

Boyle's Buffs ready for return from long break

Boyle's Buffs haven't played since OT win over CSU on Dec. 8

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 12/17/2010 12:05:44 AM MST

Bruised kidney. Four stitches above an eye. Concussion. Banged up hand. Deep thigh contusion. Sore shoulder.

Above is the list of injuries and ailments Cory Higgins has been treated for this season.

Only eight games into the basketball season, the senior guard was walking around the University of Colorado campus feeling as beat up as the football players limping out of the Dal Ward Center after suffering through a painfully long final Big 12 season.

"I've never been through anything like this," Higgins said. "I guess it will just make me stronger in the long run. This is a first for me."

When we last left Higgins he wasn't doing that well mentally either. The normally clutch All-Big 12 performer missed three key free throws in the final minute of regulation to allow Colorado State to erase a five-point deficit and force overtime.

The Buffs (5-3) regrouped and beat the Rams 90-83 in overtime on Dec. 8 for their third consecutive victory.

"I never want to put the team in that position again," said Higgins, an 86 percent free throw shooter. "But it was good for us to know that we can do it. The last couple years, I don't know if we would win that game. It was good for us to grow as a team."

During finals week first-year head coach Tad Boyle gave the Buffs three days off and conducted shorter practices so the team could focus on exams and heal physically.

CU returns to the court tonight to face The Citadel at the Coors Events Center (7:37 p.m., FSN).

The coaching staff went over some of the recent upsets nationally — Drexel over Louisville, Oakland over Tennessee, UC-Santa Barbara over UNLV, and so on — with the players after watching film of the Bulldogs (3-5) from the Southern Conference. CU has a 17-game non-conference home winning streak dating back to the 2008-09 season.

"They scare the heck out of me," Boyle said of the Citadel, which starts five seniors. "We have to be mentally ready to go. (Tonight) is a mental challenge for us just as much as it is a physical challenge, especially coming off finals."

The Buffs have had some balanced scoring throughout this five-game home stand, which began with blowout wins over Texas-Pan American and Oregon State.

Alec Burks (20.5 ppg) leads the Big 12 in scoring and had 25 points against CSU. Higgins, despite all of the injuries, is averaging 16.9 points per game (fifth among Big 12 players).

Levi Knutson has averaged 18 points while shooting 75 percent (18-for-24) from the field over the last three games. Marcus Relphorde has averaged 14.6 points and 5.0 rebounds over the last five games.

"I think we've been up and down, but as of right now we're headed in the right direction," Higgins said. "Over the last few weeks and the last couple games we've really made some big strides. We need to continue that through the break."

Boyle will do whatever it takes to beat The Citadel tonight and Longwood on Sunday. Ideally, the coach would like to have more players involved in the rotation before the level of competition rises dramatically at the Las Vegas Invitational and in conference play.

"Going into all these games before Big 12 play, I'd like to develop some depth and build our bench," Boyle said.

Six Big 12 teams are ranked in the Associated Press poll this week. The Buffs still have some work to do before 2011 arrives.

But you get the feeling CU's leader is just getting warmed up.

"This is the best I've felt all season," Higgins said. "Hopefully we can just go from here and as an individual I will get better."

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All Things Colorado Sports — Blogs — The Denver Post

DECEMBER 16, 2010, 10:14 AM

CU's Boyle has practice priorities in order

By [NATALIE MEISLER](#) |  1 Comment

[1]

Colorado's head coach [Tad Boyle](#) ^[2] takes part in practice in Balch Fieldhouse on Wednesday (Special To [The Denver Post](#) ^[3], David Zalubowski)

BOULDER — If the walls of the antiquated Balch Fieldhouse could hear, there was an unfamiliar sound this week in the Colorado athletic facility that time forgot.

The Buffs are holding basketball practice in the building next to the stadium this week. [CU](#) ^[4] football fans know the building — it's the old barn next to the stadium used to stay warm during halftime and buy concessions.

[CU](#) ^[4]'s men's and women's basketball are evicted from their [Coors Events Center](#) ^[5] home by final exams and (for those who pass their exams) winter graduation.

Former coach [Jeff Bzdelik](#) ^[6] would take his teams to the [Pepsi Center](#) ^[7] or Broomfield Event Center to practice during the facilities conflict.

