperate for a win. It showed in the way they chased down loose balls, scratched after rebounds and defended passing lanes.

The Sooners? Desperate to get out of Boulder, maybe. Otherwise, the team laden with prep All-Americans seemed disinterested and disinclined to put forth anything more than the minimum effort.

Not to take any credit from the Buffs in this one. They deserved to win because they played better basketball all night long. They ran the Sooners into the floor.

All night long, CU coach Jeff Bzdelik kept asking his players: "Whose will is greater? Whose passion is greater?"

On this night, there was no question.

Colorado guard Nate Tomlinson, all 6-foot-3 of him, had more rebounds than every Sooner except 6-9, 290-pound Tiny Gallon. Tomlinson finished with eight rebounds; Gallon with 10. Gallon doesn't just take up space in the paint, he covers the paint. He'll get 10 rebounds on most nights just by standing somewhere close to the basket.

But after Gallon, the Sooners couldn't come up with more than a pint of rebounds. Ryan Wright, OU's 6-9 forward? Four rebounds. Andrew Fitzgerald, 6-8 forward? One rebound in 22 minutes.

Meanwhile, 6-6 Buff junior Marcus Relphorde hauled in 10 to match Gallon -- and for the night, the Buffs were dead-even with OU on the boards, 33-33.

There's no doubt the Sooners are talented. Capel has put together some of the nation's top-ranked recruiting classes. The Sooners were picked in the preseason to finish third in the Big 12 behind Kansas and Texas. When the season began, their only question was where they'd be seeded in the NCAA tourney (the answer: NIT).

The Buffs, meanwhile, are the squad everyone picked to finish dead last in the Big 12. NCAA Tournament berths are still a dream in these parts.

But all year, the Buffs have been throwing scares at folks. They've been playing solid team basketball.

Wednesday night, for one night at least, it all came together. Their effort was balance personified.

Along with his 10 rebounds, Relphorde also had 13 points, a team-high six assists and a couple of steals. CU junior Cory Higgins finished with 18 points, four rebounds and three assists. Freshman Alec Burks had 17 points, three rebounds and a couple of assists. Tomlinson added 13 points to go with his eight rebounds and three assists.

But the statistic that stands out the most? CU finished with 19 assists on 28 baskets -- a ratio any coach will take. The Sooners, meanwhile, had more turnovers (11) than assists (10), a ratio that probably still has Capel fuming today.

Capel, though, didn't make the same mistake he made two years ago, when his Sooners lost in Boulder and he said he



was "embarrassed."

Instead, Capel gave credit where it was due. "Colorado was really good tonight," Capel said. "You have to give them all the credit. Those guys came ready to play."

As for Bzdelik, it's clear the coach can see the light at the end of the tunnel. He's endured two very tough years in Boulder, and this year -- his third -- is no picnic. But he also knows that his four leading scorers and rebounders from Wednesday night's win will be back in Buff uniforms next year.

He knows better days are ahead -- and he also knows his team is slowly but steadily building a nice fan following.

"It was really a solid team performance -- and I want to include our student body as a part of this team, because they are really awesome," Bzdelik said. "When I say this was a rock solid team win, I include the student body."

As for this year, the Buffs still have designs on post-season play. NIT, CBI -- just about any initials will do.

But to get there, they need to keep playing like they did Wednesday night. If they do that, they could close the regular season with three straight wins -- Iowa State, at Nebraska and Texas Tech -- and take a little momentum with them to Kansas City for the Big 12 Tournament.

There, they could find Oklahoma waiting for them in the first round.

I'm betting the Sooners might show a little more interest in that matchup.

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colorado 77, oklahoma 67

## Bufs raise game and go uptempo

CU uses fast break to snap losing streak

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

Posted: 02/18/2010 01:00:00 AM MST

Updated: 02/18/2010 02:01:00 AM MST



Cory Higgins led the Buffs in points with 18, and led the crowd in drawing some noise for his mates in the 77-67 win over OU. (Karl Gehring, The Denver Post )

BOULDER — Slow and steady is how Colorado coach Jeff Bzdelik has described the baby steps made by his men's basketball program. CU may have taken a bigger, more significant leap — psychologically as much as anything — with a 77-67 victory Wednesday night over visiting Oklahoma.

The Sooners love to run. And Colorado beat them at their own game.

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THE DENVER POST

Now, that's progress. But who would have thought?

"We really wanted to push the ball and create a quick tempo against Oklahoma," Bzdelik said. "Taking advantage of altitude is a way you wear on them."

Colorado (12-13, 3-8 Big 12) still needs a big-time rebounder to sniff the upper tier of the Big 12 Conference. But an effort such as this, along with a victory over Baylor and taking Kansas into overtime, suggests the Buffaloes are getting closer.

