

## With eye on NIT bid, Buffs must get to .500

**CU men need victory today as regular season comes to end**

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

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NIT, tba.

That's how the remaining March practice schedule at the Coors Events Center reads entering today's regular-season finale between Colorado and Texas Tech (2 p.m., Altitude).

If the Buffs (14, 15, 5-10) can beat the fading Red Raiders (16-13, 4-11), who arrive in Boulder with a six-game losing streak, they will be the No. 8 seed at next week's Big 12 Tournament in Kansas City.

These two teams will play again at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday at the Sprint Center unless CU wins today and Oklahoma upsets Texas A&M, which would move the Sooners up to the No. 9 seed.

"It's always tough to play a team twice in a row and beat them both times," CU forward Marcus Relphorde said. "I think we can do it if we focus."

Before worrying about a rematch with Texas Tech, the Buffs need to do whatever it takes to get back to .500 and allow Dwight Thorne to walk off the floor a winner in his final home game at CU. The 6-1 guard from Arlington, Texas, is expected to be in the starting lineup again on Senior Day and will be honored along with walk-on classmate Trent Beckley, who has not played the past two seasons due to injury and health issues.

"I'm not a very emotional guy. We'll see," Thorne said on how he will react to the send off in front of his parents, friends and high school coach. "It means a lot to end my career on the highest note possible. Hopefully, (today) will be a good day."

The Buffs are coming off one of the best night's of the Jeff Bzdelik era as the team put an end to its brutal 36-game Big 12 road losing streak in style with an 81-68 thrashing of Nebraska in Lincoln on Tuesday. CU shot 61.9 percent from the field, 70.6 percent behind the 3-point arc and 73.9 percent at the line to keep its postseason hopes alive.

Casey Crawford has scored 30 points off the bench on 11-for-14 shooting (8-for-11 from 3-point distance) during this two-game winning streak.

"It just spreads the defense out when you have a big man that can shoot threes like that," Alec Burks said. "It helps me and Cory (Higgins) and Marcus (Relphorde) drive."

Burks and Higgins each scored 19 points against Nebraska while Relphorde added 12 points. The Buffs are 8-0 when at least four players score in double figures.

"I think we're still turning that corner. We've made a lot of big steps this year, but we still have to continue to grow," Higgins said. "We have to keep these last three weeks going. We won a close game last Saturday (against Iowa State), we won a road game, now we just have to be more consistent."

Burks can become CU's all-time freshman scoring leader with 17 points today. He has 464 points this season and trails Chauncey Billups (465 points, 2005-06) and Richard Roby (480, 2004-05) on the list.

The future looks bright for CU with only one senior saying good-bye today, but the team is focused on winning right now and making the NIT a reality instead of a possibility.

"We're maturing and understanding what it takes to win. They're growing up," Bzdelik said. "It's oozing out. We're playing a lot of young players. Everybody wants everything now, but it doesn't happen that way. ...

"The next step is just to continue winning."

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# CU men's preview vs. Texas Tech

Camera staff  
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 03/05/2010 11:57:54 PM MST

**TODAY** -- Colorado finishes the regular season against Texas Tech at 2 p.m. at the Coors Events Center.

**BROADCAST -- Television:** Altitude with Mitch Holthus (play-by-play) and Rich Zvosec (color); **Radio:** KVCU (1190 AM) with Mark Johnson (play-by-play) and Charles Johnson (color).

**STORYLINES** -- The Buffs (14-15, 5-10) snapped a 36-game Big 12 road losing streak with an 81-68 victory at Nebraska on Tuesday. ... Casey Crawford was 6-for-7 behind the arc with 20 points to lead CU, which shot 61.9 percent from the field and 70.6 percent from 3-point distance. ... Cory Higgins and Alec Burks each had 19 points. ... The Red Raiders (16-13, 4-11) are coming off an 86-68 home loss to Baylor. ... Mike Singletary led Texas Tech with 20 points before fouling out. ... Pat Knight's team, which cracked the national rankings during non-conference play, enters the regular-season finale on a six-game losing streak.

**KEY STAT** -- CU will clinch the No. 8 seed with a win and the No. 9 seed with a loss for next week's Big 12 Tournament. The Buffs will face Texas Tech again at the Big 12 Tournament in Kansas City unless they beat the Red Raiders and Oklahoma upsets Texas A&M. In that scenario CU would face the Sooners.

**KEY STAT II** -- Alec Burks can become CU's all-time freshman scoring leader with 17 points today. He has 464 points this season and trails Chauncey Billups (465 points, 2005-06) and Richard Roby (480, 2004-05).

**COACHES** -- Jeff Bzdelik is 34-57 in his third season at CU. Pat Knight is 30-32 in his second full season at Texas Tech.

