

Uh-oh, here comes Udoh

Bufs to face dominating Baylor center

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 01/11/2010 06:06:57 PM MST

Before the first practices began in October, Big 12 coaches voted Baylor 10th in their preseason poll.

Less than three months later, the Bears -- who are 13-1 overall and 1-0 in conference play entering Tuesday's game against Colorado at the Coors Events Center (7:07 p.m., FSN) -- are ranked 22nd nationally in the Associated Press poll released Monday.

"It's a compliment to the great players we lost last year," Baylor coach Scott Drew said when asked about the lack of preseason love from his peers. "Obviously, people realize you're in a rebuilding phase or a reloading phase. And we're also the ninth-youngest team in the country. ...

"But whenever you're picked low, that's going to add motivation to your team."

The Bears' start is pretty amazing considering Drew said goodbye to the winningest recruiting class in program history. Talented players like Curtis Jerrells, Henry Dugat and Kevin Rogers led Baylor back from the abyss of the NCAA sanctions that were handed down six years ago in the aftermath of Patrick Dennehy's murder and the nefarious Dave Bliss era.

In the past two seasons, Baylor has made an NCAA Tournament appearance, reached the NIT championship game and won 45 games.

"It was a great challenge for the returning players and the new players and the coaching staff to prove that we do belong," Drew said.

The Bears knew they were adding a solid player to the lineup this season in Ekpe Udoh, but Drew admits he didn't think the 6-foot-10 center would make such a headline-grabbing impact this early.

Udoh, a Michigan transfer, was named the Big 12 player of the week on Monday after recording a triple-double (18 points, 17 rebounds and 10 blocks) against Morgan State and then leading Baylor to a 91-60 thrashing of Oklahoma in the Big 12 opener with 14 points, eight rebounds and seven blocks.

And now the Bufs (9-6, 0-1) -- an undersized team that struggles to rebound the ball -- must deal with Udoh, who plays alongside 7-footer Josh Lomers.

"They have a frontcourt that is very long and athletic and protects the rim very well. They can score inside and attack the offensive glass violently," CU coach Jeff Bzdelik said. "And then you combine that with some really outstanding guard play from veteran guards who can score really well."

Baylor backcourt mates LaceDarius Dunn (18.4 ppg) and Tweety Carter (16.5 ppg) are just as dangerous on the perimeter as Udoh (14.1 ppg, Big-12 leading 11.3 rpg) is in the paint.

That's a bad combination for CU, which focused on Texas' interior players on Saturday, only to be torched for 29 points by freshman guard Avery Bradley, who was named the Big 12 rookie of the week for his efforts, during a 103-86 loss in Austin.

"We all just need to collectively hit the glass," Austin Dufault said after the Bufs were out-rebounded 39-23 by Texas. "We usually have one, two or three guys doing it. Once we get all five guys boxing out and going to the glass we'll be able to finish off defensive possessions because we're going to be facing some more teams like this."

CU is looking to defend its perfect 8-0 record at the Coors Events Center. Big 12 teams were 105-1 at home in non-

conference play and all five home teams won on Saturday.

"It is mind boggling," Bzdelik said of the extreme home dominance throughout the conference. "Hopefully I can just continue with my own business at home. We've gotten better, but this whole league has gotten better. It's just an awesome league."

Baylor has true road victories at Arizona State, Arkansas and South Carolina. The team's only loss was to Alabama on a neutral court.

"Road wins are great for a team's morale and character," Drew said. "It's you versus everyone else. Those games were great for our confidence and building our team and bringing us closer together."

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colorado

Baylor big man Ekpe Udoh has CU's full attention

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 01/12/2010 01:00:00 AM MST



Ekpe Udoh is the main reason Baylor is ranked 22nd by The Associated Press. Udoh is averaging 14.1 points and 11.3 rebounds. (Sam Greenwood, Getty Images)

BOULDER — Not meaning any physical harm, Colorado intends to give Baylor big man Ekpe Udoh several on the chin tonight at the Coors Events Center.

The best way to play against a shot blocker such as Udoh is to take the ball right at him, CU men's basketball coach Jeff Bzdelik said Monday. A springy, 6-foot-10 junior transfer from Michigan, Udoh leads the Big 12 Conference in blocked shots (4.7 per game) and rebounds (11.3).

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To be successful, Bzdelik said the Buffaloes (9-6, 0-1 Big 12) can't shy away from Udoh, who also averages 14.1 points.

"(Udoh) is going to be making a lot of money (in the NBA) very soon," said Bzdelik, a former Nuggets coach. "He's so talented and long. What you need to do against

CU Basketball

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players like that is take it to their chin, because if you try to avoid their body, their length enables them to still block the shot.

"If you take it strong to the rim, at their chin, that draws the shot blocker. Then you need to make a good decision to either try to draw contact or kick it to an open teammate."

