



Point guard Nate Tomlinson was a big contributor in CU's win against Oklahoma.
Photo Courtesy: Tony Harman



02/19/2010 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

Brooks: Tomlinson Seeks To Shed Inconsistency

BOULDER - Australian-born Nate Tomlinson spent much his first season in U.S. college basketball adapting to the physical play in the bang-about Big 12 Conference. Much of Season Two has been spent coping with the game as it's played above the shoulders, between the ears.

Tomlinson, Colorado's starting point guard, concedes his sophomore year has been plagued by more inconsistency than either he or coach Jeff Bzdelik had hoped.

"Yeah, I have been pretty inconsistent this year," he said. "I lost a little bit of confidence at the beginning of the year and I'm just trying to get it back now."

But if you saw Tomlinson Wednesday night against Oklahoma, you left the Coors Events Center believing as much as in Tomlinson as he surely left believing in himself.

On any number of fronts, it was a good night for Nate.

Foremost, his team won, out-running, out-hustling (and it's not a stretch to say out-thinking) the

Sooners, 77-67.

"It was good on my behalf, but it was more important on the team's behalf. It was a great team win," said Tomlinson, who made several large contributions - 13 points, a career-high eight rebounds, three assists and only two turnovers.

His lone steal came at an opportune time in the final minute, and the last of his two three-pointers - buried from deep in the left corner - was among the Buffs' biggest shots of the game.

Here's OU coach Jeff Capel's take on it: "(He) hit a huge three from the corner. I thought we had done a pretty decent job on that possession. Tomlinson called for the ball and made a really big shot.

"He got going in the middle part of the second half where he was driving and scoring and seeing the ball go to the basket - and he was coming off a game where he had zero points. He does a magnificent job of running this basketball team."

Well, he did on Wednesday night. In the scoreless game Capel was referring to - CU's 68-51 loss at No. 9 Kansas State - Tomlinson didn't attempt a field goal or free throw, didn't snare a rebound and had one more turnover (four) than assists in 31 minutes.

That's what Tomlinson is talking about when the subject of inconsistency arises. Four nights later . . . he wasn't the same player, and don't think his teammates (or his dad, but more on that later) didn't notice.

When Tomlinson is playing as he did against the Sooners, said senior Dwight Thorne II, "It makes us more balanced . . . when he's being aggressive and not looking to pass the ball every time, it opens up things for everybody else.

"He passes the ball well, but he shoots it well, too - whenever he decides to shoot."

Tomlinson's issue with confidence hasn't been apparent to Thorne: "I couldn't tell you (about that) . . . when he's shot the ball, he's made some. But you can't make it unless you shoot. Last game (at Kansas State) he didn't attempt a shot. I didn't really see a lack of confidence, but I'm not him."

Tomlinson might have been focused and settled against the Sooners for another reason: His father, Billy, traveled from Beijing to see his son play.

"All he really cares about is if I play hard, so he was proud of me for playing hard," Nate said. "But he just wanted me to be myself and play like I would if I was on the playground back home (in Sydney, Australia). So he was just happy with the way I played."

Coaching kept Billy Tomlinson on the move when Nate was growing up, but he did coach his son in youth hoops (ages 12-17) "and was a big part of things," Nate said. "I took a lot from him and his teams. I was always around them, listening to things - just being around professionals and seeing the way they acted and did stuff."

In Australia, Billy Tomlinson coached the now-defunct Sydney Kings. He's now an assistant coach for the Chinese women's national team, and Nate noted that his father's trip to the states this week

"was the first time in three or four years that he's seen me play."

Nate's dad also attended the K-State-CU game in Manhattan. But there was a night-and-day difference in how his son played there and back in Boulder.

The Buffs altered a couple of things for Oklahoma: They ran more and played zone less.

"We knew they could really shoot the threes really well, so we wanted to limit their looks from the perimeter," Tomlinson said. "And we weren't sure if (Tiny) Gallon (OU's previously suspended 6-foot-9, 290-pound center) was going to play or not, so we thought they might be a little bit or not as skilled inside.

"We thought our 'biggs' would be able to handle that (if Gallon didn't play). But he did end up playing, and our 'biggs' did a great job on him. (Gallon finished with only four points but collected 10 rebounds.)"

