

CU's effort lackluster vs. Mizzou

Bufs' Burks returns to score career-high 27, but it's not enough

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 02/06/2010 04:12:32 PM MST

Jeff Bzdelik was worried that his team would still be suffering from an emotional hangover on Saturday afternoon.

Sure enough, less than 72 hours after letting a season-changing upset of No. 1 Kansas slip away, the Buffs looked as out of sorts as Zach Galifianakis in Las Vegas.

There would be no single-digit heartbreak this time as Colorado was outclassed and clobbered by Missouri during an 85-66 loss at the Coors Events Center in front of a crowd of 8,248.

The Buffs (11-12, 2-7) fell below the .500 mark for the first time all season. And this doesn't figure to be rock bottom with road trips to Manhattan, Lawrence and Columbia looming.

"It was a tough one to bounce back from," CU senior Dwight Thorne said of the program's near-miss against the Jayhawks. "I didn't foresee it being the way it was today, but you could feel there was a little bit missing from this game compared to the Kansas game."

There was one CU player who appeared to be quick, well rested and ready to for the Tigers' "40 minutes of hell" -- Alec Burks.

The talented freshman, who missed the KU game with a sprained knee sustained on Jan. 30 at Iowa State, led the Buffs with a career-high 27 points.

"(Bzdelik) said we didn't play with effort and we were comfortable," said Burks, who grew up in Grandview, Mo. "We felt like we didn't have to work hard because we took Kansas to overtime. I don't think we came out with the same effort we did against Kansas."

The Tigers (17-6, 5-3) beat CU for the seventh consecutive time and have won the last four meetings in Boulder.

Missouri ended the suspense early in the second half after 3-pointers by Kim English and Marcus Denmon sparked an 8-0 run to make the score 57-37 with 14:40 remaining.

"Whenever you're down 10 you're one or two threes from the game getting out of hand," said CU associate head coach Steve McClain. "We had no answer. ... When they get into that groove and they're up 10, that's the game they like. They just get into a flow, and we could never get them out of that flow."

McClain handled the post-game press conference so Bzdelik could catch a flight to be with family. His mother died on Thursday.

A spectacular dunk by Laurence Bowers gave the Tigers their largest lead, 63-40, with 12 minutes and 47 seconds of garbage time left to play. CU cut the deficit to 66-53 on a basket by Thorne with 6:28 left, but the comeback bid faded when Cory Higgins (15 points) fouled out on a weak charge call by the official with 5:29 remaining.

Bzdelik took some of his frustration out during a conversation with the men in stripes, but intensity, turnovers and missed layups were much more of an issue for the Buffs than the whistles.

"We haven't shot the ball this bad all year," McClain said. CU was 20-for-56 (35.7 percent) from the field while allowing the Tigers to shoot 49.1 percent. "Some of that was them and some of that was us just not making shots. And that's part of the game."

The uninspired Buffs trailed 42-29 at the intermission.

Marcus Relphorde, who posted his first career double-double (18 points, 11 rebounds) against KU, picked up his second foul with 16:40 left in the first half and was not a factor with two points (0-for-5 from the field) in 17 minutes.

Levi Knutson, who sparked the Buffs with 13 points on 5-for-8 shooting against KU, was 0-for-3 shooting with one point.

"I don't know if it's an emotional hangover. I think maybe we got comfortable," McClain said. "I think we thought, 'Well, we're at home and it has been pretty good for us at home, so it will just be OK.'

"That's where I give Missouri credit. They put the throttle down."

Missouri 84, Colorado 66

MISSOURI

FG FT Reb

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

Ramsey 25 4-6 2-3 2-7 1 2 10

Safford 15 4-6 2-2 0-4 1 4 10

Tiller 22 2-4 0-0 0-2 6 3 4

Taylor 33 0-5 0-0 1-4 5 3 0

English 33 5-11 7-8 1-5 3 2 21

Dixon Jr 16 1-6 2-2 0-0 0 0 4

Denmon 30 6-9 6-6 2-6 3 2 22

Bowers 11 3-5 3-6 1-1 0 4 9

Moore 15 2-3 0-0 0-3 1 2 4

Totals 200 27-55 22-27 9-36 20 22 84

Percentages: FG .491, FT .815.

