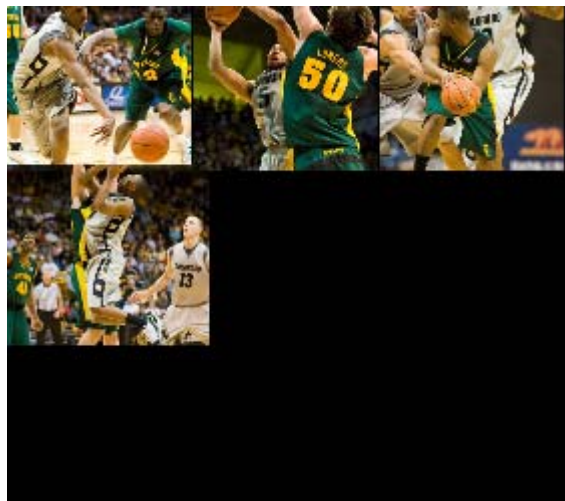


CU Buffs protect home court against No. 22 Baylor

Bzdelik's squad improves to 9-0 at Coors Events Center

By **Ryan Thorburn** Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 01/12/2010 09:14:46 PM MST



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As non-conference play was coming to a close, Jeff Bzdelik described his third Colorado team as "mild."

Synonyms for the adjective include: calm, unemotional and weak.

The rugged Big 12 has changed the suddenly fierce, passionate and relentless Buffs.

CU improved to 9-0 at home for the first time in 27 years and beat a ranked opponent for the first time in three years with an impressive 78-71 upset over No. 22 Baylor on Tuesday night in front of a raucous crowd of 6,957 at the Coors Events Center.

"It was much different than previous years playing up here," Bears coach Scott Drew observed after his team's impressive nine-game win streak ended. "There is a reason they are undefeated at home."

The crowd certainly helped.

But as Bzdelik noted: "You still have to play well."

And the Buffs (10-6, 1-1) were as intense defensively and as balanced offensively as they've been all season.

The Bears (13-2, 1-1) shot 47.3 percent from the field but turned the ball over 18 times, which led to 21 CU points. Five different players scored in double figures for the Buffs, who shot 61.5 percent in the second half and turned the ball over only five times in the game.

"I think we've been building more and more confidence from the non-conference season and at Texas," Cory Higgins said after scoring 16 of his team-high 18 points in the second half. "We know we can play with anybody. Unlike in the past, we expect to win these games this year."

CU flew home from Austin with more swagger, despite losing 103-86 at Texas. The Longhorns (15-0) moved up to No. 1 in the polls this week.

"This was a very important game because we had a great crowd and were playing a ranked opponent," Bzdelik said. "We played well at Texas. Against the No. 1 team in the nation we shot 54 percent from the floor and put down 86 points. We just couldn't stop them. But they're really good ... they probably had three first-round picks when you look at the first three names in the box score."

Baylor also has plenty of talent, which is why Mark Warkentien, the Denver Nuggets vice president of basketball operations, watched the game from press row.

After the Buffs built a 21-14 lead, LaceDarius Dunn put on a shooting clinic, knocking down three shots from behind the arc during an 11-0 run by the Bears. The junior shooting guard finished with 23 points before fouling out in the final minute.

"We dived on a couple of those screens in the first half and (Dunn) got on a roll," Marcus Relphorde said. "We had to

toughen up on defense and fight through those screens."

Baylor -- a team that had won road games at Arizona State, Arkansas and South Carolina during non-conference play -- led 32-27 at the intermission thanks to an 18-6 run over the final eight minutes of the half.

Ekpe Udoh, the reigning Big 12 player of the week, finished with 14 points, 14 rebounds and two blocks. Tweety Carter had 13 points and seven assists. And 7-footer Josh Lomers threw down some easy dunks en route to 10 points for the Bears.

But unlike last season -- when Higgins did all of the heavy lifting -- Bzdelik had pieces to counter with all over the court.

Relphorde was very aggressive on both ends of the court, finishing with 17 points and seven rebounds. The junior's 3-pointer with 2:38 remaining was the dagger, giving the home team a 64-55 cushion.

Unflappable freshman Alec Burks chipped in with his standard 16 points and six boards. And point guards Nate Tomlinson and Dwight Thorne combined for 21 points on 6-for-11 shooting with six assists and no turnovers.

"I don't think we're mild anymore," Higgins said. "It's a whole different team and we have a whole different swagger than in years past."