They drove strong to the hoop. They didn't back off the intensity throttle when Oklahoma made a late spurt to twice trim the deficit to five points. And they showed the Sooners, and the 5,976 fans in the Coors Events Center, that they aren't afraid to step up in crunch time.

Getting 18 points from junior guard Cory Higgins, 17 from freshman Alec Burks and double-figure scoring from two others, Colorado snapped a four-game losing streak. Junior swingman Marcus Relphorde returned after missing a game with knee tendinitis and recorded a double-double with 13 points and 10 rebounds.

"Wins are just huge for confidence," Higgins said. "We had let a couple of them slip away these past couple of weeks."

Up by three points at halftime, Colorado jump-started its fast break with "unbridled effort," as Bzdelik likes to say. The Buffs raced to a 59-47 lead with 9:07 to go when Dwight Thorne beat OU players down the court and took a pretty feed from Higgins for a layup.

Another fast break, this time finished by Higgins, lengthened the Buffs' advantage to 66-51. But Oklahoma (13-12, 4-7) wouldn't go away. A layup by 6-foot-9, 290-pound Tiny Gallon and another by fellow freshman Tommy Mason-Griffin off a CU turnover pulled the Sooners to within 69-64 with 2:18 remaining.

Time out, Colorado.

"I can't tell you everything (Bzdelik) said," Higgins told reporters with a grin. "We were letting the game slip away. That would be stupid. We had to get it together."

Clutch free throws and solid ball-handling down the stretch enabled the Buffs to stay on top.

*Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280 or [tkensler@denverpost.com](mailto:tkensler@denverpost.com)*

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Longmont, Colorado  
Wednesday, April 21, 2010

Publish Date: 2/18/2010

## CU gets winning feeling

*By Patrick Ridgell*  
© 2010 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Jeff Bzdelik probably has nightmares about it.

The Colorado men's basketball coach has seen his team lose by single-digits 27 times in less than three seasons in Boulder, 18 times in Big 12 games, and when the Buffs began to show signs they might throw Wednesday's game with Oklahoma away, the guy got mad. He called a timeout and unleashed a tongue lashing so graphic that CU's Cory Higgins said after the game he couldn't repeat most of what was said.

But this time things were different. This time, the Buffs pulled away for a 77-67 win over Oklahoma to snap a four-game losing streak and move into 10th place in the Big 12 and, most important, leave the court feeling pretty good about themselves for a change.

Imagine that.

"Young players have to learn how to win," Bzdelik said. "We put ourselves in position many times to win but have not been able to close it out. So I get animated on the sidelines.

"Getting that winning feeling is a good thing."

Said Higgins: "He kept saying, 'What are we doing?' and that we were letting the game slip away after playing so hard for 37 minutes. We played good enough basketball to win the game, and to let it slip away, that would be stupid. We had to get it together."

CU built a 15-point lead in the second half. Things turned scary when the Sooners (13-12, 4-7) pulled to within 69-64 with 2 minutes, 18 seconds to play after they scored eight straight points. The Sooners took advantage of a missed one-and-one by CU's Marcus Relphorde and Alec Burks' turnover deep in CU territory to give themselves a chance.

Bzdelik called the timeout, and when play resumed CU's Nate Tomlinson hit a 3 on its next possession to end Oklahoma's rally. CU, scoring on each of its final four possessions, finished the game on an 8-3 run.

"In the timeouts, we talked about it a couple of times — whose will is greater?" Bzdelik said.

CU benefited from having each of Relphorde, Higgins and Burks available, a luxury it hasn't had in three of its previous four games. Relphorde said he tweaked the knee tendinitis that forced him to miss Saturday's loss at Kansas State, but he still had his second double-double — 13 points and 10 rebounds, plus six assists. Higgins had 18 points, 14 after halftime, and Burks added 17.

Tomlinson, an Australian playing in Boulder in front of his father for the first time, had 13 points and eight rebounds. Bill Tomlinson works as an adviser for the Chinese women's national basketball team in Beijing.

"I think it was a very special game for (Tomlinson) in that regard," Bzdelik said.

Bzdelik said CU planned to run Oklahoma, especially the Sooners' big men. The plan worked. CU had 22 fast-break points; Oklahoma has six.

Bzdelik also cited CU's 19 assists against only seven turnovers. The Buffs shot 50 percent, and they matched Oklahoma 33-33 on the boards. They had been out-rebounded in their past 15 games. And, once again, he thanked CU's student body. Wednesday's attendance was 5,976.

"In a lot of ways, this was a rock-solid team performance," Bzdelik said.