3-Point Goals: 8-18, .444 (English 4-5, Denmon 4-6, Tiller 0-1, Taylor 0-2, Dixon Jr. 0-4).

Team Rebounds: 4.

Blocked Shots: 6 (Ramsey 4, Moore, Safford).

Turnovers: 16 (Ramsey 5, Denmon 2, Moore 2, English 2, Safford 2, Dixon Jr., Taylor, Tiller).

Steals: 11 (Taylor 4, Dixon Jr. 2, Tiller 2, Ramsey 2, English).

Technical Fouls: None.

COLORADO

FG FT Reb**Min M-A M-A O-T A PF PTS**

Dufault 18 0-3 0-0 1-2 1 0 0

Tmlnsn 36 2-5 2-2 0-2 2 2 8

Rlphrde 17 0-5 2-4 3-5 3 3 2

Burks 32 9-19 7-8 4-6 1 3 27

CHiggins 31 5-11 5-7 3-7 3 5 15

Thorne 20 2-5 2-2 0-3 1 2 6

Hrs-Tnks 4 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Knutson 14 0-3 1-2 0-1 0 2 1

Crawford 3 0-0 0-0 0-1 0 2 0

Hrnbackle 15 2-3 0-0 0-1 0 0 5

Eckloff 10 0-2 2-2 0-3 0 1 2

Totals 200 20-56 21-27 11-31 11 20 66

Percentages: FG .357, FT .778.**3-Point Goals:** 5-14, .357 (Burks 2-2, Tomlinson 2-4, Hornbuckle 1-1, Knutson 0-1, Thorne II 0-1, Eckloff 0-1, Relphorde 0-2, [C.Higgins](#) 0-2).**Team Rebounds:** 0.**Blocked Shots:** 2 (Dufault, Relphorde).**Turnovers:** 16 (Burks 4, Tomlinson 3, Knutson 2, Hornbuckle 2, [C.Higgins](#) 2, Crawford, Thorne II, Relphorde).**Steals:** 11 ([C.Higgins](#) 5, Thorne II 2, Dufault, Burks, Knutson, Relphorde).**Technical Fouls:** Burks.**Missouri 42 42--84****Colorado 29 37--66****A --** 8,248.**Officials --** Michael Eggers, Terry Moore, Randy Heimerman.

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Woelk: Comfortable turns into complacent for Buffs

Neill Woelk Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 02/06/2010 11:48:49 PM MST

Forty minutes of hell?

It seemed much longer than that to Colorado folks on Saturday. An afternoon stretched over an eternity.

Clearly, Mike Anderson's Missouri Tigers were not intimidated by CU's most-recent outing, an overtime loss to Kansas. Equally obvious was the fact that MU didn't get the memo saying the Buffs are tough on their home floor.

Rather, the Tigers came into the Coors Events Center and took ownership of the court. They played in-your-face defense. They forced turnovers, blocked CU's shots and hit their own while the Buffs kept waiting for that homecourt advantage to kick in.

They're still waiting this morning. Missouri 84, CU 66, and back to square one for the Buffs.

"I think maybe we got comfortable," said CU associate head coach Steve McClain. "We thought we were at home and it's been pretty good for us at home, so it would be OK.

"Even when we got down early, I think our guys were like, 'I think it will be OK.'"

OK, how about this: the Buffs aren't good enough to be feeling comfortable anywhere. They are an improved team, but they've gotten to that point by playing desperate basketball, by outhustling and outworking opponents.

There was no sense of desperation on this day. Even when they managed to cut MU's early double-digit lead down to two late in the first half, they didn't force the issue. They let Missouri dictate the pace. And before the home crowd had a chance to get warmed up and into the game, the Tigers were back up by eight. Minutes later, the lead was double digits again.

It never got any closer. The Buffs had their worst shooting day of the year (20-for-56, 35.7 percent) while the Tigers were an efficient 27-for-55, including 8-for-18 from 3-point range.