Colorado 78, Baylor 71

BAYLOR

FG FT Reb

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

Udoh 40 5-9 3-4 6-14 5 4 14

Jones 30 0-3 0-0 0-6 1 0 0

Lomers 21 4-5 2-3 1-4 0 3 10

Dunn 38 7-16 4-4 2-6 0 5 23

Carter 39 5-16 0-0 0-1 7 1 13

Ellis 2 1-1 0-1 2-2 0 1 2

Acy 17 4-5 1-3 2-2 1 3 9

Dennis 3 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 3 0

Walton 10 0-0 0-0 0-1 0 3 0

Totals 200 26-55 10-15 15-38 14 23 71

Percentages: FG .473, FT .667.

3-Point Goals: 9-22, .409 (Dunn 5-10, Carter 3-8, Udoh 1-2, Jones 0-2).

Team Rebounds: 2.

Blocked Shots: 5 (Lomers 2, Udoh 2, Dunn).

Turnovers: 18 (Dunn 4, Udoh 4, Lomers 3, Carter 3, Acy 2, Jones, Walton).

Steals: 2 (Dunn 2).

Technical Fouls: None.

COLORADO

FG FT Reb

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

H-Tunks 23 2-5 0-2 0-0 1 1 4

Tmlinsn 31 3-6 3-4 0-1 4 3 11

Rlphrde 34 6-12 3-6 3-7 2 2 17

Burks 32 5-11 5-7 3-6 2 2 16

CHggns 31 6-11 6-8 1-4 3 4 18

Thorne II 23 3-5 3-4 0-5 2 0 10

Dufault 11 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 1 0

Hrnbackle 5 1-1 0-0 0-0 0 1 2

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

Totals 200 26-52 20-31 8-25 15 17 78

Percentages: FG .500, FT .645.

3-Point Goals: 6-13, .462 (Relphorde 2-4, Tomlinson 2-4, Thorne II 1-1, Burks 1-2, [C.Higgins](#) 0-2).

Team Rebounds: 2.

Blocked Shots: 0.

Turnovers: 5 ([C.Higgins](#) 2, Burks, Hornbuckle, Dufault).

Steals: 9 ([C.Higgins](#) 2, Tomlinson 2, Harris-Tunks 2, Burks, Relphorde, Thorne II).

Technical Fouls: None.

Baylor 32 39--71

Colorado 27 51--78

A -- 6,957.

Officials -- Rick Hartzell, Kerry Sitton, Kipp Kissinger.

Woelk: Win over BU a big step for CU Buffs

Neill Woelk Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 01/12/2010 11:56:36 PM MST



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Marcus Relphorde swears there was never a doubt Tuesday night -- not even for a program whose tradition has far too often been to lose the close ones, not even for a program whose record for each of the last three years has included at least 20 losses.

Relphorde, a junior transfer at Colorado, isn't interested in CU's history. Relphorde doesn't care what happened last year or the year before.

Relphorde is interested in the here and now -- and right now, the Buffs are basking in the glow of a 78-71 win over No. 22 Baylor. Right now, the Buffs aren't in last place in the Big 12 Conference, where just about everyone picked them to finish when the season began.

Right now, the Buffs are anxious to prove Tuesday night wasn't a fluke.

"I came from a program where I wasn't used to losing," said Relphorde, who scored 17 points, grabbed a team-high seven rebounds and added a pair of assists in Tuesday's win. "We've got a lot of new guys who are the same way. When it gets down to crunch time, we think we've got the mental toughness to win it.

"And the guys who were here before? They're tired of it. There might have been a time when this team would have panicked, but that's not us. Not anymore."

Actually, that "time" wasn't so long ago. Early in theseason, the Buffs let the chance for big wins against Gonzaga and Arizona slip away down the stretch. They did the same at Oregon State.

The ability -- the confidence -- to seal the deal just wasn't there.

But Tuesday, with a raucous crowd of 6,957 squarely in their corner, the Buffs didn't let the Bears off the hook. Not when the Bears took a one-point lead with just more than seven minutes left. Not when some missed CU free throws and big BU 3-pointers in the final minutes threatened to puncture the Buffs' bubble.

Not this time.

Instead, the Buffs made plays when they absolutely, positively had to have them. Two free throws from freshman Alec Burks with 1:14 left to bump CU's lead to nine. A huge steal by senior Dwight Thorne with just 30 ticks on the clock when Baylor had cut the lead to six. And when most needed, some key rebounds when Baylor finally missed in the waning seconds.

