

CU looks to keep curse alive vs. Kansas

Burks listed as day-to-day after MRI shows knee is just sprained

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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AMES, Iowa -- Can the curse of No. 1 continue in Boulder?

Two weeks ago, after ascending to the top spot in the Associated Press poll for the first time in program history, Texas was promptly upset by Kansas State.

One week ago, after Barack Obama made a congratulatory phone call to John Calapari and the undefeated Wildcats, No. 1 Kentucky was upset by South Carolina.

Today Kansas, an overtime winner at rival K-State on Saturday, is expected to be voted the nation's top-ranked program once again after spending the first eight weeks of the season at No. 1.

The Jayhawks (20-1 overall, 6-0 Big 12) will play Colorado on Wednesday at the Coors Events Center. The 7 p.m. game will be broadcast nationally on ESPN2.

"It's the biggest opportunity we've had this year. We'll have more CU fans this time than KU fans, hopefully," Dwight Thorne said. "It's going to be a big game for us."

The Buffs (11-10, 2-5) had no choice but to look ahead after a stinging 64-63 loss to Iowa State on Saturday night at Hilton Coliseum.

Alec Burks sustained a left knee injury early in the game. Colorado officials said Sunday that Burks is listed as day-to-day. An MRI showed his knee is only sprained.

"We'll just hope for the best," Jeff Bzdelik said.

CU will obviously have to play its finest 40 minutes of the season to have a chance to beat the Jayhawks.

"I'll show up, if I can play or not. It will be great," Burks said. "Their fans come out and support them. Between their fans and our fans, it's going to be a great game."

The Buffs suffered their 33rd consecutive Big 12 road loss in Ames and are 1-9 outside of Boulder this season.

However, Bzdelik's boys have finally established a significant home-court advantage this season. CU is 10-1 at the Coors Events Center and the 87-81 loss to K-State came down to the wire.

"Our players have a great desire and they're getting better," Bzdelik said moments after Marcus Relphorde's potential game-winning shot against the Cyclones rimmed out. "We know that when we play well we can compete with anybody."

The upset of Baylor on Jan. 12 was a big step forward, but the coach said "we need more milestones."

Beating KU -- something CU hasn't done since a 60-59 win on Jan. 22, 2003 -- would qualify as a signature win for Bzdelik and validate the argument that the Big 12 is the best conference from top to bottom this season.

"You look at teams like Iowa State and Nebraska and Colorado and Texas Tech. Some of the teams that are in the second tier right now in the standings, we're good too," Bzdelik said. "We all prove that with the competitiveness of these games."

Competing is not the problem for this young team. Bzdelik has now suffered 26 single-digit losses during his three seasons

at CU.

Good teams take advantage of opportunities. The Buffs missed a golden opportunity against Iowa State but are presented with an even bigger one on Wednesday when the Jayhawks invade Boulder, most likely looking to put an end to the recent curse of No. 1.

"It's definitely a big opportunity for us to get a huge win," Cory Higgins said.

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Burks hurt

Offensive weapon's status not clear as CU readies for Kansas

By Patrick Ridgell
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The Colorado men's basketball team reported Sunday afternoon that guard Alec Burks has a left knee sprain.

An MRI performed earlier in the day revealed the sprain. He'll be monitored daily to determine his activity level and when he can play. CU did not announce when Burks will return to the lineup.

CU will host Kansas on Wednesday. The Jayhawks are expected to be ranked No. 1 when the polls are released today.

Burks suffered the knee sprain in the opening moments of Saturday's loss at Iowa State. He did not return to the game.

Coach Jeff Bzdelik told KKZN 760 AM after the game that CU did not believe Burks suffered ligament damage in the knee. Bzdelik said there might be some cartilage damage, but that the extent was unknown.

Burks has been a pleasant surprise for the Buffs in 2009-10. He had scored in double figures in every game prior to Saturday, and NBA scouts have noticed him.

According to CU, Burks was the nation's only true freshman who had scored in double figures in every game this season. That streak ended Saturday, in CU's 21st game.

Burks has exceeded 20 points in five games. He has led the Buffs in rebounding nine times and scoring nine times. He has shot better than 50 percent from the field in 14 games, and above 60 percent seven times.

Burks entered Saturday as CU's second leading scorer, averaging 17.2 points per game. He led the Buffs in rebounding, 5.0 per game, was third in assists (37) and second in steals (25).

Read Patrick Ridgell's [CU sports blog](#). He can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.



Colorado's Alec Burks drives the lane to get two points against Nebraska on Wednesday at the Coors Events Center in Boulder. CU announced Sunday that Burks, who has been an offensive leader for the Buffs, has a knee sprain. It is not known when he will return to the lineup. **Joshua Buck/Times-Call**