"Some of us were too comfortable," said freshman Alec Burks, who returned from a one-game injury hiatus to score a career-high 27 points to go with six rebounds. "Some felt that we didn't have to work hard because we took Kansas to overtime. So we were complacent.

"I don't think we came out with the same effort as we did against Kansas."

It's a harsh way to learn a lesson, but if there's anything for the Buffs to gain from Saturday's outing, it should be that no one is afraid of them, not even on their home court. An 11-12 record (2-7 in the Big 12) isn't going to strike fear in the hearts of anyone.

From the Silver Lining Dept., the Buffs will at least have a little time to digest this lesson. They don't play again until next Saturday, when they travel to Kansas State. That means a week to get their sense of desperation back.

"We have to re-evaluate ourselves," McClain said. "We have to look in the mirror and ask, 'What do I have to do to help us get better?'"

Saturday's loss dropped CU below .500 for the first time this season. For the Buffs to still realize their goal of advancing to postseason play, they likely need to win at least four of their remaining seven Big 12 contests, then win at least one in the conference tournament.

It's why Saturday's loss was so damaging. Now, opportunities for those wins are awfully slim. Even if they win the rest of

their home games -- Oklahoma, Iowa State and Texas Tech -- they still need to get one on the road.

"We have to get to the gym, get some shots up and work hard," McClain said. "Our plan is to practice, go a little shorter and harder this week and be able to be productive going into Kansas State."

The Buffs haven't won at Kansas State since 2005. They've lost eight in a row to the Wildcats, including an 87-81 decision to KSU earlier this season in Boulder.

It's a safe bet they won't have the problem of feeling too "comfortable" in Manhattan next Saturday.

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Burks tallies career-best 27 vs. MU

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 02/06/2010 11:48:19 PM MST

Alec Burks, in true "Show-Me State" fashion, let his actions do the talking.

The Big 12's top freshman scorer, who hails from Grandview, Mo., scored a career-high 27 points to lead Colorado during an 84-66 loss to Missouri on Saturday at the Coors Events Center.

Burks was not offered a scholarship by Mizzou coach Mike Anderson, despite attending the Tigers Elite Camp in the summer of 2008. The 6-6 guard gave a verbal commitment to CU before his senior year in high school and went on to become the Gatorade Player of the Year in Missouri, while also growing two inches.

"It's just another team with another name on the jersey. I just happen to be from there," Burks said after CU's seventh consecutive loss to the Tigers. "Nothing special for me, just a game."

During the state semifinals last spring, Burks led Grandview High School to a victory over Summit West, out-dueling Michael Dixon -- now a Missouri freshman -- en route to the state title game.

Burks, who was averaging 16.3 points entering the rematch, grabbed six rebounds and was 9-for-19 from the field in 32 minutes on Saturday. Dixon had four points (1-for-6 shooting) and no rebounds in 16 minutes but walked off the court with the winning team this time.

"We were very fortunate to sign him early," CU coach Jeff Bzdelik said recently. "He is one of the elite freshmen in the nation."

Burks returned to the starting lineup after missing the final 38 minutes of the Iowa State game and Wednesday's overtime loss to No. 1 Kansas with a sprained knee.

"I thought he got tired, but we had to leave him out there and let him play through getting tired because we have to get him back in game condition," CU associate head coach Steve McClain said. "He had a good night."

Emotional week

In addition to suffering single-digit losses to Iowa State (64-63) and KU (72-66) and enduring the disappointing effort Saturday, Bzdelik was dealing with the death of his mother, who passed away on Thursday after being hospitalized during the Maui Invitational in November.

The third-year CU coach left the Coors Events Center immediately after the game to catch a flight to Chicago to join his family.

"He knew it was coming and that's why he handled it like he did. He did a great job of not letting it be a distraction for anybody, and most people didn't even know," McClain said. "It's one of those things all of us deal with in life."

The Buffs will not play again until next Saturday at Kansas State.

Roughing on Relphorde

Buff junior Marcus Relphorde, after a brilliant 18-point, 11-rebound performance against the Jayhawks, found himself stuck on the end of the bench after picking up his second foul barely three minutes into the game.

