

Burks boasts aggressive style for CU Buffs

Colorado men could benefit from following suit

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 01/22/2010 12:06:04 AM MST

STILLWATER, Okla. -- Jeff Bzdelik challenged his upperclassmen to be better on-court leaders after Wednesday night's lackluster defensive effort here.

Colorado's coach was baffled by the Buffs' soft play during a 90-78 loss to Oklahoma State at Gallagher-Iba Arena.

But when it comes to playing on the road, perhaps the older statesmen should be following the lead of true freshman Alec Burks.

CU has dropped 31 consecutive Big 12 road games and its last 23 true road games against Division I competition.

Burks -- who led the Buffs with a career-high 24 points on 8-for-13 shooting against the Cowboys -- has been the bright spot on most of the dark nights spent away from Boulder this season.

"I'm a freshman," Burks said with a smile when asked if some of his veteran teammates could learn from his fearless play on the road. "I don't think people really listen to me like that."

On a night when OSU stars James Anderson (26 points, eight rebounds) and Marshall Moses (career-high 20 points, 18 rebounds) were allowed to do whatever they wanted, Burks was the only Buff who matched their aggressiveness.

And not just on the offensive end. The 6-6 guard also led CU with three steals and five rebounds.

"Alec is a warrior. He's a talented young player, which I think people can see," Bzdelik said. "He has an edge to him, in a positive way."

The Buffs need more of an edge, especially in the paint where they were out-scored 44-30 and out-rebounded 38-23 by the Pokes.

Just as Austin Dufault (10 points, five rebounds) started to get his groove back, reigning Big 12 rookie of the week Marcus Relphorde (four points, 2-for-9 shooting) went into hiding.

Oklahoma State shot 54.4 percent from the field, scored 14 points off 14 CU turnovers, and scored 17 points off nine offensive rebounds.

"Too many easy looks," Bzdelik said. "We gave them easy points off turnovers, we gave up easy points because we allowed deep low-post catches, we gave up easy looks because we didn't communicate on defense."

Burks leads all Big 12 freshmen in scoring (303 points) and is the only freshman in the country to score in double figures in every game (18 times) this season. He is also at his best during the worst of times for the rest of the Buffs:

In a 74-69 loss at Oregon State, Burks scored 19 points and was 7-for-13 shooting.

In a 77-62 loss at Colorado State, Burks scored 22 points and was 9-for-14 shooting.

In an 84-59 loss at Tulsa, Burks scored 17 points and led the team with eight rebounds.

In a 103-86 loss at Texas, Burks scored 21 points and led the team with six rebounds.

"I just stay aggressive," Burks said. "My mom told me to be aggressive in everything you do, so that's what I do."

Close Window

Send To Printer

- [News](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Speak Out!](#)
- [Multimedia](#)

- [Subscribe](#)

Fifth time is the charm

Relphorde and Boulder the right fit

By David Starcer on January 22, 2010

Share

0
tweets

Most college basketball players only need to make the necessary adjustments once when transitioning from high school.

tweet

For Colorado Buffaloes junior forward Marcus Relphorde, Boulder is the fifth stop in five years in his rollercoaster ride of a basketball career.

After starting out at Homewood-Flossmoor (Ill.) High School in the suburbs of his hometown of Chicago, Relphorde moved to American Christian (Pa.) School to play with former University of Memphis and current Sacramento Kings guard Tyreke Evans.

When the time for college came, Relphorde was recruited by Brad Soderberg and committed to Saint Louis University. However, a head coaching change brought in former Utah boss Rick Majerus. Relphorde never found his way into Majerus' rotation and averaged 4.3 minutes a game in 21 games with the Billikens.

Relphorde left Saint Louis after his freshman year and made his way to Indian Hills Community College in Iowa. Late in the season, he blossomed into the talent many thought he would be and averaged 14 points per game and scored in double figures in 12 of the team's last 13 games to help lead the team to a 30-3 record.

Needless to say, his play caught the eyes of several Division-I programs, including Colorado. In the end, Relphorde chose to be a Buffalo over TCU and Arkansas.

He said Boulder is a place he doesn't plan on leaving.

"I love it, man," Relphorde said. "I like Boulder a lot. So far, we've had great fan support and hopefully we can continue to build on it and get more of those wins."

After a rough start to his first season as a Buffalo, Relphorde has started to emerge as the third option on offense. In his first three Big 12 Conference games, Relphorde averaged 19.7 points and 5.0 rebounds and



Junior forward Marcus Relphorde makes his way down the court during the men's basketball game against Baylor at the Coors Events Center on Jan. 12. The Buffs beat Baylor 78-71. (CU Independent file/Sara Fossum)

was a major factor in the squad's upset of then No. 22 Baylor.

The man of many jerseys attributed his recent success to a newly-found comfort zone.

"Getting used to everything, learning the offense, knowing when to attack and when not to attack just so happened when we played these (Big 12) games," Relphorde said. "I knew I had to step up, but it's helped that I've been in a bunch of different systems and learning to adapt quick is something I've always had to do. This system helps me create match-up problems. Everything is just falling into place."

Relphorde's teammates say they hope he can continue his stellar play this weekend when they face a balanced Texas A&M team at 11:30 a.m. Saturday in College Station, Texas. The Aggies are 2-2 in Big 12 play and bounced back from a tough overtime loss at Texas with a big win over Oklahoma.

"They have an inside presence, good guard play, good shooters," senior guard Dwight Thorne II said. "They're a good all-around team."

"Donald Sloan is a good player, Bryan Davis is a good player. We have to come out and minimize their impact and make them work hard to beat us."

As for the team's well-documented road woes, the so-called "mental barrier" CU is trying to break is not as big a factor as some may think.

"You know, you should be able to win no matter where you play," head coach Jeff Bzdelik said. "I've always said I've never seen a fan come out of the stands to block a shot or grab a rebound."

As for Relphorde, his recent co-Big 12 Player of the Week accolade for games of Jan. 11-17 has validated his status as a big-time contributor for the team. If he can keep it that way, the Buffs could have a bright future to look forward to, maybe a future as near as this March.

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

Posted in [Front Page](#), [Sports](#) | Tagged [Men's Basketball](#)

Copyright © 2010 CU Independent