## PROBABLE STARTERS:

**Colorado** -- G Dwight Thorne, 6-3, senior, 7.5 ppg, 2.1 rpg, G Alec Burks, 6-6, freshman, 16.6 ppg, 4.7 rpg, G Cory Higgins, 6-5, junior, 18.6 ppg, 3.9 rpg, G Marcus Relfhorde, 6-7, junior, 10.8 ppg, 4.1 rpg, F Austin Dufault, 6-9, sophomore, 5.8 ppg, 3.2 rpg.

**Texas Tech** -- G Nick Okorie, 6-1, senior, 10.0 ppg, 2.5 rpg, G John Roberson, 5-11, junior, 14.6 ppg, 2.1 rpg, F Mike Singletary, 6-6, junior, 14.7 ppg, 6.7 rpg, F Darko Cohadarevic, 6-9, senior, 7.0 ppg, 5.2 rpg, F D'walyne Roberts, 6-7, junior, 6.7 ppg, 5.5 rpg.

**SERIES** -- Colorado leads 16-12 but Texas Tech has won the previous four meetings.

**UP NEXT** -- Colorado will open the Big 12 Tournament against either Texas Tech or Oklahoma at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday at the Sprint Center (10:30 a.m., Altitude).

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MARCH 5, 2010, 2:51 PM

## Scouting report for CU vs. Tech: Two-on-two battle?

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

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It could come down to a case of two-on-two Saturday afternoon in Colorado's regular-season finale at the Coors Events Center.

Not exactly, of course. But both Colorado (14-15, 5-10) and Texas Tech (16-13, 4-11) rely heavily on two players. All four rank among the top 14 scorers in the Big 12 Conference.

For CU, of course it's junior guard Cory Higgins (18.6 points per game) and freshman guard Alec Burks (16.6).

For Tech, it's a pair of juniors: guard John Roberson (14.6) and forward Mike Singletary (14.7).

"We need our best players to play well," Tech coach Pat Knight said of Roberson and Singletary when the Red Raiders hit a slump.

They're quite capable. The 5-foot-11 Roberson already is Tech's career assists leader (465). Singletary, 6-6, has scored 20 or more points eight times this season.

"Roberson can give teams a lot of problems because he's small and he's so quick," CU coach Jeff Bzdelik said this week. "He had a big game against us here a couple of years ago as a freshman (20 points in an 87-69 Tech victory), so he can cause a lot of problems if we don't contain him.

"Singletary is a player that is very strong and very active," Bzdelik said. "He scores in a variety of ways. He has had some huge games."

Knight said Higgins and Burks may be as good a pair as there is in the Big 12. Considering that the Big 12 is the nation's top RPI league, that compliment speaks volumes. "They're going to be our focus," the coach said of Higgins and Burks.

Of course a third option on either team may rise up and be the key to the game. But chances are, the outcome will depend on whichever pair combines to score the most points.

The No. 8 seed in next week's Big 12 Tournament is at stake. Colorado likely will need a victory Saturday to keep alive its hopes of finishing with at least a .500 record.

Tipoff is at 2 p.m.

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### Tech's tourney seeding on line against Buffs

By Courtney Linehan | A-J SPORTS EDITOR

**Saturday, March 06, 2010**

Story last updated at 3/6/2010 - 12:26 am

Late in Thursday's basketball practice, the Texas Tech reserves seemed to be teaching the Princeton offense to the starters.

"Oh, I remember that from Oregon State," John Roberson said at one point in the lesson.

The Red Raiders hope they remember it this afternoon, when they face Colorado in Boulder at 3 p.m. CST. It will be Tech's last regular season game and will likely determine the team's seeding in the Big 12 tournament.

"We've been playing good at times, but then there's times when we get down and don't rise to the challenge," forward Mike Singletary said Thursday.

"We need to get our minds right, get our minds corrected, and start preparing."

Tech must be prepared for Colorado's complicated offense, which was developed at Princeton and is used by several programs across the country. But more than that the Raiders want to make sure they don't beat themselves.

That's because of Tech's six consecutive losses, three have been by four points or less. Had Tech won those three games, the Raiders would squarely own seventh place in the conference standings, and with a 19-10 overall and 7-8 Big 12 record, already be locks for the NIT.

It's not far from their current standing: a win today will make them the eighth seed in the tournament. Add a first-round Big 12 Tournament win and Tech could still get into the NIT.

"The committee, they look back and they usually look at the last couple weeks," Tech coach Pat Knight said. "We haven't had a good couple weeks. But then if they take into consideration the caliber of teams we're playing, we'll see. But I definitely think we've got to win the next two games to even be considered."

