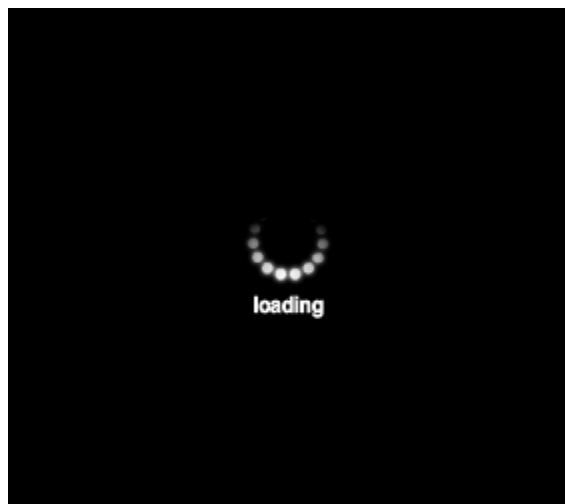


Colorado men's basketball team must get better on glass

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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If the Buffs rebound at the EA Sports Maui Invitational next week like they did on Wednesday night, there is a good chance they will finish in eighth place.

And Division-II Chaminade is in the field.

Colorado struggled with its interior defense and was out-rebounded 32-25 by Texas Southern during an otherwise impressive 88-77 victory at the Coors Events Center.

"We've just got to rebound the basketball. We've got to rebound the ball so we can get out in the open court," Buffs coach Jeff Bzdelik said. "We're playing a dangerous game right now just trying to outscore people. We have to get some stops and rebound the basketball. We have to get better in those areas."

The visiting Tigers from the SWAC grabbed 16 offensive rebounds and scored 17 second-chance points. CU had eight offensive rebounds that led to eight points.

"I think if we just box out more and contest that we can work it out," said freshman guard Alec Burks, who finished with 23 points and four rebounds.

CU's opponent in the first round of the Maui Invitational is Gonzaga. On Tuesday, Bulldog big men Robert Sacre and Elias Harris each scored 17 points and combined for 13 rebounds in a 75-71 loss at No. 2 Michigan State, a program known for taking care of business in the paint and on the glass.

"They're big, so we're going to have to rebound the ball better," Cory Higgins said after scoring 23 points and grabbing six rebounds. "That's what it is going to come down to. I think if we just play our game we'll be fine. We just have to rebound the ball."

Lost Treasure

Texas Southern played without Whitworth Treasure, who was averaging 24.0 points and 3.5 rebounds through the first two games of the season while shooting 57.7 percent from the field.

According to the Tigers coaching staff, the talented junior guard -- who Bzdelik was worried about during preparation for the game on Tuesday -- had a paperwork issue related to his eligibility. Treasure is a transfer from Southern Shreveport Junior College.

Travele Jones picked up the slack with 31 points and nine rebounds for Texas Southern.

Jeremy Williams update

Texas Southern opened up the season with an 89-70 loss at UTEP on Nov. 13. Former CU player Jeremy Williams, who left the program during Bzdelik's first season and spent one year in junior college, scored 18 points in that game for the Miners.

On Wednesday, Williams scored 12 points during UTEP's 70-52 victory over Arkansas-Pine Bluff, the team the Buffs defeated 88-72 in the opener.

Notable

Cory Higgins had made 20 consecutive free throws dating back to last season before missing an attempt with 5:58 remaining in the first half. He finished 4-for-6 at the line and CU was 20-for-27 as a team. ... This was the first meeting between the two programs. CU improved to 7-0 against SWAC teams. ... The victory was Bzdelik's 99th as a college coach. ... Texas Southern will continue its economically-sound road trip with games at Northern Colorado (Friday) and Air Force (Saturday).

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CU hoops 3-0 after win over Texas Southern

By Justin Williams
© 2009 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Not hello. Not goodbye. Not love. For the Colorado men's basketball team, aloha had better mean "improved rebounding."

The Buffs struggled on the boards again Wednesday night, this time against Texas Southern, a Southwestern Athletic Conference team missing its best player. CU hung on for an 88-77 win at the Coors Events Center, but a 32-25 rebounding deficit had coach Jeff Bzdelik sounding like a broken record for his third straight season.

"First thing we work on in practice every day. We work on that, we work on that and we work on that," said Bzdelik, who has battled the issue every year at the CU helm. "That is the big thing that we have to do better, is to rebound the ball."

Here's the good news: the Buffs are 3-0 for the first time since the 2001-02 season. They also might have found the "two" in a much-needed one-two offensive punch when freshman Alec Burks went basket-for-basket with proven CU stud Cory Higgins on Wednesday night. The duo put up 23 points apiece.

But here's the bad news: On Monday, the Buffs play outside Boulder for the first time this year, in the stacked Maui Invitational. And first up is Gonzaga (1 p.m., ESPN), a much taller team that gave No. 2-ranked Michigan State all it could handle Tuesday night in East Lansing, Mich.

"(The close game) was good for us because we know we're going to be battling every minute of every game in Maui," Higgins said. "We needed something like this, to get a little taste of what it feels like to be tested."

Whether or not CU should have been tested by the Tigers (1-2), however, is debatable.

Texas Southern — a team that went 8-25 a year ago — played without leading scorer Whitworth Treasure. The junior college transfer came in averaging 24 points per game, and coach Byron Smith's only explanation was a "coach's decision" for Treasure's absence.

Still, the Tigers hung tight. After CU built a 16-point second-half lead, TSU pulled within two points with 5 minutes remaining in the game.

Everyone pointed to rebounding as the culprit.