Said Oklahoma coach Jeff Capel: "Colorado was really good tonight. You have to give them all the credit. Those guys came ready to play; they shared the ball, and did a lot of good things. Higgins and Burks were very good. Relphorde really gives them a different look. Tomlinson was very good tonight.

"They got away in transition and got some easy baskets, and really put us on our heels."

TIP-INS: Burks became CU's fourth freshmen to score more than 400 points Wednesday. He has 404. ... Oklahoma played guard Willie Warren (mono) and center Tiny Gallon (suspension) off its bench. Warren finished with 19 points, and Gallon had four points and 10 rebounds. ... CU is 11-3 at home. It has beaten Oklahoma four straight times in Boulder.

Read Patrick Ridgell's CU sports blog at [www.timescall.com/blogs/ridgell](http://www.timescall.com/blogs/ridgell). He can be reached at [pridgell@timescall.com](mailto:pridgell@timescall.com).

••

COLORADO 77, OKLAHOMA 67

OKLAHOMA (13-12, 4-7)

Wright 1-4 2-2 4, Fitzgerald 4-6 1-2 9, Crocker 2-10 0-0 4, Mason-Griffin 7-12 2-2 19, Davis 3-7 1-1 8, Pledger 0-0 0-0 0, Franklin 0-1 0-0 0, Warren 5-9 6-9 19, Gallon 2-6 0-0 4. Totals 24-55 12-16 67.

COLORADO (12-13, 3-8)

Dufault 2-3 1-1 5, Tomlinson 4-6 3-4 13, Relphorde 6-13 0-1 13, Burks 5-6 6-7 17, Higgins 7-17 3-3 18, Thorne 3-7 2-2 9, Harris-Tunks 0-2 0-0 0, Knutson 1-1 0-0 2, Eckloff 0-1 0-0 0. Totals 28-56 15-18 77.

Halftime—CU 33-30. 3-point goals—Oklahoma 7-20 (Mason-Griffin 3-7, Warren 3-3, Davis 1-5, Fanklin 0-1, Gallon 0-1, Crocker 0-3); CU 6-14 (Tomlinson 2-4, Relphorde 1-3, Burks 1-1, Higgins 1-4, Thorne 1-2). Fouled out—Crocker (O). Rebounds—Oklahoma 33 (Gallon 10); CU 33 (Relphorde 10). Assists—Oklahoma 10 (Crocker 3, Mason-Griffin 3); CU 19 (Relphorde 6). Total fouls—Oklahoma 16; CU 15. Technicals—none. A—5,976.

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## The big three strike again

Higgins, Burks, Relphorde combine for 48 in home win

*By David Starcer on February 18, 2010*

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When one thinks of killer basketball trios, they think of the Celtics' Paul Pierce, Ray Allen and Kevin Garnett; the Spurs' Tony Parker, Manu Ginobili and Tim Duncan; and at the college level, it's usually the big name schools that possess such talent, like North Carolina did in their title run last year with Ty Lawson, Danny Green and Tyler Hansbrough.

Believe it or not, it may be time to add Colorado's triumvirate to that list.

Junior guard Cory Higgins, freshman guard Alec Burks, and junior forward Marcus Relphorde have become CU's version of "The Three Amigos," and when all are healthy and playing well, it's as good a threesome as it gets. Just ask Oklahoma.

The trio combined for 48 points, 17 rebounds and 11 assists in Colorado's 77-67 win over Oklahoma on Wednesday night. Perhaps most importantly, the three combined for only five turnovers, a vast improvement from the team's 24 turnover debacle at Kansas State over the weekend.

Relphorde, who had 13 points, 10 rebounds and six assists in his return from knee tendinitis that sidelined him against K-State, proved to be a matchup nightmare for the Sooners. Oklahoma head coach Jeff Capel echoed his team's frustration in his post-game comments.

"We really didn't have anyone to guard [Relphorde] tonight," Capel said.

Capel said, "he is perfect for their system because he is big and strong enough and tough enough where he can guard a four (power forward), but he is a difficult matchup (on offense) at times for (an opponent's) fours."

Higgins and Burks provided their usual offensive fireworks, leading the team in scoring with 18 and 17, respectively. It's gotten to the point where it's expected of the backcourt duo to carry the load for the



Junior guard Cory Higgins drives down the court during Wednesday night's game against the University of Oklahoma in the Coors Events Center. The Buffs beat the Sooners 77-67. (CU Independent/Lee Pruitt)



Buffaloes, but when you add Relphorde to the mix, the team becomes a completely new monster entirely.

"When everybody is healthy, we're pretty tough to guard and there is going to be a matchup problem somewhere," Higgins said after the game. "They're not going to be able to handle all three of us so it just makes the game so much easier."