Knight admits he's more concerned about his team's ability to close things out than to start strong. He said the team tends to quit in the second half, giving up big leads in games against Nebraska, Texas A&M and even Baylor.

Singletary blamed it on too little motivation, which leads to an inability to end opponents' runs.

"When Baylor got on a run we didn't end it, we didn't hit that one bucket to silence it," he said of the Bears' effort to eliminate Tech's 11-point lead on Tuesday. "We've got to learn from those."

Colorado comes into the game having defeated Iowa State and Nebraska in the past week. The Buffs will lock up the No. 8 seed if they beat Tech, or fall to ninth with a loss.

That means Colorado is likely to end its regular season and begin its conference tournament against the same opponent, in this case Tech, for the first time since the 1984-85 season.



Singletary

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Tech, on the other hand, isn't worried about history yet. It just wants the win.

"We've got to try to finish this season as hard as we can," forward Darko Cohadarevic said. "It's over now. We're on a six-game losing streak, which is not a great situation to be in, but we've got to finish it strong. We've got to try, at least."

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NIT Touney? Are you NUTS?

Posted by: [Jacktech](#) at Mar. 6, 2010 at 11:14:31 pm

Sadly you can stick a fork in this team. They are done!

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2010

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## Miles still to go for Buffaloes

*By Patrick Ridgell*  
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BOULDER — The Colorado men's basketball team will have reached the end of an eventful regular season with today's game against Texas Tech.

And there's still so much to do.

There is a sense that its wins and young talent have enabled it to turn some corner this season that in past years was too sharp to navigate. With the groundbreaking for a practice facility scheduled this month — plus, players say, more administrative and community support gracing the program — things appear on the upswing.

But the Buffs also talk about how some games this winter slipped through their grip — games that shouldn't have, like those on trips to Iowa State and Texas A&M, and that overtime home loss to Kansas on Feb. 3.

So close, yet still so far.

"Those games, we could have easily won and should have won," junior forward Casey Crawford said. "Win those games and we're over .500 in the Big 12 and making the NCAA Tournament."

"We made a lot of big steps this year, but we still have to continue to grow," junior guard Cory Higgins said.

Coach Jeff Bzdelik said the way to continue to grow is to continue to win, which CU has done three times in its past five games. Tuesday at Nebraska, the Buffs snapped a 36-game losing streak in Big 12 road games and a 28-game road streak against Division I opponents. Picked by coaches to finish last in the Big 12 for the fourth straight season, CU can take eighth place with a win today. It also can finish the regular season at .500 and position itself for a possible spot in the NIT.

"If (CU wins), that means we have won four of our last six Big 12 games, and it's tangible evidence we're getting better, gaining confidence along the way," Bzdelik said.

CU's attendance is illustrating its progress. While the Buffs enter the regular season's final weekend last in the Big 12 in attendance — and will probably finish there for the fifth straight season — CU's average of 6,096 is its highest since 6,858 in 2002-03. That was the last time it played in the NCAA Tournament. The program hasn't averaged more than 6,000 fans per game since that year. Last year's average was 4,637.

CU reported Friday that 7,500 tickets had been sold for today.

"What Dwight (Thorne, a senior) told me was they had nobody at their games his freshman year," Crawford said. "No



Colorado's Casey Crawford finds enough room around Kansas' Xavier Henry to drain a 3-pointer during a Feb. 3 game at Coors Events Center in Boulder. The junior forward is coming on strong — averaging 15 points per game over his past two, with eight 3s — but still laments the Buffs' close losses earlier this year. **Joshua Buck/Times-Call file**



one would come.”

The search for help in the post continues through recruiting, but with everyone but Thorne expected to return in 2010-11, plus the addition of redshirting point guard Shannon Sharpe, it’s hard not to look ahead. Junior guard Cory Higgins said he might test the NBA Draft waters this spring but plans to return for his senior year. And freshman Alec Burks has moved up to the third pick in the 2011 mock draft at NBADraft.net.

Again, that’s the future. The Buffs are trying to live in the now.

To reach the NIT, they need to keep winning, including their game next Wednesday in the Big 12 Tournament’s opening round. Bzdelik didn’t want to answer questions this week about next Wednesday, mainly because he knows there’s still work to do.

Nebraska out-rebounded the Buffs 40-20 and grabbed 20 offensive rebounds. Had CU not hit 70 percent of its 3s, it might still be wondering today when that road losing streak would ever end.

“It’s young people growing up,” Bzdelik said. “The only way to learn something is to go through it and to learn along the way.

“School of hard knocks.”

Read Patrick Ridgell’s CU sports blog at [www.timescall.com/blogs/ridgell](http://www.timescall.com/blogs/ridgell). He can be reached at [pridgell@times-call.com](mailto:pridgell@times-call.com).