"Someone's got to step up internally (in those situations)," Buff coach Jeff Bzdelik said. "I saw that in our team today."

Certainly one win does not make a season. But this one -- Bzdelik's first over a ranked team at CU -- is the kind that can only build confidence. It's the kind that somewhere down the road, you might look back on and designate a "breakthrough moment."

It's also the kind that will no doubt turn heads around the conference when coaches and players check the scores this morning.

"We're not worried about getting respect," said Buff Cory Higgins. "Nobody's going to give us respect. We have to take it."

If the Buffs play the way they did Tuesday, they'll have their chances. Five players in double figures, led by 18 from Higgins. Only five turnovers for the entire game while recording nine steals. And while the 38-25 Baylor edge in rebounding doesn't look good on paper, the Buffs actually competed on the boards.

And the biggest factor -- one that won't show up in the box score -- is the outstanding coaching job by Bzdelik.

The Buffs were ready for everything the Bears did. Offensively, CU patiently attacked Baylor's zone, a task none too easy given the Bears' 6-10, 6-10, 7-0 front line. Defensively, they hounded and harassed Baylor's front court while doing their best to deny entry passes into the Bears' big men. Final tally: 18 Baylor turnovers.

And, Bzdelik's tactic of rotating his "big men" (a relative term) to keep them fresh paid off. CU sophomore Trey Eckloff's line will show just one assist for his 10 minutes of play, but his defensive work in the first half played a big role in helping keep the Bears in check.

Yes, there were lapses. Baylor erased a 7-point CU lead in the first half in what seemed like seconds when LaceDarius Dunn broke free on three straight trips down the floor for 3-pointers. Baylor's big men did get their share of points and rebounds (6-10 Epke Udoh finished with 14 points and 14 rebounds).

But often enough, the Buffs were a step ahead of the Bears.

Asked if it was a "milestone win" for his program, Bzdelik answered with a faint grin: "We need more milestones."

Indeed. Next up for the Buffs is a Saturday home date with No. 12 Kansas State, a team fresh off an 88-65 dismantling of Texas A&M on Tuesday.

"I feel like we finally broke through that door," Higgins said. "Unlike past years, we expect to win these games."

Yep, Tuesday's win was indeed just one game in a season. One game in a season that still has 14 remaining in maybe the toughest conference in the nation.

But for these Buffs, who needed something -- anything -- to show as a reward for their work, it was at least a statement that they like their chances.

Even if nobody else does.

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Balance key to CU Buffs` success

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 01/12/2010 11:52:16 PM MST



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five rebounds) and others thriving in their roles.

Alec Burks watched the Buffs from afar last season.

The freshman from Grandview, Mo., believed Colorado -- despite suffering through a third consecutive 20-loss season and a 1-15 record in Big 12 play -- was getting closer to becoming a good program.

He figured: Cory Higgins just needed some help.

And that's exactly what No. 11 received during CU's 78-71 victory over No. 22 Baylor on Tuesday night at the Coors Events Center.

Per usual, Higgins led the Buffs with 18 points and Burks chipped in with 16.

The difference was Marcus Relphorde (17 points, seven rebounds) continuing to raise his level of play, and Nate Tomlinson (11 points, four assists), Dwight Thorne (10 points,

"We have so many weapons," Burks said while sitting next to Higgins at a postgame press conference. "They can't stop all of us, as opposed to last year when it was my man right here just going to work every night. We're a lot more balanced."

CU improved to 7-0 this season when four starters score in double figures. This was the third game this season where the Buffs had five players score in double figures (Arkansas-Pine Bluff and Cal State Northridge).

The Buffs will need another balanced effort on Saturday against No. 13 Kansas State, the only other Big 12 program that recruited Burks heavily.

Rebounding woes continue

Despite the balanced scoring, the Buffs still struggled on the glass as Baylor out-rebounded them 38-25.

Shane Harris-Tunks, a 6-11 forward, started for the second consecutive game to help CU match up better in the paint size-wise with Baylor's front line of Ekpe Udoh (6-10), Anthony Jones (6-10) and Josh Lomers (7-0).

The freshman from Australia only mustered four points and did not grab a rebound in 23 minutes. Trey Eckloff didn't score or grab a rebound in 10 minutes.

Austin Dufault, who had one point and no rebounds against Texas on Saturday before fouling out in nine minutes of action, didn't score or grab a rebound against the Bears.

