

CU Buffs have chance to avenge Iowa St. loss

Men fell to Cyclones in one of many near-misses this season

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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The missed opportunities began early.

Colorado led by 16 points before losing to Gonzaga 76-72 in the Maui Invitational opener on Nov. 23. The next morning the Buffs lost to Arizona 91-87 in overtime.

Another potential victory over a Pac-10 opponent slipped away down the stretch as a bad Oregon State team beat the Buffs on Dec. 4.

The single-digit setbacks continued in Big 12 play with tough losses to Kansas State (87-81), Texas A&M (67-63) and Kansas (72-66, OT).

If the Buffs had found a way to win half of those games they would be 15-12 instead of 12-15. A berth in the NIT or CBI would be within reach.

There's nothing CU can do about the near-misses now, except avenge the most painful woulda-coulda-shoulda finish of the season -- the 64-63 loss to Iowa State in Ames on Jan. 30.

The Buffs (3-10 in the Big 12) host the Cyclones (14-14, 3-10) today at the Coors Events Center (11:30 a.m., Altitude).

Marcus Relphorde's shot in the paint rimmed out as time expired in the first meeting. Alec Burks injured his left knee just two minutes into the game and did not return.

"We've got to get desperate so we can win these three games," said Burks, who has scored in double figures in every other game he has played in.

After suffering some lopsided losses at conference powerhouses Kansas State, Kansas and Missouri this month, the Buffs believe they can bounce back today against Iowa State and put together a win streak entering the Big 12 Tournament.

CU's final road game will be at last-place Nebraska next Tuesday and the home finale will be against Texas Tech on March 6.

"You've got to make layups and you can't turn the ball over. We turned it over several times (against Missouri) where it was unforced," Bzdelik said after CU's 92-63 loss to the Tigers on Wednesday. "You've got to be smarter and you can't run and hide from the ball.

"All the things we've been working on, we didn't do."

Craig Brackins scored 27 points and grabbed 13 rebounds to lead the Cyclones over CU. Iowa State dropped its next six games until Wednesday's 78-74 win over Nebraska at Hilton Coliseum in which Brackins scored 11 of his 21 points in the final 7:18.

Brackins, a likely NBA first-round pick, had to be drooling while watching film of Missouri shooting 58.3 percent from the field without much resistance from the Buffs.

"You have to play defense," Burks said. "You can't just let your man drive by you. Everybody needs to play harder."

A win today would solidify CU's hold on 10th place and drop Iowa State back down to 11th. And the Buffs would still have

a chance to improve their seed at the Big 12 Tournament with two more winnable games to close out the regular season.

These are opportunities Bzdelik's team can't afford to miss out on. There is no margin for error now to achieve the preseason goal of a winning season.

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CU men's preview: vs. Iowa State

Camera staff
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 02/27/2010 12:15:37 AM MST

TODAY: Colorado hosts Iowa State in an 11:47 a.m. tipoff at the Coors Events Center.

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

STORYLINES: The Buffs (12-15, 3-10 Big 12) are coming off a 92-63 loss at Missouri on Wednesday. ... Cory Higgins and Alec Burks combined for 34 points on 14-for-23 shooting. The rest of the team scored 29 points on 9-for-30 shooting. ... Burks needs 47 points to become CU's all-time leading freshman scorer. ... Keegan Hornbuckle returned to the lineup after missing the better part of a month with a right shoulder injury. The freshman forward finished with six points for the Buffs. ... The Cyclones (14-14, 3-10) are coming off a 78-74 victory over Nebraska, which snapped the team's six-game losing streak. ... CU killer Craig Brackins scored 11 of his team-high 21 points in the final 7:18 against the Huskers. ... Marcus Relphorde shot at the buzzer rimmed out and CU lost 64-63 at Iowa State on Jan. 30 in the first meeting of the season.

KEY STAT: CU is 11-3 at home and shoots .496 from the field and averages 77.8 points per game at the Coors Events Center. On the road, CU is 1-10 (including a win over Division II Chaminade) and averages 67.4 points and shoots .425 percent.

COACHES: Jeff Bzdelik is 33-57 in his third season at CU. Greg McDermott is 58-69 in his fourth season at Iowa State.