New coach [Tad Boyle](#) ^[2] has a different outlook. "Part of education is learning history and the history of Colorado basketball starts in Balch Fieldhouse," he said Wednesday.

If for some strange reason [CU](#) ^[4] ever had to play a game building used until 1978, Boyle joked about the classic scene from *Hoosiers* when Gene Hackman measured the height of the basket.

A few players looked astounded to think the team ever played there.

Unlike Bzdelik's field trips to better lit out-of-town facilities, Boyle had a different set of logistics in mind. He said he didn't want to take too much time out his players' day during final exam week.

Boyle was also celebrating the final time when the team will need Balch. Starting next season, the men's and women's basketball team along with the volleyball team will have their own practice courts in the new facility under construction adjacent to the Events Center.

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Longmont, Colorado
Friday, December 17, 2010

Publish Date: 12/17/2010

Sharpe shaking off rust

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BOULDER — Shannon Sharpe figured to be a big part of the University of Colorado men's basketball team this season.

Through eight games, however, the freshman point guard is having a tough time getting on the floor.

Sharpe is playing just 17.1 minutes per game, averaging 1.4 points and 1.6 assists.

Those are hardly the numbers some projected for the 6-foot-1, 200-pounder, but head coach Tad Boyle said it's way too early to judge Sharpe.

"Some of the expectations outside the program that were placed on him, I'm not sure they were fair," Boyle said. "Shannon's a freshman and unlike most freshmen, he hasn't played for two years."

Sharpe, from Corona, Calif., came to CU a year ago but suffered a season-ending knee injury in preseason workouts.

He did not play basketball in 2008-09 while attending Laurinburg Institute in North Carolina. So, he hasn't played a significant role on the court since the 2007-08 season, in high school.

"He's got some rust to take off of his game and he's still in that learning mode," Boyle said. "I'm not disappointed in Shannon at all. I'm encouraged with what he can bring our program."

Boyle said he wants to see Sharpe be aggressive on offense, and also said Sharpe could be one of the best on-ball defenders on the team.

"He brings something to the table," Boyle said.

BOARDING: True freshman Andre Roberson is leading the Buffs with 6.6 rebounds per game — 2.1 more than anyone else.

Even Boyle is surprised at how good Roberson has been on the boards.

"Yeah a little bit," he said. "We knew when we signed him that he was a good rebounder in high school. But, I think he's done it at a really high level."

Most surprising is that Roberson is leading the team while not even starting. In fact, he plays less than half the time (18.8 minutes per game).

The Citadel (3-5) at Colorado (5-3) men

When/Where: 7:30 p.m. tonight, at the Coors Events Center in Boulder

TV/Radio: FSN/760-AM

The series: This is the first meeting between the schools.

Leading scorers: The Citadel — Cameron Wells (15.8 points per game). CU — Alec Burks (20.5).

Notes: CU has won 17 straight home games against non-conference foes. ... The Buffs are 5-0 at home this season. ... The Bulldogs are 0-3 on the road this season. ... Burks ranks 28th nationally in scoring. ... The Buffs are averaging 82 points per game, while The Citadel averages 61.2.

Brian Howell

“He goes every time to the offensive glass and he’s just got a nose for the ball that you can’t teach,” Boyle said.

In his limited minutes, Roberson has displayed some scoring touch, too, with 4.6 points per game on 55.2 percent shooting. He also leads the team with 10 blocks and 13 steals.

With all that production, it seems natural that Roberson should be on the floor more. But, Boyle said, like Sharpe, Roberson needs to develop.

“I think (more minutes) are going to come with time and with his development as a player on the defensive end and offensively, as well,” Boys said. “Andre is a big part of our future here and I think he’s showing glimpses of it right now. As the season goes on, you’ll see his minutes hopefully going up.

“Andre is a guy who can come in here and develop into a really solid basketball player.”

BACK AT IT: CU hasn’t played since a win against Colorado State on Dec. 8 because of finals. But starting tonight against The Citadel, the Buffs will play four games in seven days.

“Mentally it’s a hard time right now to be a basketball player,” Boyle said. “You’ve got to compete, obviously finals are pretty taxing on them. It’s a challenge.”

Boyle is hoping the Buffs can continue the momentum they built in winning their last three games.