Trying to contain Colorado's terrific trio is hard enough, but not knowing who is going to take the shot makes it even harder on opposing defenses. The Buffs did a good job of moving the ball around, making the extra pass, and not settling for contested shots. Finding the open man was key to the team's victory, especially down the stretch.

After the Sooners had closed CU's lead to four with 10:10 remaining, Relphorde hit a deep three off a kick-out from Dwight Thorne to up the lead back to seven. After a Higgins' three point play, Relphorde returned the favor by finding a cutting Thorne for one of his six assists.

And at the four minute mark of the game, Higgins showed some unselfish play on his own part, hitting a wide open Burks in the corner with a no-look pass instead of settling for a contested drive for another Colorado 1-2-3. The freshman Burks, who went 5-for-6 from the field and 6-for-7 from the free throw line, recognizes the importance of a balanced scoring attack.

"We try to share the ball and get everybody involved in the game," Burks said. "When you do that, you win games, and you saw that tonight."

It was clear from the get-go the Buffs wanted to be the aggressor, and they pushed the tempo to try and wear Oklahoma's big men. Using the mile-high altitude as a weapon, the Buffs stretched their lead to double-digits at multiple points in the game, only to see the Sooners climb back in it.

When the Sooners closed the margin to five, 69-64, with 2:20 to play, head coach Jeff Bzdelik called a timeout to try and recollect his troops. His message was simple.

"During the timeouts we talked about it a couple of times. Whose will is greater? Whose passion is greater? Whose desire is greater? We need to just get those loose balls and play with that little extra effort," Bzdelik said.

His players responded, and the Buffs were able to close out their opponent for their third Big 12 win and perhaps gain a little confidence heading into a tough back-to-back road gauntlet of division rivals Kansas and Missouri.

Those games were the last things on the players' minds following the big win, and the ear-to-ear smiles on all three of Colorado's stars revealed just how relieved and excited they were about the victory.

When asked if his near triple-double would have been the first of his career, the usually subdued Relphorde showed his funny side with his response.

"Um, nah. At least not when it really mattered," Relphorde said.

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## Higgins leads Colorado past OU, 77-67

by: Staff Reports

Wednesday, February 17, 2010

Willie Warren and Tiny Gallon returned to the Oklahoma lineup tonight at Colorado, but they couldn't keep the Sooners' season from slipping away a little more.

The Buffaloes, next-to-last in the Big 12 Conference coming in, scored a 77-67 victory. That handed OU its sixth loss in eight games. The Sooners are now 13-12 overall, 4-7 in the conference and 0-6 in conference road games.

Specific to the game, coach Jeff Capel said it was "deplorable" transition defense that cost the Sooners the game. Indeed, Colorado's fast-break attack triggered a fast start -- the Buffaloes began 9-of-12 from the field in taking a 21-15 lead -- and a big finish.

OU was within 51-47 with just under 11 minutes remaining, when the Buffs went on a 15-4 run. Cory Higgins scored nine points during that outburst and led Colorado (12-13 and 3-8) with 18.

The Sooners pulled within 69-64 with 2:18 left on Tommy Mason-Griffin's bucket. But Nate Tomlinson hit a 3-pointer on the ensuing possession to put the game out of reach. Mason-Griffin and Warren, who played 30 minutes in his first game back from mononucleosis, scored 19 points apiece to lead OU. Gallon, who returned from a one-game suspension, scored just four points but came away with a team-high 10 rebounds.

Alec Burks helped teammate Higgins with 17 points. Tomlinson and Marcus Relphord contributed 13 each. Colorado shot 50 percent from the field while turning the ball over just seven times.

As to the general state of affairs, Capel was blunt during his postgame radio interview.

"We have too many agendas on our team," he said. "Until everyone can submit to the team, it's going to be tough for us going forward."


OU's next two games are against No. 7 Kansas State Saturday in Norman, and at No. 1 Kansas next Monday night. After that, the Sooners face Baylor, Texas and Texas A&M. That's five of the top six teams in the Big 12 before heading to Kansas City for the conference tournament.

"It's a lot of problems with this team," Capel continued. "It's a lot of different things. That's on me and our coaching staff. We have to figure out a way to do a better job in lot of areas on our program..."

"At times we're not a very smart basketball team. Again, I attribute that to guys having too many agendas. We have too many agendas on our team instead of it just being about OU winning. I have not done a good job of getting these guys to understand when we win, everyone looks good. When we don't win, it's for nothing. It doesn't matter what anyone did or how many points or whatever. I don't care about any of that stuff when we don't win.

"That's my whole thing, trying to get us to be on the same page to win."

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