Udoh, who sat out last season under NCAA transfer rules, may be the league's hottest

player. On Monday, Udoh was named Big 12 player of the week. It marked the second straight week he earned the award.

Baylor (13-1, 1-0) had to replace three starters from last season and rates as one of the league's early surprises — in large part because of Udoh. The Bears come off a 91-60 dismantling of Oklahoma on Saturday in Waco; Udoh blocked seven shots.

"We all know from a defensive mind-set what Ekpe has done for us," Baylor coach Scott Drew said Monday on the Big 12 coaches teleconference. "But I think the best thing about Ekpe is his intangibles. His leadership has been huge for us."

Bzdelik said he will give 6-10 freshman Shane Harris-Tunks his second straight start. The Aussie center will replace 6-9 sophomore forward Austin Dufault for a better matchup.

"On defense against Udoh, you need to try to straighten his legs out so he can't jump and is not as agile," Harris-Tunks said.

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Longmont, Colorado
Wednesday, May 05, 2010

Publish Date: 1/12/2010

Unbeaten in Boulder, Buffs face big test in No. 22 Baylor

By Patrick Ridgell
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Oddly enough, tonight might already be a must-win game for the Colorado men's basketball team.

Oddly enough, because it's hard to label any game as "must win" for the team picked to finish last. But if CU and coach Jeff Bzdelik hope to accelerate the rebuilding process, any chance to defend the home court is one not to be wasted. That's more true in a league like the Big 12 — a conference whose teams have so far gone a combined 112-1 at home in 2009-10 — and for a team like CU, which has lost its past 30 straight conference road games.

Tonight, CU hosts No. 22 Baylor (13-1, 1-0 Big 12), which owns a nine-game winning streak that features road wins at Arizona State, South Carolina and Arkansas, plus Saturday's 31-point home victory over Oklahoma.

"In the NBA, you said every game had a playoff implication, how matter where you were playing or who you were playing," said Bzdelik, the former coach of the Denver Nuggets. "It's the same thing in college basketball."

"Every game has an implication in terms of your desire to be in postseason play, and every possession is important. One possession can be a turning point in a season."

CU (9-6, 0-1) is 8-0 in Boulder in 2009-10.

Bzdelik added that handling the pressure of defending one's home court requires an ability to play fearlessly while coping with everything else.

"Everyone is going to make mistakes and miss shots," he said. "You have to play through that and keep competing."

Adding to their pressure tonight is that the Buffs must deal with Baylor's Epke Udoh, the early leader for Big 12 newcomer of the year. The Big 12 named Udoh, a 6-foot-10 transfer from Michigan who sat out 2008-09, its player of the week Monday for the second straight week.

Udoh averaged 16 points, 12.5 rebounds and 8.5 blocks in two double-digit wins. He had a triple-double against Morgan State Wednesday.

"Last year, during practices, we saw he'd have a big impact on our team," coach Scott Drew said. "We were just wishing last year we could use him."

Udoh's impact is seen in statistics. Not only does Baylor lead the Big 12 in field goal defense, holding teams to 34.9 percent from the field, the Bears are third in field goal percentage — 49.9 percent — and 3-point shooting — 40.6 percent. Drew credits Udoh's work with helping the entire team shoot better.

"He helped improve (our) 3-point percentages because he draws the defense, and not only does he draw them, but he does a great job kicking (the ball) out," Drew said.

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

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Longmont, Colorado
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Tonight's games

By Patrick Ridgell
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No. 22 Baylor (13-1, 1-0) at Colorado men (9-6, 0-1)

When/Where: 7 p.m. tonight at the Coors Events Center in Boulder.

TV/Radio: FSN/KVCU 1190 AM.

The series: CU leads 14-8, 7-2 in Boulder. Baylor beat CU 75-57 in Waco, Texas, last year.

Leading scorers: Baylor — LaceDarius Dunn (18.4 points per game); CU — Cory Higgins (18.1 points per game).

Notes: CU is 8-0 at home. It last started 9-0 at home in 1982-83. ... CU is 8-3 when it exceeds 70 points. ... Junior Marcus Relphorde had a season-best 24 points in Saturday's 103-86 loss at No. 1 Texas. Freshman Alec Burks scored 21. ... Four Buffs big men fouled out Saturday, including center Shane Harris-Tunks, who made his first career start. Sophomore Austin Dufault, who came off the bench for the first time in his career, Relphorde and Trey Eckloff were the other three. ... CU listed Harris-Tunks as a reserve and Dufault as a starter in Monday's notes. The Bears' front-line starters are listed at 6-foot-10, 6-foot-10 and 7-foot. ... CU has lost nine in a row against ranked teams. ... CU is opening conference play against three straight ranked teams for the first time in program history. It will host No. 13 Kansas State on Saturday. ... Baylor's 91-60 defeat of Oklahoma on Saturday was the program's first win over the Sooners after 26 losses. ... The Bears return only two starters from last year's 24-15 team that lost to Penn State in the NIT Finals.