PROBABLE STARTERS:

Colorado -- G Nate Tomlinson, 6-3, sophomore, 5.4 ppg, 2.5 rpg; G Alec Burks, 6-6, freshman, 16.7 ppg, 4.8 rpg; G Cory Higgins, 6-5, junior, 18.0 ppg, 3.7 rpg; G Marcus Relphorde, 6-7, junior, 10.7 ppg, 4.2 rpg; F Austin Dufault, 6-9, sophomore, 6.1 ppg, 3.3 rpg.

Iowa State -- G Diante Garrett, 6-4, junior, 8.9 ppg, 2.5 rpg; G Scott Christopherson, 6-3, sophomore, 7.5 ppg, 2.0 rpg; F Marquis Gilstrap, 6-7, senior, 14.5 ppg, 9.2 rpg; F Craig Brackins, 6-10, junior, 16.7 ppg, 8.4 rpg; C Justin Hamilton, 6-11, sophomore, 6.4 ppg, 5.4 rpg.

SERIES: Iowa State leads 76-67, but the Buffs have won the last four meetings in Boulder.

UP NEXT: The Buffs will play their final road game of the season on Tuesday at Nebraska (6 p.m., FSN).

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Today's Games

By Patrick Ridgell
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No. 12 Texas A&M (19-7, 7-6) at Colorado women (13-13, 3-10)

When/Where: 2 p.m. today at Coors Events Center in Boulder

TV/Radio: No TV/KKZN 760 AM

The series: CU leads 10-7. Texas A&M has won the past six meetings.

Leading scorers: Texas A&M — Danielle Adams (15.3 points per game); CU — Brittany Spears (18.2 points per game)

Notes: CU snapped its eight-game losing streak Tuesday with an 80-79 overtime win at Missouri. ... CU's Bianca Smith needs one 3-pointer to match Shelly Sheetz's program record of 252. ... CU has lost 17 in a row to teams ranked in the AP and WBCA polls. With three regular-season games to go, CU is in 11th place in the Big 12. It's a game behind Kansas State for 10th, and two behind Kansas and Texas Tech. The Buffs will host Kansas State in their regular-season home finale on March 3. ... Adams leads Texas A&M in scoring despite coming off the bench. The Aggies lead the league with 15.8 assists per game.

Iowa State (14-14, 3-10) at Colorado men (12-15, 3-10)

When/Where: 11:45 a.m. today at the Coors Events Center in Boulder

TV/Radio: Altitude/KVCU 1190 AM

The series: Iowa State leads 76-67. CU leads 46-16 in Boulder. Iowa State beat CU 64-63 on Jan. 30 in Ames.

Leading scorers: Iowa State — Craig Brackins (16.7 points per game); CU — Cory Higgins (18 points per game)

Notes: CU played at Iowa State without Alec Burks for all but the first 2 minutes of the game. He hurt his knee and did not return. Burks, with 434 points, needs 47 to break CU's single-season freshman record (Richard Roby, 480). ... CU is 11-3 at home. ... Iowa State snapped a six-game losing streak Wednesday when it beat Nebraska 78-74 in Ames.

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college basketball

Kaba picking up slack for Bears

By Tom Kensler

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UNC has weathered the loss of junior guard Devon Beitzel. (Associated Press file photo)

Even more difficult than replacing Devon Beitzel's 14.3 points per game is missing his clutch play during crunch time, Northern Colorado coach Tad Boyle said of the junior guard.

"Devon made some big-time plays for us at the end of games," Boyle said. "The last four minutes of the game in close ones, that's where we're going to miss him most. He's a guy you can rely

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on."

A former Centaurus High School standout, Beitzel suffered a broken foot in a Feb. 13 loss at Weber State. The Bears (23-6, 11-4 Big Sky) have won all three games without Beitzel and are favored today in the regular-season finale at Sacramento State. But the March 9-10 Big Sky Conference Tournament in Ogden, Utah, can be a different animal.

Taking Beitzel's place in the starting lineup is Chris Kaba, a 6-foot-8 junior from Gary, Ind., who can shoot from outside. So far, Kaba has more than stepped up. He earned Big Sky player of the week honors after averaging 16.5 points and 8.5 rebounds in two conference victories last week.

Boyle said the team did not have to change much after Beitzel's injury because Kaba had averaged about 17 minutes a game as a reserve.

"For Chris, the problem has been consistency," Boyle said. "If he can be consistent, he's fully capable of stepping in for Devon. But it's never easy when you lose a key player, especially late in the season."

