

CU Buff men in 'must-win' mode

Colorado looks to avoid falling into Big 12 basement

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COLLEGE STATION, Texas -- The Buffs were ready to turn the page after a hard-to-swallow 67-63 loss here on Saturday to Texas A&M at Reed Arena.

Colorado, now 10-9 overall and 1-4 in the Big 12, will host rival Nebraska on Wednesday at the Coors Events Center.

"That's a must-win game," Dwight Thorne said.

The Cornhuskers (12-7, 0-4) are currently at the bottom of the conference standings after a 70-53 loss at Missouri on Saturday. The Buffs don't want to join them in the basement after spending the past three seasons down there.

"It will be huge. I can't wait for it," Austin Dufault said. "We're definitely ready to win a big game in the Big 12. We'll definitely be ready for that one. Both teams are going to be pretty desperate."

Jeff Bzdelik's team continues to be consistently competitive in the Big 12 and had plenty of opportunities to upset Texas A&M and produce a rare road victory.

For whatever reason -- mostly rebounding -- the Buffs came up short in crunch time, just as they did against Kansas State a week earlier in an 87-81 home loss.

Saturday's bitter defeat was the program's 25th single-digit loss under Bzdelik.

"It's never going to be satisfying until we win," Bzdelik said when asked if he was encouraged by his team's effort in College Station. "We got them to miss shots, but we need to finish possessions defensively. It's not an excuse that we're not as big as these teams. We need to block off better and move people back and move our feet."

The Aggies (14-5, 3-2) were practically begging CU to steal the win. Mark Turgeon's team was a pathetic 2-for-23 from 3-point distance and 15-for-22 from the free throw line.

Texas A&M was also uncharacteristically sloppy with the ball, allowing the Buffs to score 23 points off 12 turnovers.

"They weren't really sure what (defense) we were in, and at times maybe we weren't sure what we were in," Thorne said. "We kept them off balance and that's what we wanted to do."

The Buffs played much better defensively than they did during a 90-78 loss at Oklahoma State in the previous game. Donald Sloan led Texas A&M with 18 points but was just 5-for-15 from the field.

CU was able to overcome a 10-point deficit late in the second half and tied the game 59-59 before the Aggies got the key basket on an offensive rebound and dunk by Bryan Davis. Texas A&M then iced the game with six free throws in the final 18 seconds.

"We put ourselves in a position to win, which is what we wanted to do. The effort was definitely there, but we had some positioning things that didn't go right at times. We have to tighten that up a little bit," Dufault said. "That's what we're trying to do this whole year is never give up. I think we might have done that a little bit against Oklahoma State. We stopped playing hard."

"Our team has to come out and play to the buzzer every game."

One of these days the Buffs are going to win a Big 12 road game. They play at Iowa State (12-7, 1-3) -- another team off to a shaky start -- next Saturday.

"We're going to break through," Cory Higgins said. "Nobody has their head down right now."

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