Colorado women (11-3, 1-0) at Texas Tech (12-3, 0-2)

When/Where: 6 p.m. tonight at the United Spirit Arena in Lubbock, Texas.

TV/Radio: No TV/KKZN AM.

The series: Texas Tech leads 15-5, 6-1 in Lubbock. Texas Tech beat the Buffs 66-60 last year in Boulder.

Leading scorers: CU — Brittany Spears (19.5 points per game); Texas Tech — Kierra Mallard (14.4 points per game).

Notes: CU has won five of its past six and nine of 11. CU has lost seven straight road games, including two this season. The Buffs have lost 17 straight road games against Big 12 South teams. ... CU is third in the Big 12 with 8.1 3s per game, and it leads the league in free throw shooting at 77 percent. ... CU's Bianca Smith continues to lead the Big 12 in 3s with 42, despite hitting none in Saturday's win over Missouri. She's also the conference's top free throw shooter, at 96.7 percent. ... CU announced Saturday that guard Whitney Houston has taken a "leave of absence" from the team, and she missed the Missouri game. It has not reported when she will return. Houston played only three minutes apiece in CU's two previous games. ... Texas Tech lost its league opener Saturday to Oklahoma, 73-58. The Lady Raiders have lost two of their past three, but are 10-0 at home. Texas Tech leads the Big 12 with 11.3 steals per game.

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New role for Thorne

Lone senior leads men's basketball against No. 22 Baylor

By David Starcer on January 12, 2010

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Talking to senior guard Dwight Thorne II, one would expect Thorne's recent demotion to the bench would be his main motivation to step his game up. But Thorne has another reason to be fired up heading into his final stretch as a collegiate player.

"To get to the postseason, hopefully the NCAA tournament," Thorne said. "That's the goal for this year."

To reach that goal, the Colorado Buffaloes men's basketball team are going to have to make some noise in Big 12 Conference play, and after their 103-86 loss at Texas on Saturday, they will have to rebound against the No. 22 Baylor Bears at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the Coors Events Center. And by rebound, that's both figuratively and literally.

"[Baylor] presents a huge challenge for us in every sense of the word," head coach Jeff Bzdelik said. "They're very long and very athletic."

The longest player in their frontcourt rotation is junior center Ekpe Udoh, who's averaging 14.1 points and 11.3 rebounds per game this season.

At 6-foot-10 and 240 pounds, Udoh and the rest of the Bears' lanky frontcourt will prove a different challenge for CU's big men than Texas' 6-foot-10, 290-pound Dexter Pittman, possessing athleticism to go along with sturdiness down low.

On the offensive side of things, it could be Thorne who proves to be a deciding factor on the team's success for the rest of the season.

After finishing second on the team in scoring last year behind junior Cory Higgins, Thorne's average has slipped to 8.4 points per game. The emergence of new players such as freshman Alec Burks (16.6 ppg and 5.1 rpg) and junior Marcus Relphorde (24 points on 8-of-13 shooting against Texas) has affected his playing time. After a road loss at rival Colorado State, Bzdelik moved Thorne to his current sixth man role.



CU's Dwight Thorne II guards Aaron Bruce in the second half against Baylor on Feb. 27, 2008. The Buffs couldn't overcome their slow start and lost 68-57. (CU Independent file/ Morgan Hofmann)

“Coach told me he wanted me to come off the bench and add more spark (to the team),” Thorne said. “I’m fine with it but I haven’t fit my role to the best of my ability. I still have to shoot better (from the outside) and play good defense to be that spark for this team.”

Although Thorne may not be totally pleased with his own performance, his coach appreciates the personal sacrifices Thorne is making to make the team better.

“It’s a great testimony to his character to come in off the bench and perform like he has,” Bzdelik said. “He’s accepted it well. It’s a credit to who he is as a person, he’s about the team. As a senior, I know what to expect from him, and he’s given us a big lift.”

A Texas native himself, Thorne got plenty of exposure to the big basketball programs in the state when he was being recruited.

TCU, Texas Tech and Texas A&M all showed interest in the 6-foot-3 guard from Arlington, but it was former CU coach Ricardo Patton who ultimately reeled in Thorne to come to Boulder. Baylor was one of the few schools in the region who didn’t seek Thorne, and the reason had nothing to do with Thorne’s play in high school.

Baylor signed guard Tweety Carter, who is the all-time scoring leader in the history of American high school basketball. Carter, a senior, also happened to be in Thorne’s recruiting class.

“So they probably didn’t need me,” Thorne said. “But Tweety’s my friend, my buddy. We’ve played against each other and I’m looking forward to playing him again.”