As for ratcheting up the offensive tempo, which resulted in 22 fast-break points for the Buffs, Tomlinson noted, "In last couple of weeks we've really gotten away from running. At the beginning of the year that's when we were at our best - getting some rebounds and get out and run, because we've got some real good athletes. It's fun to get out there and play with them."

It's more fun still to know his contributions are matching his capabilities.

FOCUSED ON THE BUFFS: Given the results of their two most recent meetings, don't expect No. 1 Kansas to overlook CU Saturday afternoon in Lawrence (2 p.m., Big 12 Network).

Last season at Allen Fieldhouse, the Buffs took the Jayhawks to the wire before losing, 66-61. Earlier this month in Boulder, the Buffs took them to overtime, but lost, 72-66.

"The last two times, we've played them tough," Tomlinson said. "If we do the same things we did (against OU) - rebound and don't turn the ball over - we can be in any game, if not beat, any team in the country.

"We got a little bit of confidence from the last (KU game), but we still didn't win - which is what we really want to do in the end."

Expect CU to get KU's best shot - "And they're going to get ours, too," Thorne added. "That's going to be a game where, you know what, you've got to believe you can do it. If we go in there with the outlook of believing we can do it, we can get it done.

"If there's an ounce of doubt in your mind . . . if you don't feel like you can do it, you have no chance."

CU is seeking to break a 34-game road losing streak in Big 12 Conference play. The Buffs haven't won in Lawrence in 26 years.

CU WOMEN VISIT NO. 3 NEBRASKA: Lugging a seven-game losing streak to the home court of the nation's third-ranked team isn't anyone's definition of a pleasure trip.

But that's what Kathy McConnell-Miller's team is faced with on Saturday (12:05 p.m., no TV).

The Buffs were beaten 79-72 on Tuesday by Kansas, but McConnell-Miller saw enough from her revamped starting lineup to pencil in the same fivesome for Saturday.

Senior Bianca Smith, making her second start of the season, was beneficial to the Buffs' early productivity - a shortcoming in recent weeks. So, Smith, who averages 12.6 points a game, will open against the unbeaten Cornhuskers (24-0, 11-0).

"We got off to a great start," McConnell-Miller said of CU's 19-8 surge against KU before the Jayhawks negated it with a 25-4 run before halftime.

But, added McConnell-Miller, "I want Meagan (Malcolm-Peck) to know that I've got faith in her and we've got to keep her as an offensive threat and feeling as confident in herself as we are in her. But we got off to the start we wanted."

McConnell-Miller attributed KU's late first-half run to "a couple of things - I had a bad lineup in, three freshmen on the floor in Chucky (Jeffery), Meagan and Melissa (MacFarlane). Then, if you recall, there was no stoppage of play for me to get them out . . . it just kept going and kept going and kept going.

"I didn't like the lineup we had in - it gave them some momentum and that run was like (those) teams have started off with. It just really set us back. But I thought we responded; we got to within three a couple of times and just didn't make plays."

She also said the lack of an inside presence continues to be a factor in CU's struggles: "We don't have a go-to (player) on the inside . . . we had that the first four years, now we've got guards. We don't have that balance, and it's glaring in the Big 12."

The 6-foot-7 MacFarlane doesn't have the experience yet to be an inside presence, while 6-4 senior Courtney Dunn "doesn't have the desire" to fill that role, McConnell-Miller said.

"She likes being outside, she likes moving the ball and she likes shooting threes. That's where her passion is, and we need it to be (inside)."

Inside scoring, McConnell-Miller said, is "needed desperately, whether it's (Dunn), Julie (Seabrook) or Melissa - somebody, some inside presence."

Nebraska defeated CU 80-64 last month in Boulder.

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SHOW MENU



Burks won't be bystander for Buffs' game at Kansas

CU's super freshman confident heading into first action against KU

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 02/20/2010 12:12:55 AM MST

LAWRENCE, Kan. -- Alec Burks is tired of watching the Colorado-Kansas game, even though he has had a pretty good seat for the past two meetings.

A year ago Burks made the short drive here from his hometown to watch CU -- the program he verbally committed to before his dazzling senior season at Grandview (Mo.) High School -- play KU at Allen Fieldhouse.

The Buffs erased a 16-point deficit and silenced the Rock-Chalk chant until the eventual Big 12 champion Jayhawks finally exhaled and pulled out a 66-61 victory.