Milestone win

Colorado snapped a nine-game losing streak against ranked opponents dating back to an 84-75 victory over No. 18 Oklahoma State on Feb. 17, 2007 in Boulder.

"We need more milestones," Bzdelik said.

Series

CU leads the all-time series with Baylor 15-8, including an 8-2 mark in Boulder. Bzdelik's Buffs also upset the Bears in double overtime at the 2008 Big 12 Tournament.

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cu basketball

Bzdelik proud of Buffs after upset of Bears

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 01/13/2010 01:00:00 AM MST

BOULDER — Whether the 78-71 victory Tuesday night over 22nd-ranked Baylor becomes a turning point in the Colorado men's basketball program remains to be seen.

It's much, much too early to predict any significance, CU coach Jeff Bzdelik said, pointing out that No. 13 Kansas State comes to town Saturday. And he still needs to recruit a big man.

"It's a milestone," Bzdelik said. "We need more milestones."

Never mind, he said, that this was the first win over a ranked opponent during his three seasons in Boulder. He felt more elation for his players.

As much as anything, it was an important victory from a psychological standpoint, Bzdelik explained. "To get rewarded with a great win for the effort our

players are giving, that's huge," he said. "I'm so happy for them. (Losing) has been tough on

CU Basketball

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[Visit Tom Kensler's All Things Buffs blog for a behind-the-scenes look at CU sports.](#)

everybody."

Battling a substantial size disadvantage against Baylor's front line of 7-feet, 6-10 and 6-10, Colorado (10-6, 1-1 Big 12) trailed 32-27 at halftime. But the Buffs, inspired by courageous drives down the lane by Cory Higgins and Marcus Relphorde, began to get a bounce in their step. They started beating Baylor down the court and began to chip away.

Two free throws by Higgins completed a 16-5 run that put the hosts up 59-51. Then a 3-pointer by Relphorde and a hanging bank shot by Higgins made it 66-56 with 2:06 to play.

Finally showing some nerves, Colorado converted

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THE DENVER POST

only 5-of-10 free throws during the final 51 seconds, but that was enough. A season-best crowd of 6,957 roared in approval.

Five CU players scored in double figures, led by Higgins (18 points), Relphorde (17) and freshman guard Alec Burks (16). CU improved to 9-0 at home.

Colorado managed just one Big 12 Conference victory last season. This score no doubt will raise eyebrows around the league. CU may not yet be back. But the Buffs no longer figure to be pushovers, at least in the Coors Events Center.

In the face of all that pressure, and against an athletic, long-armed opponent, the Buffs committed just five turnovers — a season low. At the other end, CU helped to force 18 Baylor turnovers.

"It's huge for our confidence," said Higgins, a junior guard.

Baylor (13-2, 1-1) was coming off a big win — a 91-60 thrashing of Oklahoma on Saturday in Waco, Texas, that snapped a 30-game losing streak to the Sooners. But CU shot 61.5 percent after halftime and never blinked.

"You really have to give Colorado credit," Baylor coach Scott Drew said. "They made the shots in the second half, and some of them were tough shots. I'd rather lose to a team that plays well."

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Home of upsets

Colorado beat a top-25 team for the first time in nearly three years. A look at CU's last five victories over ranked opponents:

Jan. 12, 2010: 78-71 over No. 22 Baylor, at Boulder

Feb. 3, 2007: 89-77 over No. 12 Oklahoma State, at Boulder

Feb. 15, 2006: 84-75 over No. 18 Oklahoma, at Boulder

Feb. 8, 2005: 88-79 over No. 23 Texas, at Boulder

Feb. 18, 2004: 85-75 over No. 22 Texas Tech, at Boulder

Source: CU sports information

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mark kizsla

Kiszla: Buffaloes have right to beam

By Mark Kizsla
The Denver Post

Posted: 01/13/2010 01:00:00 AM MST

Updated: 01/13/2010 11:25:04 AM MST



Colorado guards Cory Higgins, left, and Marcus Relphord celebrate as Colorado pulls ahead of Baylor in the second half of Colorado's 78-71 victory in an NCAA college basketball game in Boulder, Colo., on Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2010. (AP | David Zalubowski)

BOULDER — After leading the Buffs to an upset of a na time in nearly three years, CU stars Cory Higgins and Al victory lap, exchanging high-fives with students as the s Colorado 78, Baylor 71.

And coach Jeff Bzdelik allowed himself what looked sus one of the most impossible basketball jobs in the country

But this felt like bona fide progress.

