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Opinion: Foul Play

Just let the players play

By Brent Wilson New on January 18, 2010

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Instead of watching a men's basketball game between No. 12 Kansas State and Colorado, I watched the first ever symphony of whistles — in 3D!

For about three hours Saturday, I was lucky enough to witness 68 foul calls and 94 free-throw attempts — some poor basketball fans don't get to see that kind of return for days! I, on the other hand, got to see it in a 40 minute game. For all of you math wizards out there, that's 1.7 fouls per minute and more than one free-throw attempt every 30 seconds.

In all sincerity, if this is what Big 12 Conference officiating has come to, the conference heads better act fast. For a game that in no way allowed for a speck of athletics or contained an iota of intelligent officiating, the Big 12 will only take a hit from this.

Imagine if this was No. 3 Kansas vs. No. 1 Texas on national television, and you made millions of people sit through 68 fouls and 94 free throws. Who, then, would really respect the Big 12 as the elite conference this year?

After Saturday, I don't know if Colorado is really six points worse than K-State or 20 points better. All it proved in the end was who could stay conscious longer — I lost.

CU head coach Jeff Bzdelik said the pace of the game "started, stopped, sputtered."

Unfortunately for Colorado, they played better than their purple counterparts — except on the boards. I'm not going to lie, they could have been boxed-out by lint walls on Saturday. They were that bad.

When all was said and done, they lost the rebounding war nearly two-to-one, and junior guard Cory Higgins had six rebounds while all the forwards and centers (the taller players) combined for only seven.

However, to add to the laundry list of my preempted excuses, here's mine for the Buffs on Saturday: How do you tell your players to be more aggressive on the boards when cheap, touch and air fouls are handed out like car wash coupons?

By the end of the game, three Buffs had fouled out and four others were a foul away from being right beside

them.

Think of this, if three more players fouled out, the Buffs might have had to forfeit the game because they couldn't put five eligible players on the court.

Boy would that have made the Big 12 look good — NOT!

Junior forward Marcus Relphorde, who had to play limited minutes due to foul trouble, said the refs, "weren't really letting us play."

"I don't want to blame it on the refs," Relphorde said. "(But) we have played in more physical games than that."

Yeah, I don't want to blame them either (cough) ... (cough)?

But the past is the past I suppose, and we are looking forward. So here are three steps the refs need to take in order for this to never happen again:

1. Establish what is and is not a foul game-by-game to the players.

Tell them what you will and will not call specifically, and then stick to it. Let the viewers know too. Nobody likes to know their team's fate is determined by arbitrary calls.

2. Overreacting and flopping should be castigated.

If it is illegal to celebrate excessively in college sports, shouldn't it be illegal to jeopardize the integrity of the game by trying to cheat the system? The next player who terrifyingly crashes to the floor after he's been grazed by a jersey should be escorted into the locker room for medical treatment — think what a real bump would do to him?

3. Even the calls between blocking fouls and charging.

As much as we like to see mad men sprinting into the chests of defensive of players and being rewarded for it — let's keep the ridiculousness to a minimum.

After the game ended Saturday, Nuggets point guard and former CU player Chauncey Billups talked to the Buffs players in an effort to pass on some experience and wisdom to them.

Next time, hopefully he'll make a time for the officiating crew as well.

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