"I was there watching my future teammates fight to get a win," Burks recalled. "It was great to see."

On Feb. 3, despite being cleared by the CU medical staff, Burks was held out of the lineup by coach Jeff Bzdelik to give his sprained left knee some extra time to heal.

The Big 12's top freshman scorer watched helplessly from the end of the bench as the Buffs lost a 72-66 nail-biter in overtime to the nation's No. 1 team at the Coors Events Center.

"You never know," Burks said when asked if the results would have been different had he played. "But I would have liked our chances."

Burks will finally go from the ranks of innocent bystander to perhaps the key player to watch today as CU looks to end a 34-game Big 12 road losing streak and snap the nation's longest home-court winning streak with a rare victory over the mighty Jayhawks at Allen Fieldhouse (2 p.m., Altitude).

"We have a lot of confidence," Burks said. "My teammates played them close last year and this year. And I didn't even play in the first game, so I feel like I can help my teammates out and we can get a win."

It would certainly qualify as a historic victory considering:

The Buffs' last Big 12 road win was on January, 21, 2006, at Oklahoma State (an 80-78 overtime win in Stillwater under Ricardo Patton).

The Buffs' last win in Lawrence was a 75-74 victory on Feb. 10, 1983 (Burks wasn't even born until 1991).

The Jayhawks are 59-7 all-time against CU on their home court. Overall, KU has won 14 consecutive meetings in the series and 41 of the previous 42 meetings.

The Jayhawks have won 56 consecutive games at Allen Fieldhouse. KU is 109-6 at home under Bill Self.

"It's going to be tough. I don't even know how many games they've won at their place in a row," Nate Tomlinson said. "We just need to do the same things we did against Oklahoma -- rebound, not turn the ball over, make some shots here and there, and we'll have a chance."

The Buffs (12-13, 3-8) are coming off a 77-67 victory over Oklahoma in which four different players scored in double figures and Dwight Thorne added nine points off the bench.

CU will need that type of balance, and perhaps a lackluster effort by the top-ranked Jayhawks (25-1, 11-0), to pull off an

upset for the ages.

"It would be a big win to take down the No. 1 team," said Burks, who will get a chance to play in front of his mom today. "A huge confidence boost."

CU has played well against some good competition this year with single-digit losses to ranked teams such as Gonzaga, Kansas State and Texas A&M, in addition to the home loss to KU and a win over Baylor.

However, the Buffs are still looking for their first conference road win under Jeff Bzdelik, who is 0-21 in Big 12 road games at CU.

"Young players have to learn how to win," Bzdelik said. "We've put ourselves in position many times to win but we haven't been able to close it out."

This time, if the visitors can somehow stay in the game until crunch time again, CU will have a pretty clutch and confident player on the court in Burks.

"Crowds don't really bother me. Maybe it bothers some other guys, but that's just me," Burks said when asked about dealing with the atmosphere at Allen Fieldhouse. "I'm not really a believer in pressure. I feel like if we block all that out and do our job we'll get a win."

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CU men's preview: at Kansas

Camera staff
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 02/20/2010 12:07:50 AM MST

TODAY: Colorado travels to Lawrence to take on No. 1 Kansas at Allen Fieldhouse.

BROADCAST: Television: Altitude with Mitch Holthus (play-by-play), Jon Sundvold (analyst) and Paul Splittorff (analyst);
Radio: KKZN (760 AM) with Mark Johnson (play-by-play) and Charles Johnson (color).

STORY LINES: The Buffs (12-13, 3-8) are coming off a 77-67 victory over Oklahoma on Wednesday. ... Four different players scored in double figures, led by Cory Higgins' 18 points. ... Marcus Relphorde returned to the lineup after missing a game with a knee injury. The junior forward scored 13 points and grabbed 10 rebounds for his second career double-double (the first one came against KU on Feb. 3). ... The Jayhawks (25-1, 11-0) haven't played since a 59-54 win at No. 24 Texas A&M on Monday. ... Junior center Cole Aldrich has 98 blocks this year, already a KU single-season record. ... Brady Morningstar has 21 turnovers and four assists in the last six games.

KEY STAT: CU has lost 34 consecutive Big 12 road games. KU owns the nation's longest active home-court winning streak (56).