More important, it felt like genuine fun.

The Buffaloes needed this win to keep the faith.

"Doubt can creep in. There's no question. I mean, we're "It takes a lot of will to not let people challenge your conf some point you need to get rewarded."

Bzdelik radiated so much intensity that when a charging out a basket during the first half, the coach went all incre ripping his sport coat off in protest.

"In every race, if you talk to track and field athletes, ther careful how I say this . . . there's that give a you-know-w factor," said Bzdelik, who challenged the Buffaloes durin "Whose will is greater?"

The best player on the floor was Burks, whose 16 points story of the statement of physical superiority this 6-foot-6 against a tall, rugged Baylor team.

Legitimate NBA talent is not frequently seen making itse the Front Range. Burks, however, can do more than dre LeBron James and Kobe Bryant.

"I don't believe in pressure," Burks said.

And how often do you hear a CU basketball player spea

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Buffs' 'swagger' bests Baylor

CU's 'mild' gets wild with boost from crowd

By Patrick Ridgell

© 2010 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Late Tuesday, Colorado men's basketball players were urging on the crowd at the Coors Events Center as the Buffs battled Baylor.

And for a change, the Buffs actually had a decent crowd worth urging on.

That was one of several unusual sights witnessed Tuesday night.

The main one was CU's 78-71 defeat of No. 22 Baylor, its first win over a ranked team in its past 10 tries, since it beat No. 18 Oklahoma State in February 2007.

Everyone in the Big 12 is winning at home these days, as the league's 114-1 home record in 2009-10 attests. So the Buffs are more or less just keeping up with the Joneses by improving to 9-0 in Boulder.

But CU (10-6, 1-1 Big 12) overcame a halftime deficit. It enjoyed what players called a big and valuable home-court advantage provided by a healthy student section and a season-high 6,957 fans. And late, when Baylor (13-2, 1-1) tried desperately to come back, officials had to separate players from both teams as they jawed on the court.

Remember, a week ago, CU coach Jeff Bzdelik called his team "mild."

"Someone's got to step up internally, and I saw that in some players," Bzdelik said. "I saw that in them today."

This was big for the Buffs. So big that upon the game's conclusion, the team's lone senior, Dwight Thorne, and the coach grabbed a microphone to thank the students for attending and cheering, and invite them to return Saturday, when No. 13 Kansas State will visit (2 p.m., Altitude).

Asked if this win represented a milestone, Bzdelik said, "We need more milestones. This was a very important game because we had a great crowd and, yes, we were playing a ranked opponent."

CU's Cory Higgins, who scored 16 of his team-best 18 in the second half, said he didn't know what sparked the mid-court arguing.

"It was just people talking back and forth, getting heated," Higgins said.



Colorado guard Marcus Relphorde, left, chases down a loose ball in front of Baylor guard LaceDarius Dunn on Tuesday in Boulder. The Buffs beat the No. 22 Bears 78-71.
David Zalubowski/AP

COLORADO 78, BAYLOR 71

BAYLOR (13-2, 1-1)

Udoh 5-9 3-4 14, Jones 0-3 0-0 0, Lomers 4-5 2-3 10, Dunn 7-16 4-4 23, Carter 5-16 0-0 13, Ellis 1-1 0-0 2, Acy 4-5 1-3 9, Dennis 0-0 0-0 0, Walton 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 26-55 10-15 71.

COLORADO (10-6, 1-1)

Harris-Tunks 2-5 0-2 4, Tomlinson 3-6 3-4 11, Relphorde 6-12 3-6 17, Burks 5-11 5-7 16, Higgins 6-11 6-8 18, Thorne 3-5 3-4 10, Dufault 0-0 0-0 0, Hornbuckle 1-1 0-0 2, Eckloff 0-1 0-0 0. Total 26-52 20-31 78.

Halftime—Baylor 32-27.

3-point goals—Baylor 9-22 (Dunn 5-10, Carter 3-8, Udoh 1-2, Jones 0-2); CU 6-13 (Tomlinson 2-4, Relphorde 2-4, Burks 1-2, Thorne 1-1, Higgins 0-2). **Fouled out**—Dunn (B).

Rebounds—Baylor 38 (Udoh 14);

"I don't think we're mild anymore. It's a whole different team. We have a whole different swagger on this team than in years past."