If it were hockey, Relphorde would have been sent to the box for a four-minute roughing call after elbowing J.T. Tiller in the face and drawing blood. Bzdelik held him out for all but 17 minutes of the game.

Officials looked at a replay of the incident and determined that the contact was inadvertent.

"All he did was swim to get rid of the guy ... I think when he did it his elbow just came back and popped the guy," McClain said. "The referees came over to look at it and see if it was intentional and saw that it wasn't. ... I think he sat there a long time and had a hard time getting back into the flow."

Relphorde was 0-for-5 from the field with two points.

Notable

CU was out-rebounded (36-31) for the 14th consecutive game. ... CU's 20 field goals matched a season low (20 vs. Yale). ... The Buffs had more turnovers (9) than field goals (7) in the first half. ... Cory Higgins had a season-high five steals. ... Missouri leads the all-time series 97-52.

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dave krieger

Krieger: CU big on improvement

By Dave Krieger
Denver Post Columnist

Posted: 02/07/2010 01:00:00 AM MST

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CU's Alec Burks goes up against the defense of Missouri's Marcus Denmon on Saturday in the Buffs' 84-66 defeat in Boulder. Burks scored a game-high 27 points. (Cliff Grassmick, The Daily Camera)

BOULDER — One night they're shocking the country, taking the top-ranked Kansas Jayhawks to overtime on national TV before suddenly remembering who they're playing, as if waking from a dream.

Three days later, they're getting blown out at

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home by unranked Missouri.

The CU men's basketball program in coach Jeff Bzdelik's third year is a little like the national economy — you can see the green shoots, but there is not yet a noticeable recovery.

"I made it very clear when I took this job that I couldn't wave a magic wand and have this happen overnight and do so without compromising the moral and academic integrity of the university," Bzdelik said Saturday.

"So I was very honest with people. I said

CU Basketball

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we are going to have to start from scratch in an unforgiving league and build so that we have, after three, four years, a group of upperclassmen

who are experienced, competition-tested and who, collectively, as a team, can win games and put ourselves in position for postseason play."

The other day, athletic director Mike Bohn compared Bzdelik's program with Dan Hawkins' football program, saying both were close to winning, but "that last difference is very difficult to achieve."

There's one noticeable distinction between the two that seems to have basketball fans more cheerful than the restive football fans. Both coaches have brought in some highly touted recruits, but their performance has been markedly different.

Hawkins' top names — Darrell Scott and Lynn Katoa — washed out. Bzdelik's top recruits — Alec Burks and Cory Higgins — are as good as advertised. Bzdelik's problem is they're both guards. His team is not so much a doughnut as a bicycle tire. It has an enormous hole in the middle.

"We feel really good about where our recruiting class can be this year," Bzdelik said. "We haven't signed anybody yet, but we're working on some big kids that will really be solidifying pieces."

Bzdelik desperately needs them. In Big 12 Conference play so far this season, the Buffs have been outrebounded 360-250. That's a difference of more than 12 boards per game. The margin in blocked shots is 40-14. No team can win consistently getting destroyed inside that

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way.

"It'd be nice to have (a shot-blocker) back there that every now and then could erase a defensive mistake," associate head coach Steve McClain agreed.

CU has three players — Burks, Higgins and junior Marcus Relporhe — worth the price of admission. Unfortunately, they're all guards. Not only were Burks and Higgins the Buffs' leading scorers Saturday against Missouri, they were their leading rebounders too. That's not going to cut it in the bruising Big 12, which is why CU is 2-7 in the conference.

Still, the presence of Burks, a serious NBA prospect, gives Bzdelik credibility out on the recruiting trail, as does a nationally televised near-miss like Wednesday's overtime loss to Kansas.

"We're seeing signs that this thing is consistently building," Bzdelik said. "The players are getting better. They're doing great in the classroom. They're good citizens. They're young. They're talented. The crowds, I think, are really buying into these young guys. So it's like a slow, steady, consistent build."

Of course, it's not like the old days when you could build around a young player like Burks. The Buffs will be lucky if he stays in school for two years. He's already projected as a lottery pick in the 2011 NBA draft.

In 2 1/2 seasons at CU, Bzdelik is now 32-54. He knows fan patience will last only so long.