Thorne will get his chance to guard Carter, who’s averaging 16.5 ppg, including three straight 27-point outbursts during the Bears’ nonconference slate.

Whether Thorne and company reach the ultimate goal of postseason play starts with this game, and what better springboard for a Cinderella run than a victory over a Top 25 opponent in front of a home crowd.

When asked how much that goal meant to him and the Colorado program, Thorne mentioned his cousin, former Texas A&M guard and current NBA player Acie Law IV.

“He played in the tourney a few times and he said there’s nothing like it, it would be a dream come true,” Thorne said. “You watch your favorite players growing up, you watch your favorite teams, you want to be a part of college basketball, and when you get there, you want to win a national championship. So if we get there, anything is possible.”

Contact CU Independent Staff Writer David Starcer at David.starcerc@colorado.edu.

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Colorado vs. Baylor

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TIME: 09:00 P.M. EST

Baylor ended a lengthy losing streak against one Big 12 rival, but that game was at home. Winning on the road, however, is what will most likely determine success in the conference this season.

The No. 22 Bears look for a 10th straight victory Tuesday night as they try to hand Colorado its first home loss of the season.

Baylor (13-1, 1-0) ended a 30-game slide to Oklahoma with a 91-60 victory Saturday before moving into the Top 25 for the first time this season Monday. The Bears were ranked for seven weeks last season from Dec. 1-Jan. 12.

LaceDarius Dunn scored 23 of his 28 points in the second half and Tweety Carter added 18 and 10 assists for the Bears, who celebrated the historic victory before quickly looking ahead to this road trip.

"We have to enjoy this one, but we also have to get prepared for Colorado," Carter said. "Like I said the other day we take one game at a time and we took care of this one. We have to get prepared for Colorado."

With nearly every team in the Big 12 unbeaten at home, road victories look like they will come at a premium. Colorado (9-6, 0-1) has won its eight home games by an average of 17.6 points, although none have been against ranked teams.

Baylor has won three straight regular-season meetings with Colorado, including a 75-57 victory last season. The Bears, though, are 1-6 all-time at the Coors Event Center.

Another big second half from Dunn would help Baylor's cause. After shooting 34.8 percent in his previous nine games and making 2 of 7 shots in the first half Saturday, the junior guard bounced back to make 7 of 9 after the break.

"I went into halftime with five points and came out second half and did a good job of taking good shot and making them," Dunn said. "And my teammates did a great job getting me the ball."

Baylor is riding its longest win streak since opening 12-0 in 2000-01 thanks in part to its defense, which is limiting opponents to 35.3 percent shooting in that span.

"Again I think all year long we have had great balance and the most balance comes on the defensive end," coach Scott Drew said.

That defense will be tested by a Colorado team coming off a strong shooting effort in defeat. The Buffaloes lost 103-86 at then-No. 2 Texas on Saturday despite shooting 53.6 percent.

Colorado was undone by a 39-23 rebounding disadvantage and 15 turnovers.

"We never were able to finish possessions by grabbing a defensive rebound and gave them some easy points off some bad turnovers," coach Jeff Bzdelik said. "But offensively, if we didn't turn it over we were able to find ways to score."

Marcus Relphorde scored a team-high 24 points, but was one of four Colorado players to foul out in the Buffaloes' 12th straight Big 12 loss.

"I think we let up a little bit with our physicality," Relphorde said. "It was tough, but we will learn from it and take it into the rest of our Big 12 games."

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Big 12

Team	Conf. W-L	Tot. W-L
Kansas	15-1	33-3
Kansas St.	11-5	29-8
Baylor	11-5	28-8
Texas A&M	11-5	24-10
Missouri	10-6	23-11
Texas	9-7	24-10
Oklahoma St.	9-7	22-11
Colorado	6-10	15-16
Texas Tech	4-12	19-16
Iowa St.	4-12	15-17
Oklahoma	4-12	13-18
Nebraska	2-14	15-18

[Expanded Standings](#)

Key Players



LaceDarius
Dunn G, BAY

30.9

18.4

2.3

3.9

41.1

40.2

81.5

Min. Per Game

Pts. Per Game

Ast. Per Game

Reb. Per Game

Field Goal %

Three Point %

Free Throw %

32.4

18.2

2.7

3.3

50

39.1

85.9



Cory
Higgins G, CO

Head to Head



Baylor Bears
13-1



Colorado Buffaloes
9-6

SCORING

79.6	Points/Game	77.1
49.9	Field Goal %	48.9
65.3	Free Throw %	78.1
40.6	Three Point %	38.4

DEFENSE

46.3	Rebounds/Game	31.7
6.1	Steals/Game	8.5
7.9	Blocks/Game	2.7

Other Games

NCST	88	Final	TXAM	65	Final	OHST	70	Final
FSU	81		KSST	88		PUR	66	
KY	89	Final						
FLA	77							

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