CU's Alec Burks battles for the ball amongst Texas Southern's Onyekautukwu Abiakam, left, and Travele Jones during the first half Wednesday night at the Coors Events Center. **Lewis Geyer/Times-Call**

Colorado 88, Texas Southern 77

TEXAS SOUTHERN — Boyles 0-0 0-0 0, Jones 10-14 8-11 31, Hall 6-14 4-4 16, Ray 4-11 1-2 12, West 0-0 0-0 0, Ellis 1-1 0-0 2, Johnson 2-2 1-2 5, Burrell 0-2 0-1 0, Clayborn 1-5 0-0 2, Te.Price 0-0 0-0 0, Abiakam 3-5 3-4 9. Totals 27-54 17-24 77.

COLORADO — Dufault 2-5 3-4 7, Relphorde 4-9 3-4 11, Burks 6-9 10-13 23, C.Higgins 9-12 4-6 23, Thorne II 4-7 0-0 10, Tomlinson 3-3 0-0 8, Harris-Tunks 1-1 0-0 2, Crawford 0-1 0-0 0, Hornbuckle 2-4 0-0 4. Totals 31-51 20-27 88.

Halftime — Colorado 43-36. 3-Point Goals — Texas Southern 6-15 (Jones 3-5, Ray 3-9, Burrell 0-1), Colorado 6-11 (Tomlinson 2-2, Thorne II 2-3, Burks 1-2, C.Higgins 1-2, Crawford 0-1, Relphorde 0-1). Fouled Out — Jones. Rebounds — Texas Southern 32 (Jones 9), Colorado 25 (C.Higgins 6). Assists — Texas Southern 15

“We’ve just got to rebound the basketball,” said Bzdelik, whose team has been beaten on the boards in two of its three games. “We’ve got to rebound the ball so we can get out in the open court.”

(Hall 6), Colorado 15 (Relphorde 4).

“We’re playing a dangerous game right now, just trying to out-score people. We have to get stops consistently, and we have to rebound the basketball. We have to do a better job.”

The Buffs got a standing ovation from the 4,678 in attendance with 35 seconds left in the game, when CU – leading by 14 after 7-0 run – finally put the Tigers away.

Burks and Higgins, this time, were the culprits.

“Cory told me midway through the second half just to be aggressive every time,” said Burks, who scored 15 of his career-high 23 points in the second half. “That’s what I was trying to do, help my team win.”

Bzdelik praised Burks after the game, citing him as “very talented,” “intelligent” and “a gifted player offensively.”

Burks, who was the high school player of the year in Missouri last year but was highly overlooked when recruiting came around, said he’s trying to prove all those that doubted him wrong.

“The big names didn’t come after me because they said I was lazy and stuff, so I’m just showing them what they missed,” he said.

No better way to accomplish that than on a national stage next week in Hawaii.

“It’s going to be fun,” he said.

NOTES: Bzdelik won his 99th collegiate game Wednesday. ... Higgins led the Buffs with six rebounds and also saw his consecutive-free-throws-made streak, dating back to last season, come to an end at 20. ... CU is now 7-0 all-time against the SWAC.

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Bufs tame Tigers to stay perfect

CU 3-0 heading into Maui Invitational

By David Starcer on November 19, 2009

For the first time in a while, Cory Higgins has company at the top of the stat sheet.

Freshman Alec Burks joined the junior Higgins atop the box score as they both poured in a team-high 23 points to lead Colorado to an 88-77 victory over the Texas Southern Tigers in front of 4,678 Wednesday at the Coors Events Center.

For the Buffaloes, the one-two punch of Higgins and Burks was too much to overcome.

The freshman scored 15 of his career-high 23 in the second half, including eight down the stretch to help CU boost a lead that had slipped to two points with under five minutes to go. Burks' aggressiveness in taking the ball to the rim sent him to the foul line often, where he went 10-of-13.

"Cory told me midway through the second half just to be aggressive," Burks said. "So that's what I was trying to do to help my team win."

The reigning Gatorade Player of the Year in the state of Missouri has showed Bufs fans his potential with his play this season. But other Big 12 Conference programs, such as Kansas State and Missouri, passed on Burks with concerns over his work ethic. Burks took the criticisms to heart.

"I felt like I got recruited a lot but the big names didn't come after me," Burks said. "I'm just showing them what they missed."

The Tigers' Travele Jones had a monster game, leading his team with 31 points in the losing effort. Texas Southern played without leading scorer Whitworth "Junior" Treasure, who's averaging 24.0 points per game this season, because paperwork for his transfer was not in order. Even though the Tigers were shorthanded, they gave CU all they could handle.

CU led by as many as 16 in the second half, but a 26-12 run by Texas Southern tightened the game before Burks and Higgins took over, combining for 13 of Colorado's final 17 points.

The Bufs improve to 3-0 and gave head men's basketball coach Jeff Bzdelik his 99th collegiate win. Bzdelik voiced his concerns and praises over his team's performance, but his biggest shout-out went to the fans, particularly the student section.

"I want to thank our students," Bzdelik said. "We need them and they are a big part of our basketball team. We really appreciate our students and our fans."

Another freshman, forward Keegan Hornbuckle, played some solid minutes off the bench for the Buffaloes and hit a nice fadeaway jumper before the buzzer to give Colorado a 43-36 lead going into halftime.

The Buffaloes shot over 60 percent from the field, the first time they have done so since Jan. 12, 2008 against Texas A&M. Higgins, who also grabbed a team-high six rebounds, felt the game was a great lead-in to the challenges the team will face in the upcoming Maui Invitational.

“It was good for us because we are going to be battling every minute of every game in Maui and we needed something like this to get us a little taste of what it feels like to be tested,” Higgins said.

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