KEY STAT II: The Buffs' last victory at Allen Fieldhouse was a 75-74 triumph on Feb. 10, 1983.

COACHES: Jeff Bzdelik is 33-55 in his third season at CU. Bill Self is 194-41 in his seventh season at Kansas.

PROBABLE STARTERS:

Colorado -- G Nate Tomlinson, 6-3, sophomore, 5.8 ppg, 2.6 rpg; G Alec Burks, 6-6, freshman, 16.8 ppg, 4.8 rpg; G Cory Higgins, 6-5, junior, 18.1 ppg, 3.8 rpg; G Marcus Relphorde, 6-7, junior, 10.5 ppg, 4.2 rpg; F Austin Dufault, 6-9, sophomore, 6.3 ppg, 3.3 rpg.

Kansas -- G Xavier Henry, 6-6, freshman, 13.2 ppg, 4.1 rpg; G Sherron Collins, 5-11, senior, 15.1 ppg, 4.2 apg; G Brady Morningstar, 6-3, junior, 5.1 ppg, 3.4 apg; F Marcus Morris, 6-8, sophomore, 13.1 ppg, 6.3 rpg; C Cole Aldrich, 6-11, senior, 11.4 ppg, 10.1 rpg.

SERIES: Kansas leads 118-39, including a 59-7 advantage in Lawrence. The Jayhawks have won the last 14 meetings.

UP NEXT: The Buffs play Missouri on Wednesday at Mizzou Arena (5:30 p.m., no television).

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cu basketball

Bufs, Bzdelik put a fast spin on Princeton offensive sets

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 02/20/2010 01:00:00 AM MST

Updated: 02/20/2010 01:10:27 AM MST



Jeff Bzdelik points the Buffs to a faster moving offense, all in the Princeton style. (Karl Gehring, The Denver Post)

BOULDER — The Runnin' Buffs? Colorado's patterned system has evolved to the point where junior guard Cory Higgins now calls it the "Princeton offense on steroids."

Rather than always setting up to pass the ball around the perimeter, Colorado players are now able — even encouraged — to get out and go. The Buffaloes beat Oklahoma down the court for 22 fast-break points Wednesday night in a 77-67 victory over the Sooners. Even attempting to outplay an athletic opponent at its own game would have seemed unfathomable during Jeff

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Bzdelik's first two seasons as the CU coach.

Colorado averaged 62.4 points per game for the 2007-08 season. The new-look Bufs carry a 74.1 average into today's matchup at top-ranked

CU Basketball

View slide show of former CU men's basketball coach Jeff Bzdelik .

- **View** slide show of CU women's basketball coach Linda Lappe .

Visit the CU Stats Page for men's boxscores, Big 12 standings, team leaders and more .

- **Visit** the CU Stats Page for women's boxscores, Big 12 standings, player pages and more .

- **Visit** Tom Kensler's All Things Bufs blog for a behind-the-scenes look at CU sports .

Kansas.

"We never want to hold the ball; we're always looking to score," junior guard Levi Knutson said. "Coach (Bzdelik) always says, 'Take the best shot.' Well, it could be the first shot."

Bzdelik says this is what he had planned all along. But until this year, it hadn't made sense to jazz up the Colorado offense because his roster lacked the talent and depth to make it work.

Obviously, that changed this season with the arrival of springy newcomers Alec Burks and Marcus Relphorde.

To those who had typecast Bzdelik as a rigid and conservative "Princeton-style" coach, he is quick to remind them that the Nuggets ranked among the NBA's highest-scoring teams during his two-plus seasons (2002-05) as their coach.

"I've always wanted to push the ball," he said.

That's not to say Colorado has abandoned Bzdelik's signature offense. On the contrary, the Bufs jump into their passing game when there is no opportunity to run. CU's philosophy is to push the ball but never force something that isn't there.

Bzdelik explains he values the principles of the Princeton offense but hates the connotation that it must be slowdown basketball. Even at Air Force, Bzdelik taught his players to hustle into their sets before the opponent could adjust. And if a fast break is there, go for it.

The Princeton offense is named because it was developed and popularized decades ago at that Ivy League school by coach Pete Carril. Known for its patterns, passes and backdoor cuts, the offense was designed to be an equal-opportunity attack. Ideally, all five players have similar skills. That allows them to weave about until somebody wiggles loose for an open look.