CU 25 (Relphorde 7). Assists —Baylor 14 (Carter 7); CU 15 (Tomlinson 4). Total fouls —Baylor 23; CU 17. Technical s—none. A —6,957
--

That swagger turned into a bit of a limp late in the first half when Baylor closed with an 18-6 run to take a 32-27 lead at the break. The Buffs tied it at 38 early in the second, but their key surge was a 9-0 run that turned a 51-50 deficit into a 59-51 lead with 5 minutes, 15 seconds to play. CU forced three turnovers on it, and Higgins scored four of the nine points.

CU built the lead to 10 late, but missed four consecutive free throws in the final 50 seconds to give Baylor hope. The Bears lost 3-point shooter LaceDarius Dunn (23 points) to fouls with 50 seconds to go, and could not close to fewer than six despite CU's struggles.

The Buffs outscored Baylor 51-39 in the second half. They shot 61.5 percent from the field after halftime to finish at 50 percent. Baylor played a zone defense much of the night. The Buffs committed a season-low five turnovers, and four starters scored in double figures.

"One thing we have to do is credit Colorado, because at the end of the day, they are the ones that made shots," Baylor coach Scott Drew said. "When you shoot 62 percent from the field and then 57 percent (on 3s), you will be tough to beat.

"This Colorado team, we held them to 50 percent, and they shot 54 percent at Texas (on Saturday), so this is a good team. ... I think this was Colorado's largest crowd, and they did a great job — it was much different than previous years playing up here. There is a reason they are undefeated at home."

Bzdelik said he gathered his team during a timeout in the second half and asked his players, "Whose will is greater?"

He stressed the boost this win can provide to a team that's lost more than its share of close games during his three-year tenure, but added, "This just can't be a one-time thing."

It appears he and his players are on the same page with that one.

"We've had a lot of these close games; to see us pull away at the end and pull it out gives us confidence," Higgins said.

"(Gaining respect) does not matter to us. Nobody wants to give us respect anyway. We have to take it. I don't care if they give us respect or not."

TIP-INS: A few NBA scouts attended, including Mark Warkentien, the Nuggets' vice president of basketball operations, and Bret Bearup, a Nuggets adviser. ... Baylor's Epke Udoh had 14 points, 14 rebounds and two blocks. ... CU hadn't won a game when trailing at halftime in 2009-10. ... CU is 9-3 when it exceeds 70 points.

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Bufs bear down

CU hands Bzdelik first win over ranked opponent

By David Starcer on January 13, 2010

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The original version of this story incorrectly stated that CU head coach Jeff Bzdelik has held his position for three-plus years. Bzdelik was named CU head men's basketball coach on April 4, 2007, which is less than three years ago. The original version also stated that Baylor's LaceDarius Dunn scored 11 straight points in the first half to give Baylor a 5-point halftime lead. In actuality, Dunn scored 12 consecutive. Furthermore, the Buffs are fourth in the nation in free-throw shooting, not second as originally stated. 1/13/10; 09:23

Once again, home cooking was just what the Colorado Buffaloes men's basketball team needed.

By the time the final buzzer rang, five players had scored in double figures as the Buffs knocked off the No. 22 Baylor Bears 78-71 Tuesday in front of a season-high 6,957 spectators at the Coors Event Center.

Prior to the matchup, the Buffs' 8-0 home record this season may have been the only thing going in the team's favor. They remain perfect at home, now 9-0, and their last four home wins have followed road losses. CU lost to then-No. 2 Texas 103-86 Saturday.

With the win, the Buffs improve to 10-6 overall and 1-1 in the Big 12 Conference. The loss was only the second of the year for Baylor (13-2), who is also 1-1 in the Big 12.

Junior Cory Higgins led the Buffs with 18 points, but received help from his usual cohorts. Freshman Alec Burks had 16 points, Nate Tomlinson added 11 and Dwight Thorne II scored 10.

Thorne played stellar defense as head coach Jeff Bzdelik matched him up with Baylor's Tweety Carter, a long-time rival and friend of Thorne's from his high school days in Texas. Thorne held Carter to 13 points.

After a disappointing start to his first year as a Buffalo, junior forward Marcus Relphorde followed up a 24-point performance at Texas with his second straight offensive outburst, scoring 17 points to go along with a team-high seven rebounds. Relphorde said his approach was to get to the foul line with strong drives to the basket instead of settling for jump shots.



Junior guard Cory Higgins goes in for a layup during Tuesday's basketball game against Baylor. Higgins scored 18 points to lead the Buffs to a 78-71 victory. (CU Independent/Sara Fossum)

“The strategy was to be more aggressive because they have a lot of shot-blockers,” Relphorde said. “So if we could drive and kick it or drive it in, that was the game-plan.”