"I'm a big boy," he said. "I understand that the only thing that matters is winning. We can do all these wonderful nice things, but the only thing that matters is winning. And I've been honest with people in saying we've got to build to that point.

"I've told the administration, 'I might not be the right fit for you because I want to build this right, so that when it's right, it's rock solid and it's there forever.'

"I know we live in a society today that wants everything right now. Everybody wants everything right now. Well, it doesn't work that way unless you're going to take shortcuts."

For now, with only one senior on the roster, the Buffs are up and down and all over the place. They have shown enough of a spark to give their fans hope. But they aren't getting appreciably better from here until they find some big men who can play.

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cu basketball

Missouri proves too much, trounces CU

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 02/07/2010 01:00:00 AM MST

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Steve Moore, right, and Missouri's bigger lineup takes advantage of Colorado's Austin Dufault during the Tigers' convincing victory Saturday in Boulder. Dufault was kept scoreless in 18 minutes of play. (Cliff Grassmick, The Daily Camera)

BOULDER — When Missouri defenders weren't double-teaming Colorado ballhandlers, the Tigers pounced with a triple-team.

"Missouri just swarms you," Colorado assistant coach Steve McClain said after an easy 84-66 victory Saturday by the visiting Tigers. "They don't care if a guy fouls, because they've got two or three more on the bench just like him."

Colorado shot just 35.7 percent from the field and another good Coors Events Center crowd (8,248) didn't have nearly as much fun as those who had watched the Buffaloes take top-ranked Kansas into overtime here three days earlier.

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Colorado (11-12, 2-7 Big 12) led just once, 1-0, and trailed 42-29 by halftime.

After missing the Kansas game with a knee sprain, Colorado

CU Basketball

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freshman guard Alec Burks, a native Missourian from Kansas City, made a spectacular return with a career-best 27 points. But Missouri sophomore guards Marcus Denmon (22 points) and Kim English (21) almost kept pace.

The Tigers (17-6, 5-3) controlled the tempo, the paint and the scoreboard. Missouri also connected on 8-of-18 from 3-point range. Colorado defenders, their heads swiveling to keep track of Missouri's inside-outside tricks and all those athletes, seemed to always arrive a

half-step late.

Missouri's two starting post players and two frontcourt reserves combined for 33 points. CU's four players 6-feet-9 and taller managed a total of two points — foul shots by sophomore Trey Eckloff.

"We put on a poor performance for the crowd," Burks said. "They've been supporting us lately. But I think we'll bounce back."

McClain, a former Wyoming head coach, handled postgame interviews so Jeff Bzdelik could hurry to the airport for a flight to Chicago to attend the funeral of his mother, Ruth, who died Thursday.

Bzdelik's mother had been ill for some time, and McClain said the CU coach did not allow his family issue to become a distraction. As for the Buffs suffering an emotional hangover from the disappointing loss to Kansas, that was a different story.

According to CU players, Bzdelik told them afterward that they did not play with effort and were complacent and overconfident because it was a home game.

"That (loss to Kansas) was a tough one to bounce from," said CU guard Dwight Thorne, the team's only senior. "But I didn't foresee (this). There was a little bit missing."

Burks tried to do his part. The 2009 Missouri

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Gatorade prep player of the year was not recruited by Missouri.

"Alec has a chance today to play against his home state, so you know he's going to play well, which he did," Missouri coach Mike Anderson said.

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Men's loss to Missouri dampens Buffs' buzz

By Patrick Ridgell
© 2010 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — In four days, Colorado men's basketball went from painfully close to painful to watch.

Saturday's 84-66 loss to Missouri was ugly on many fronts. CU's awful shooting (35.7 percent) couldn't help it overcome slow starts to both halves. Missouri pushed and shoved the Buffs around, controlling the paint and dictating tempo all day, and its bench outscored CU's, 39-14.

Worst of all, CU couldn't have been flatter. On Wednesday it took No. 1 Kansas to overtime before losing, stirring talk that it's on the cusp of a revival everyone in Boulder so eagerly awaits.

Not quite.