Bzdelik said the Princeton offense gets a bum

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THE DENVER POST

rap for the perception that is passive and soft, and that it was designed to put the opponent (and sometimes the crowd) to sleep.

"It's just solid basketball, where you're sharing the ball," Bzdelik said. "But you can run hard into it."

In the past, a majority of teams that employed a Princeton-like offense did so because they lacked the talent and athleticism to keep up with quicker opponents. Milking the 35-second clock is a way to "shorten" the game by lengthening possessions. An underdog's chances of winning improve in a game with scores in the 50s and 60s.

"Colorado has changed its style a little bit," Oklahoma coach Jeff Capel said Wednesday night after watching CU attempt to turn the game into a track meet. "Last year, they would hold the ball for 25-30 seconds. This year, they mix it up. Especially with Higgins and Burks, they allow those guys opportunities to be players."

The Princeton offense is no longer considered an act of desperation. Its variations are now being used by teams with enough athleticism to execute any system. Georgetown and Michigan are Exhibits A and B.

"We're still using coach Bzdelik's system, but he has definitely tweaked it to (accommodate) the players he has now," Higgins said. "We're a bunch of talented guys that can score in a bunch of different ways. He lets us have some freedom

within the offense. He wants us to be aggressive."

Bzdelik likes to say that "players make the offense, the offense doesn't make the player." He offers the example of the Chicago Bulls still using the triangle offense after Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen departed.

"A couple of years ago," Higgins said, "we didn't have the depth or talent to do the things we're doing now. This year, people can finally see what Coach was envisioning."

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Going in a new direction

CU's offensive stats during coach Jeff Bzdelik's tenure:

Turnovers	Season	PPG	FG%	3-pt.%	FT%	per gm.
2009-10	74.1	.466	.374	.763	12.8	
2008-09	62.9	.454	.346	.731	14.1	
2007-08	62.4	.451	.343	.684	13.4	

Source: CU sports information

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Longmont, Colorado
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CU's Tomlinson expects more from self

Australian sophomore has a tenacious legacy to live up to

By Patrick Ridgell
© 2010 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Nate Tomlinson had one of his better games of 2009-10 Wednesday when Colorado defeated Oklahoma 77-67, and it just happened to come in front of his father, who flew in from the other side of the world to see it.

Coincidence? Probably. But Bill Tomlinson, a former professional basketball coach in their native Australia who's now a top adviser for China's national women's team, saw his son, who is CU's starting point guard, play with the sort of assertiveness and aggression folks around the Buffs want to see. And it was the same sort of assertiveness and aggression Nate Tomlinson used while playing for his father in the under-12s and under-18s of Australia's club system.

"He's great with an on-ball screen, and he got his feet in the paint (Wednesday) and he definitely looked more confident and aggressive out there," Bill said.

"He left home as a young boy, 17, and went to Lee Academy in Maine for two years. This is the first time I've seen him play in maybe four years. It's been a while.

"He's his own guy now. He's not the little kid I used to yell at up and down the floor. But I don't want to go down that track — because he'd probably put me on my backside."

If Tomlinson reacts like that to criticism, the first person he'd have to flatten would be himself. Because Tomlinson, who's expected to make his 16th consecutive start today when CU visits No. 1 Kansas (2 p.m., Altitude), hasn't been too happy with his season. He'll say so.

"To be honest with you, I haven't really been myself," Tomlinson said. "That's probably my fault more than anyone's. In (Wednesday's) game, I feel like I played more the way I can do.

"I'm trying to get it together here at the end of the year and finish out strong.

"I probably took too much of a ... backward step at the beginning of the year. I had a couple of bad games, and it snowballed on me."

Tomlinson started only once in the first 10 games but has been a regular part of the lineup since late December. In conference games only, Tomlinson's 4.3 assists per game ranks fifth in the Big 12. He has led CU in assists in 10 of his



Colorado's Nate Tomlinson guards against Kansas during a game Feb. 3 at Coors Events Center in Boulder. Tomlinson has been disappointed with his consistency throughout this season, but is seeking to finish out the year strong. **Joshua Buck/Times-Call**

Today's games

Colorado men (12-13, 3-8) at No. 1 Kansas (25-1, 11-0)

When/Where: 2 p.m. today at Allen Fieldhouse in Lawrence, Kan.