Bzdelik, who notched his first victory over a ranked opponent in his third season in Boulder, said he is excited to finally see what he expected out of Relphorde, a junior college transfer from Indian Hills Community College in Iowa.

“Marcus has had five different coaches in five years,” Bzdelik said. “That’s difficult on anybody to understand their role. For him to finally understand what we expect out of him and how he fits has made him more instinctive and less robotic.”

The Buffs led by as much as seven with 8:50 to go in the first half, but the Bears’ LaceDarius Dunn scored 12 straight points including three consecutive 3-pointers to give Baylor a 32-27 lead at the half.

The Buffs showed some much-needed grit and came out strong to start the second half, tying the game at 40. Later, Thorne’s jumper gave CU a 52-51 advantage, a lead the Buffs wouldn’t relinquish for the final 6:50.

Free-throw shooting, an Achilles heel in years past for Colorado, was as stellar as it has been all season (the team is currently fourth in the nation in team free-throw percentage), especially in the final few minutes. The Buffs scored their last 12 points from the charity stripe.

Baylor cut CU’s lead from 10 down to six at 74-68 after a couple of 3-pointers by Carter, but that’s as close as the Bears got. Dunn led Baylor in scoring with 23 points, but his threat as a long-range shooter was neutralized when he fouled out in the final minute.

CU’s victory was the second game of a brutal three-game stretch for the Buffaloes as they start conference play. The Buffs now face No. 13 Kansas State in Boulder this Saturday at 2 p.m. to complete the trifecta.

But after the fans helped spur the Buffs to their impressive victory, the players are confident the milestone win is just the first of many to come.

“We had great fan support today,” Relphorde said. “It was crazy. If we could have that every game and feed off that, I think it will help us get a lot of wins this season.”

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

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Colorado upsets No. 22 Baylor, 78-71

12:19 AM CST on Wednesday, January 13, 2010

Associated Press

BOULDER, Colo. – Coach Jeff Bzdelik relished his Colorado team's breakthrough win against a ranked opponent, but also recognized it as just one more step in the development of his program.

"We need more milestones," said Bzdelik, in his third season as Colorado's coach.

With 18 points from Cory Higgins – 16 in the second half – Colorado upset No. 22 Baylor, 78-71, on Tuesday night, ending a nine-game losing streak against ranked teams.

Marcus Relphorde added 17 points and Alec Burks 16 for Colorado (10-6, 1-1 Big 12), which improved to 9-0 at home. The Buffaloes punctuated their best home start in 18 years with their first win over a ranked team since beating Oklahoma State on Feb. 15, 2007. The Cowboys were ranked 18th then.

Baylor (13-2, 1-1), which had a nine-game winning streak end, was led by LaceDarius Dunn's 23 points in its fourth loss in 24 games. Ekpe Udoh had 14 points, all in the second half.

"This game can be a great learning tool," Baylor coach Scott Drew said. "This was the first time we have had a close road game. There are a lot of things we can go forward with and improve upon."

Trailing by five at halftime, Colorado tied it at 38-38 when Relphorde hit a baseline jumper off a feed from Higgins.

Dunn made a 3-pointer to give Baylor a 51-50 lead with 7:25 left. Colorado answered with a 9-0 run.

Dunn's three-point play pulled Baylor to within 59-54 with 5:04 left before Colorado edged away again on Relphorde's 3-pointer.

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Coors Events Center - Attendance: 6957

[Box score](#)

[Game story](#)

Boulder, CO (Sports Network) - Cory Higgins scored 18 points, and the Colorado Buffaloes kept their home court success going with a 78-71 win over 22nd- ranked Baylor at Coors Events Center.

Marcus Relphorde added 17 points for the Buffaloes (10-6, 1-1 Big 12), who improved to a perfect 9-0 on their home floor this season. Alec Burks contributed with 16 points, while Nate Tomlinson had 11 in the win.

"It is a combination of the fans and playing well. Our players really competed and played well against a very good team in Baylor," Colorado head coach Jeff Bzdelik said.

LaceDarius Dunn tallied a game-high 23 points for the Bears (13-2, 1-1), who had won nine in a row to obtain their national ranking. Ekpe Udoh registered 14 points and 14 rebounds, and Tweety Carter had 13 points in defeat.