"I don't know if it was an emotional hangover," associate head coach Steve McClain said. "I think maybe we got comfortable. We thought we were at home and it's been so good for us at home.

"When we were down early, guys thought it would be OK. That's where you give Missouri credit. They put the throttle down, and they kept the margin and kept building on it."

McClain filled in for head coach Jeff Bzdelik at the post-game press conference because Bzdelik departed right after the game for Chicago, where his mother died Thursday. McClain said Bzdelik "has been dealing with this for a long time, it's one of those things he knew was coming ... and he did a great job of not letting it be a distraction for anybody."

Bzdelik left the team in Maui in November when his mother fell ill. McClain coached the Buffs for their three games there.

Bzdelik feared Wednesday's agony might have deflated the Buffs, who fell to 10-3 in Boulder. According to players, Bzdelik's post-game speech showed he realized his fears.

"He said we did not play with our best effort," said guard Alec Burks, who scored a season-high 27 points in his return from his left knee sprain. "He said some of us looked too comfortable, like we didn't think we had to work hard because we took Kansas to overtime. We were complacent."

Said Dwight Thorne: "(Kansas) was a tough one to bounce back from, but I did not foresee it being the way it was today. You could tell there was a little bit missing (Saturday) that was there during the Kansas game."

CU had another good crowd Saturday — 8,248 — but most had left by late in the second half as the game deteriorated.

MISSOURI 84, COLORADO 66

MISSOURI (17-6, 5-3)

Ramsey 4-6 2-3 10, Safford 4-6 2-2 10, Tiller 2-4 0-0 4, Taylor 0-5 0-0 0, English 5-11 7-8 21, Dixon 1-6 2-2 4, Denmon 6-9 6-6 22, Bowers 3-5 3-6 9, Moore 2-3 0-0 4. Totals 27-55 22-27 84.

COLORADO (11-12, 2-7)

Dufault 0-3 0-0 0, Tomlinson 2-5 2-2 8, Relphorde 0-5 2-4 2, Burks 9-19 7-8 27, Higgins 5-11 5-7 15, Thorne 2-5 2-2 6, Harris-Tunks 0-0 0-0 0, Knutson 0-3 1-2 1, Crawford 0-0 0-0 0, Hornbuckle 2-3 0-0 5, Eckloff 0-2 2-2 2. Totals 20-55 21-27 66.

Halftime—Missouri 42-29.

3-point goals—Missouri 8-18 (English 4-5, Denmon 4-6, Taylor 0-2, Tiller 0-1, Dixon 0-4); CU 5-14 (Burks 2-2, Tomlinson 2-4, Hornbuckle 1-1, Eckloff 0-1, Relphorde 0-2, Higgins 0-2, Thorne 0-1, Knutson 0-1). Fouled out— Higgins (C). Rebounds— Missouri 36 (Ramsey 7); CU 31 (Higgins 7). Assists— Missouri 20 (Tiller 6); CU 11 (Relphorde 3, Higgins 3). Total fouls— Missouri 22; CU 20. Technicals— Burks (C). A— 8,248.

The Buffs (11-12, 2-7) are below .500 for the first time in 2009-10. They don't play again until next Saturday at Kansas State.

CU never pulled to within fewer than 10 points after halftime. Cory Higgins fouled out for the first time in 2009-10 on a charge call with 5 minutes, 29 seconds to go that sent Bzdelik out on the court to argue with an official. He did not receive a technical, unlike Burks, who received one less than three minutes later for a hard foul on Missouri's Justin Safford.

The Buffs' rebounding deficiencies are hardly news anymore, but the numbers grow more sobering each day. CU has been out-rebounded in 14 straight games. In Big 12 play, it has been out-rebounded 360-350, or by an average of 12.2 per game. Missouri won the boards, 36-31.

In blocked shots in conference games, CU is on the wrong end of a 40-14 margin. Missouri swatted six CU shots. CU blocked two.

The Buffs' 35.7 shooting matched their second-lowest clip of the season. CU had more turnovers — nine — in the first half than field goals — seven.

CU's Marcus Relphorde had 18 points and 11 rebounds against Kansas; two points and five rebounds Saturday. He sat most of the first half with foul problems. Austin Dufault failed to score, and point guard Nate Tomlinson finished with three turnovers and two assists.