UNC needs a win in Sacramento to clinch the No. 2 seed in the conference tournament (behind host Weber State) and get an opening-round bye. A victory also would match the 24-6 record of UNC's 1988-89 team as the best in school history.

Rohnert to take a bow.

Playing three years under Denver coach Joe Scott sure has worked out well for Pioneers swingman Nate Rohnert, a 6-5 senior who will play in his final home game today in the 5 p.m. matchup with Louisiana-Lafayette.

The former Chaparral all-stater came off the bench as a freshman under Terry Carroll but became an instant starter for Scott. Rohnert needs seven points to join the Pioneers' top-10 career scorers. He ranks sixth in assists (342).

"(Scott) came in and sat us all down, looked us in the eye and said, 'You're going to have to trust me,' " Rohnert recalled of his first meeting with Scott in the spring of 2007.

Milestone in sight.

Colorado senior guard Bianca Smith needs two 3-pointers to pass Shelley Sheetz as the program's career leader from long range. Sheetz, a Kodak All-American at CU and now an assistant at the University of Denver, bagged 252 treys from 1991-95.

The Buffs (13-13, 3-10 Big 12) host No. 12 Texas A&M (19-7, 7-6) today at 2 p.m., following the CU vs. Iowa State men's game. "When I came here I never thought about records," Smith said. "I'm just humbled."

Footnotes.

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Considering the Colorado men's team lost by one point at Iowa State with Buffs freshman phenom Alec Burks sitting on the bench with a knee injury, today's 11:30 a.m. rematch in Boulder looks promising for CU (12-15, 3-10 Big 12). Burks averages almost 17 points, "(but) I don't think we have the right to be overconfident about anybody," Buffs junior guard Cory Higgins said. . . . CU coach Jeff Bzdelik, on his team facing Kansas State, Kansas and Missouri in its past three road games: "I'd like to see anybody against that (stretch), Duke, anybody."

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Cyclones, Colorado clash in Big 12 basement game

By TRAVIS HINES

POSTED: February 27, 2010

With its six-game losing streak now in the rear-view mirror, the Iowa State men's basketball team will look to pick up a win against another Big 12 neer-do-well, Colorado, this afternoon at the Coors Event Center in Boulder.

The 12:45 p.m. tip will be televised by WOI-TV.

The Cyclones (14-14, 3-10) have only recorded conference victories against the Buffaloes (14-14, 3-10) and Nebraska, both of which are currently languishing alongside Iowa State in the Big 12 cellar, this season.

ISU came from behind to knock off the Huskers, 78-74, on Wednesday in their first Big 12 win since besting Colorado in January.

In the last meeting between the Cyclones and Buffs, ISU escaped with a victory at home when Marcus Relphorde's layup missed the mark at the final second, leaving the 'Clones with a 64-63 victory.

Relphorde only had the opportunity for the potential game-winner after Craig Brackins threw the ball away on an inbounds pass with just 9 seconds on the clock.

Aside from his potential game-costing gaffe, Brackins had a superb night against the Buffaloes, tallying 27 points and 13 rebounds in the Jan. 30 meeting between the two teams.

Brackins is on the verge of becoming just the sixth Cyclone player to record 1,500 points and 700 rebounds in a career, joining Zaid Abdul-Aziz, Jeff Grayer, Victor Alexander, Fred Holberg and Marcus Fizer in the exclusive club.

The junior from Palmdale, Calif. is just 22 points and one rebound shy of reaching the milestone.

Colorado's leading scorer, Cory Higgins, managed 21 points last time out against the Cyclones. Higgins is averaging 18 points, four boards and two assists per game during his junior campaign.

The Buffaloes' dynamic freshman Alec Burks could be a deciding factor in today's contest. The Missouri native left the first matchup with Iowa State after just two minutes with a knee injury, which forced him to miss Colorado's next contest as well.

Burks has posted 16 points or more in three of the five games since his return and is averaging nearly 17 ppg this season to lead all Big 12 freshmen. The 6-foot-6 guard also leads the Buffs in rebounding, averaging just shy of five rebounds per night.

The Cyclones are just 8-22 all-time inside the Coors Event Center.

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Today, 12:45 p.m.

Coors Events Center, Boulder, Colo.

ON TV: WOI

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