The Buffaloes trailed by five at halftime, and Udoh's dunk with 10 minutes to go in the game kept Baylor ahead, 46-43.

Colorado, though, put together a 16-5 run to surge in front. Dwight Thorne II hit a three-pointer to tie the game, and a Relphorde jumper later provided a 50-48 advantage with eight minutes to go.

Higgins capped the run with four straight points, as his two free throws with over five minutes left gave the hosts a 59-51 lead.

Baylor didn't get closer than five the rest of the way.

"You really have to give Colorado credit in that second half because we didn't play as good as we could defensively and they made the shots at the end of the day and some of them were tough shots," Baylor head coach Scott Drew said.

Colorado stormed out to a 21-14 lead in the first half, as a Relphorde three gave the Buffaloes a seven-point edge with eight minutes left on the clock.

Dunn, though, suddenly got hot from beyond the arc, as an 11-0 run put the Bears in front by four. Josh Lomers' layup got the run going, and Dunn hit from long range on each of the next three Baylor possessions for a 25-21 game.

The visitors led for the remainder of the half, and a Carter layup inside five seconds provided a 32-27 margin at the break.

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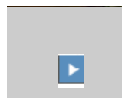
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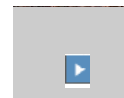
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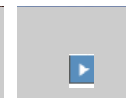
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Tough road: Big 12's teams combine to go 112-1 at home so far

Updated 1/12/2010 9:48 PM



By Denny Medley, US Presswire

Before losing on the road to Tennessee on Sunday, the then-No. 1 Kansas Jayhawks edged Cornell in Lawrence, Kan., to help the entire Big 12 keep a nearly perfect home record this season.

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Kansas State didn't stand much of a chance against [Missouri](#). Even with their best record in 61 years and their longest winning streak in a decade, the Wildcats were facing the most inhospitable place in college basketball.

Mizzou Arena? No. Anywhere on the road in the Big 12.

Living up to its billing as one of the nation's toughest conferences, the Big 12 has become the Big Nasty for road opponents, boasting a whopping 112-1 record at home through Monday.

Think of it as the 1985-86 [Boston Celtics](#) or the 1976-77 [Montreal Canadiens](#), only spread across 12 teams and seven states.

"It's mind-boggling," Colorado coach [Jeff Bzdelik](#) said.

TOP 25: [Texas takes over top spot; Kansas slides to No. 3](#)

Of the 13 largest conferences in Division I, only one has fewer than 15 combined losses and five have more than 20. The ACC is the nearest to the Big 12's home dominance and it's still 10 games behind in the loss column at 96-11.

The Big 12 has eight teams with home winning streaks of at least 11 games and the two longest in the nation: Kansas at 51, Missouri with 30. The entire conference has fewer home losses than seven teams in the Big East, six in the Pac-10, five in the Big Ten, four in the SEC.

The only Big 12 team to slip up through Monday's games? Iowa State, against Northern Iowa on Dec. 2. Northern Iowa's Ali Farokhmanesh hit a three-pointer with 36 seconds left and the defending Missouri Valley Conference regular season and tournament champions beat the Cyclones 63-60.

That's it. The rest are all W's.

"When you look at the home records, it's frightening," Texas A&M coach [Mark Turgeon](#) said.

OK, we know what you're thinking: The schedule is full of pushovers. It's true, to a certain degree. There's plenty of teams like Alcorn State, Farleigh Dickinson and Belmont for the Big 12 to beat up on.

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But mixed in with those walkovers are some tough home games.

No. 1 Texas beat Michigan State in Austin, while third-ranked Kansas beat both Michigan and California. Texas Tech won at home against Washington and Oregon State, Oklahoma beat Arkansas and Arizona in Norman. The list goes on — and has continued into conference.

Opening its season last Saturday, the Big 12 has held court, so to speak.

Missouri pulled off an impressive win at Mizzou Arena, beating Kansas State 74-68 to end the Wildcats' 10-game winning streak. Oklahoma State routed then-No. 22 Texas Tech, 81-52. Baylor ended a 30-game losing streak to Oklahoma that dated to 1977 with a 91-60 blowout. The Sooners bounced back from that loss to beat Oklahoma State 62-57 in overtime on Monday — at home, of course.

That pushed the Big 12's mark to .991, more like [Ozzie Smith's](#) fielding percentage than a winning percentage.

"That just shows what a great league we have," Baylor coach [Scott Drew](#) said. "Every place has always been tough to play, but this year it's been at a whole other level."

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