TV/Radio: Altitude/KKZN 760 AM

The series: Kansas leads 118-39, including an overtime 72-66 win in Boulder on Feb. 3. CU's last win at Kansas came on Feb. 10, 1983.

Leading scorers: CU — Cory Higgins (18.1 points per game); Kansas — Sherron Collins (15.1 points per game)

Notes: Lots of streaks will be working against the Buffs today. Kansas has the nation's longest home-court winning streak — 56 in a row. CU has lost 34 straight Big 12 road games,

past 13 games, and he already has 103 assists this season. He had 83 all of last year.

But his consistency hasn't been what he expects.

In Wednesday's win, Tomlinson had 13 points, a career-best eight rebounds and three assists against only two turnovers. He hit what might have been CU's biggest shot of the year when he sank a corner 3 with 1 minutes, 46 seconds to go to end Oklahoma's 8-0 run and help the Buffs hold off the Sooners.

"Tomlinson ... made a really big shot," Oklahoma coach Jeff Capel said. "He was coming off a game where he had zero points, but he does a magnificent job of running this basketball team."

Tomlinson not only failed to score last Saturday in CU's loss at Kansas State; he didn't even shoot — even though he played 31 minutes. He said he knows not to force anything because that's not the kind of player he is. But Tomlinson also knows he must be more assertive. He said that when he's aggressive, he's creating more opportunities for his teammates.

Bill is on a two-week break from his job in China due to the Chinese New Year. He arrived in time to attend the Kansas State game in Manhattan, Kan. Bill will attend today's game before returning to China.

"He just wanted me to play hard and ... be more aggressive," Tomlinson said about his father. "He didn't want me to be tentative. He wanted me to play like I would play back home.

"I think I have to for us to reach our potential."

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

and 26 straight road games against Division I teams. The Buffs have lost 27 straight road games to ranked teams. ... Alec Burks needs 77 points to become CU's all-time leading freshman scorer. ... Kansas leads the Big 12 in scoring margin — 19.8 points per game. ... Kansas has won 11 games in a row. ... Jayhawks center Cole Aldrich is one of three players in the Big 12 averaging a double-double — 11.4 points and 10.1 rebounds per game. Aldrich has already set Kansas' single-season block record with 98 in 2009-10. His 3.8 per game are second in the league and sixth nationally.

Colorado women (12-12, 2-9) at No. 3 Nebraska (24-0, 11-0)

When/Where: Noon today at the Bob Devaney Center in Lincoln, Neb.

TV/Radio: No TV/KVCU AM 1190

The series: CU leads 39-27. Nebraska has won nine of the series' past 10 meetings, including an 80-64 win on Jan. 30 in Boulder.

Leading scorers: CU — Brittany Spears (17.2 points per game); Nebraska — Kelsey Griffin (19.3 points per game)

Notes: CU has lost seven in a row and nine of its past 10. Its seven-game losing streak is its longest since 11 in a row in 2004-05. Five of the seven have come against top-15 teams. ... CU has lost 15 in a row to teams ranked in the AP and WBCA polls. ... Nebraska is CU's highest-ranked road opponent since the Buffs played No. 3 Oklahoma on Jan. 2, 2002. ... Despite its Big 12 struggles, CU is holding out hope for a postseason spot. It can earn an automatic WNIT spot if it's the highest-finishing Big 12 team that does not receive an NCAA bid. CU is in 11th place. It can also receive an at-large spot in the WNIT, which has expanded to 64 teams, if it finishes at or better than .500.

Patrick Ridgell



Posted on Sat, Feb. 20, 2010

Kansas – Colorado basketball preview

Colorado at No. 1 Kansas

•**WHEN/WHERE:** 3 p.m. today, Allen Fieldhouse, Lawrence

•**TV/RADIO:** Ch. 38; KCSP (610 AM)

•**ABOUT COLORADO (12-13, 3-8 Big 12):** The Buffaloes are coming in with some momentum after a 77-67 victory on Wednesday over Oklahoma in Boulder. Colorado took Kansas to overtime in the teams' first meeting before losing 72-66. The Buffaloes also gave KU all it could handle last season at Allen Fieldhouse, trimming a 21-point Kansas lead to two late in the second half before losing again. Colorado is led by veteran guard Cory Higgins and Grandview graduate Alec Burks, one of the top freshmen in the league.