Missouri coach Mike Anderson claimed CU's overtime loss to Kansas caught his team's attention.

"I just thought we really took the fight to Colorado," Anderson said.

There was some buzz coming from the program late this week. Saturday's result subdued it.

As disappointing as Wednesday's loss was, this one might have been worse. Missouri is a good program, but one CU should at least hang with, probably even beat at home, if it's serious about turning this thing around. Getting blown out on its home floor is only a reminder of how far it still has to go.

"I can honestly say we feel like we had not arrived (after Wednesday)," Thorne said. "We still lost the game. ... This game makes you think you still have a lot of work to do, as every loss does."

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



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Denmon, English power MU's 84-66 win over Colorado

By MIKE DeARMOND
The Kansas City Star

BOULDER, Colo. | Ask Missouri coach Mike Anderson about the leadership of sophomores Kim English and Marcus Denmon.

What you got in response following Denmon's career-high 22-point game and English's 21-point day in the Tigers' 84-66 triumph at Colorado was chapter and verse on seniors J.T. Tiller and Zaire Taylor.

"Our seniors are leaders," Anderson said. "You think about the things that those guys do. For a team that's, to me, a blue-collar team that predicates everything they do on defense ...

"The team is like a puzzle or a car. You've got the ignition, you've got the spark plugs. I thought Zaire and J.T. were the spark plugs today. And they *are* the leaders."

In the second half, when Mizzou piled it on from a 13-point halftime edge, Tiller and Taylor were tough. But without English and Denmon in the first half, Missouri may not have been in position to do that.

Tiller finished with six assists and two steals, if only four points. Most of that came after he received a bloody nose 3 minutes, 10 seconds into the game after colliding with Colorado's Marcus Relphorde.

Taylor finished with five assists and four steals but missed all five of his shots and scored no points.

A third senior, Keith Ramsey, blocked four shots, ripped down seven rebounds and finished with 10 points.

"They look to us for leadership," Ramsey said.

But, Ramsey added: "They carried us."

They certainly did early.

English and Denmon each threw in 14 first-half points. That more than countered the 16 first-half points by former Grandview High star Alec Burks, who finished with a career-high 27.

English hit four of eight shots in the first half, including all three of the three-point shots he launched. English also sank three of four free throws, and ripped down four rebounds in 18 minutes.

Denmon hit all three shots he took in the first half, including both of his threes, and made all six of his free throws. Denmon added three rebounds in 16 minutes.

Combined, English and Denmon hit seven of 11 shots in the first half — their teammates made six of 17 — and nine of 10 free throws — their teammates two of three.

English and Denmon finished the game eight of 11 combined from three-point range, while the rest of the team was zero for seven. Overall, the two sophomores hit 11 of 20 shots, and the rest of the team 16 of 35.

English toed the company line when the topic turned to leadership.

"We follow J.T., Zaire and Keith," English said. "We look to score a little bit more than others. But that's just our role on the team.

"It just happened to be our night. It was Miguel's (Paul) night against Nebraska."

Denmon played it low-key as well.

"Kimmie was playing well and my teammates were finding me for open shots," he said. "Me and Kimmie are guys that can easily be leading this team as sophomores. We played last year. We have some of that experience."

But, Denmon added: "We follow those guys' lead, like J.T. and the rest of those guys."

Burks implied Colorado, which fell to 11-12 overall and 2-7 in the Big 12, took a victory over Missouri for granted.

"Some felt that we didn't have to work hard," Burks said, "because we took Kansas to overtime (on Wednesday)."

The victory boosted the Tigers to 17-6 overall and 5-3 in the Big 12, tied for fourth with Texas and a half-game behind 6-3 K-State and Texas A&M.

Anderson said the win took some of the sting out of Wednesday night's 77-74 home loss to A&M, a game in which the Tigers blew an 11-point second-half lead.

"We're in the hunt for something," Anderson said. "We're trying to win a championship. We lost a game at home, so now we've got to go steal a game on the road. So we stole a game on the road."

With a couple of sophomore guards leading the way.

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