

Thorne: Urgency needed from Buffs

CU's lone senior running out of chances to qualify for postseason

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COLUMBIA, Mo. -- Dwight Thorne came out of the locker room at Mizzou Arena with a familiar look on his face after Colorado's 92-63 loss to Missouri on Wednesday night.

The expression on the face of CU's lone senior was the same as the looks Richard Roby and Marcus Hall wore two years ago during a last-place Big 12 finish.

The comments Thorne made in a post-game interview mirrored the same quotes Jermey Jackson-Wilson was giving a year ago as the Buffs were wrapping up a miserable 9-22 campaign.

Once again, time is running out on a chance to play in the postseason. Even worse, it seems like too many players on a young roster are playing with a wait-until-next-year attitude.

Next year is too late for Thorne to experience some form of March Madness. Where's the sense of urgency?

"I've been talking about that for a couple of weeks now," Thorne said. "That's the message I've been saying, and they haven't been receiving it."

Cory Higgins, a junior, has also had enough of the losing. He scored 21 points on 9-for-14 shooting against the Tigers before boarding a losing charter flight home.

No one else helped on the scoreboard until the deficit was out of control, and the Buffs played their worst defense of the season.

The Harlem Globetrotters are going to play the Washington Generals at Mizzou Arena next month. The crowd of 14,303 got a sneak preview on Wednesday.

You can guess which team was dazzling the paying customers with uncontested dunks and which team was the butt of the basketball joke.

Head coach Jeff Bzdelik spent at least 15 minutes barking at the Buffs in the post-game locker room after they allowed Missouri to shoot 58.3 percent from the field (64.3 percent behind the arc) while outscoring them 48-30 in the paint, 46-18 off the bench and 42-17 off turnovers and second-chance points.

"I'm very disappointed in our effort defensively," Bzdelik said. "And I addressed that."

During the Big 12 coaches teleconference with the media two days earlier, Bzdelik became agitated with a reporter who said the Buffs didn't have a lot to play for down the stretch. The coach stated that his team was still playing for a winning record and a possible post-season berth.

Well, CU is now 12-15 overall with three regular season games left against Iowa State, Nebraska and Texas Tech.

It's time to put up or shut ... the lid on another losing season. And a lost senior season for Thorne.

"We've got to play with a sense of urgency on Saturday," Thorne pleaded. "We have to take care of business."

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Hornbuckle aims at next step in return

CU freshman forward recovering from injury

By Patrick Ridgell
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BOULDER — Keegan Hornbuckle was pleased to return to Colorado's lineup Wednesday at Missouri. Now he wants to take the next step.

Hornbuckle played in the 92-63 loss after missing CU's past three games and six of its previous eight due to an AC separation he suffered in his right shoulder in a mid-January practice. He finished with six points in 11 minutes, shooting 2-for-3 on 3-pointers.

While he said it was good to return, Hornbuckle said he slightly favored the shoulder, avoiding contact so he wouldn't re-injure it. When the Buffs host Iowa State on Saturday (11:30 a.m., Altitude), he intends to carry a different mindset.

"I want to get back to being 100 percent healthy and I want to go in there and play without trying to shade my shoulder at all," Hornbuckle said.

Hornbuckle had never hurt his shoulder before. He said it happened when he came around a screen in practice and bumped into someone. He practiced Monday and Tuesday, but prior to that had focused on his conditioning.

A freshman from Westlake Village, Calif., Hornbuckle could have used more minutes so far this year. He said he does not believe sitting on the bench so much has put him behind.

"I feel like I gained a lot of experience when I was playing, but I also gained experience when I was just watching the game because you see a different perspective when you're just sitting there watching," he said. "I think that's helped me a little bit. I definitely don't think I was falling behind."

There's a running debate among some of the Buffs over who can jump the highest. According to fellow-freshman Alec Burks, Hornbuckle is in the mix.

"He thinks he can (jump); he can a little," Burks joked.

"We talk about that everyday. He thinks he can jump as high as me and Shannon (Sharpe), but he can't. He's up there, though. I'll give him that."

Coach Jeff Bzdelik said Hornbuckle is another reason why Bzdelik believes last year's recruiting class, which also included Burks, Sharpe, Shane Harris-Tunks and Marcus Relphorde, was "excellent."

"Keegan is a very talented young player that gives us depth and obviously to give him playing time as a freshman will ... expedite his development as a player that could help us in the future," Bzdelik said.



CU's Keegan Hornbuckle launches past Cal State Northridge's Tony Osunsanmi for a dunk during a game Dec. 22 at Coors Events Center in Boulder. Hornbuckle has missed several games this season due to injury but is now on the mend. **Morgan Varon/Times Call file**

“And also he brings a talent to our basketball team, because he’s a talented young man.”

ON HARRIS-TUNKS’ ‘REPUTATION’: After Harris-Tunks committed a hard second-half foul Wednesday in which he knocked a Missouri player to the floor, television analyst Jon Sundvold said on the telecast that Harris-Tunks has a “reputation.” Sundvold did not elaborate.

Asked Thursday about the comment, Bzdelik said, “I have no idea what Sundvold is talking about. That’s why I don’t listen to those people.”

ROUGH STRETCH: Since Feb. 13, CU has played road games at No. 1 Kansas, No. 6 Kansas State and Missouri, the three top teams in the Big 12. CU lost the three by an average of 22 points per game.

Bzdelik said Thursday the nation’s best teams would be challenged to weather such a stretch. He said Thursday’s plan was to focus on the future and the next game.

“We’re not playing the little sister’s of the poor,” he said.

“I’m not going to overreact at all. The most important thing is the next thing we do.”

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