•**ABOUT KANSAS (25-1, 11-0):** After their 59-54 victory over Texas A&M on Monday, the Jayhawks have now won 11 in a row since losing to Tennessee Jan. 10. Today, they hope to extend the nation's longest home-court winning streak to 57 games. KU coach Bill Self decided to start Tyshawn Taylor in place of Brady Morningstar at guard to try to give KU an energy boost early in games. Taylor could provide some relief to Collins, who has struggled the last five games, making just 20 of 64 shots.

•**BOTTOM LINE:** The Buffaloes have proved that, despite their record, they can give KU problems. But the Jayhawks are in need of a dominant performance to hush the critics who say they have played too many close games.

P No. Colorado Ht. Yr. PPG

F 5 Marcus Relphorde 6-7 Jr. 10.5

F 33 Austin Dufault 6-9 So. 6.3

G 10 Alec Burks 6-6 Fr. 16.8

G 11 Cory Higgins 6-5 Jr. 18.1

G 1 Nate Tomlinson 6-3 So. 5.8

P No. Kansas Ht. Yr. PPG

F 22 Marcus Morris 6-8 So. 13.1

C 45 Cole Aldrich 6-11 Jr. 11.4

G 1 Xavier Henry 6-6 Fr. 13.2

G 10 Tyshawn Taylor 6-3 So. 6.8

G 4 Sherron Collins 5-11 Sr. 15.1

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Men's Basketball

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2010

KU missed on Burks

Jayhawks didn't pursue CU standout

By Gary Bedore



By Kevin Romary

Kansas takes on Colorado in the Fieldhouse Saturday in the teams' second meeting of the season. The Jayhawks are moving ever closer to an undefeated conference season.

Kansas University didn't recruit Colorado freshman Alec Burks, a 6-foot-6, 185-pound freshman sensation from Grandview, Mo., who has emerged as one of the top first-year players in the country.

"I know a lot of people made recruiting mistakes on him," KU coach Bill Self said. "He was a great get for Colorado because he's really a nice player. He has a chance to be really good."

Today, KU finally gets to see Burks up close and personal during the 3 p.m. KU-CU contest in Allen Fieldhouse.

He has missed just one game this season because of injury — KU's narrow 72-66 overtime victory over CU on Feb. 3 in Boulder.

That's the game in which Cory Higgins had a shot to win it at the regulation buzzer, his three-pointer fading off the mark.

For the year, Burks averages 16.8 points and 4.8 rebounds per game. He has hit 52.8 percent of his shots, including 31.8 percent of his threes (14 of 44). Burks has cashed 78.7 percent of his free throws and has 41 assists against 45 turnovers.

"I'd say no matter if he's playing or not, it'd still be a tough game," KU junior center Cole Aldrich said. "He didn't play against us in Boulder. He's really good. Obviously they are a heck of a team because they got us into overtime."

Burks, by the way, is the fourth CU freshman to score 400 points in a debut season. He has 404, trailing Richard Roby (480), Chauncey Billups (465) and Donnie Boyce (417). Burks ranks fifth nationally of all freshmen in points per game and is fifth in field-goal percentage.

CU, which has dropped 14 straight games to KU, enters with a 12-13 overall record, 3-8 in the Big 12. The Buffs, 0-5 on the road in the Big 12 this year, have dropped 34 straight league road games. Their last win was an overtime decision over Oklahoma State on Jan. 21, 2006. CU has also lost 26 straight road games against Div. I opponents, the last victory over Colorado State on Dec. 22, 2007.

"We don't overlook anybody we play just because we know how tough the Big 12 is," Aldrich said. "Anything can happen in the Big 12."

KU has had some problems stopping CU's Princeton-style offense in the past.

"I would say we guarded their stuff average," Self said of the first meeting, one in which Marcus Relphorde scored a game-high 18 points. "I've been watching a lot of that tape. We didn't create any havoc. We didn't create turnovers (13), didn't create points off our defense like I hope we can. We've got to do something to allow them to not get comfortable because their stuff is hard to guard. Over time we've shown we can guard it pretty well if we are fresh and into it. To me that's the big key."

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