“For me, I wanted there to be a turning point in our season after the San Francisco game (an 83-81 overtime loss on Nov. 20),” Boyle said. “For the players, I think the turning point was after the Harvard game (an 82-66 loss on Nov. 28). Until the players commit to themselves and each other, things aren’t going to change.

“They got together after the Harvard game and talked about some things as a group. Coaches weren’t involved, but it obviously was a good meeting because I’ve seen a remarkable difference in our attitude and our togetherness since they got together.”

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Longmont, Colorado
Friday, December 17, 2010

Publish Date: 12/17/2010

Relphorde essential to CU

By Brian Howell
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BOULDER — On any given night, the University of Colorado men's basketball team doesn't know what it will get from Marcus Relphorde.

And, that can be a good thing.

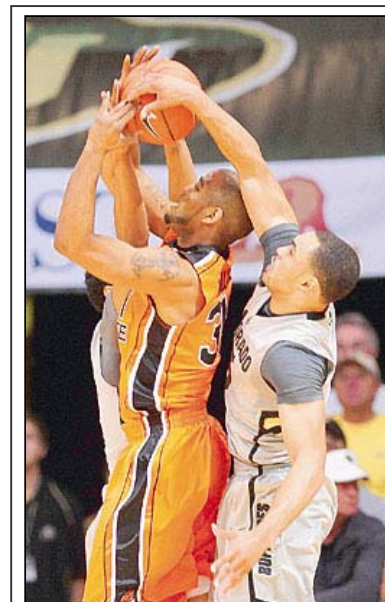
"He can do a little bit of everything," head coach Tad Boyle said. "Marcus is an X-factor for us. He's a guy on any given night that can do a lot of different things to help us win games."

The Buffs (5-3) have two top-quality scorers, in Cory Higgins and Alec Burks. They've got a young freshman, Andre Roberson, who is proving to be a great rebounder. And, they've got a pair of point guards in Nate Tomlinson and Shannon Sharpe that can rack up assists.

Relphorde, however, is a player who could lead the Buffs in any one of those categories.

In fact, he has led the team in assists three times and rebounds twice this season. He is the only player on the team to lead in both categories multiple times.

He hasn't led them in scoring yet, but has scored at least 10 points in six different games — only Burks (eight) and Higgins (seven) have done that more times this season.



Colorado's Marcus Relphorde, right, fouls Oregon State's Lathen Wallace on Dec. 4 at Coors Events Center. **Joshua Buck/Times-Call file**



Friday, Dec 17, 2010

Posted on Fri, Dec. 17, 2010

The Citadel (3-5) at Colorado (5-3)

BY SPORTS NETWORK

GAME NOTES: The Colorado Buffaloes will look to remain undefeated at home when they host The Citadel Bulldogs this evening in a non-conference bout at the Coors Event Center as part of the Las Vegas Classic. Since opening the season with three straight losses, the Bulldogs have won three of their last five games, and are coming off a 72-64 victory over Saint Mary's. Playing on the road has been a problem for The Citadel, which is winless in three games away from home.

Colorado definitely enjoys playing on its home floor, as the team has won 17- straight non-conference matchups at the Coors Event Center. This season, the Buffs have won all five of their home contests, and since last year that streak is currently at eight consecutive victories. The last time Colorado was on the court, the team defeated Colorado State, 90-83, in overtime for its third consecutive win.

This will be the first-ever meeting between the two schools on the hardwood.

The Bulldogs are coming off one of their better offensive performances of the season, as they shot an even 50.0 percent from the field, en route to an impressive win over Saint Mary's. Zach Urbanus, who is posting 10.8 ppg on the season, was one of five players in double figures in the victory registering 15 points. Cameron Wells contributed 14 points, while Bryan Streeter posted 11 points and eight rebounds. Wells is clearly the best player on the roster for The Citadel, as the guard is leading the team with 15.8 ppg and 4.5 apg, while also collecting 5.0 rpg. Austin Dahn (11.6 ppg) overcame six turnovers by scoring 11 points, and Mike Groselle helped out with 10 points and seven boards off the bench. Despite the strong effort, the Bulldogs have struggled at the offensive end of the court, producing just 61.2 ppg, while shooting below 40.0 percent per matchup.

The Buffs' success this season is due to their outstanding play at the offensive end of the court, as Colorado is producing a robust 82.0 ppg, behind an equally impressive 47.6 percent shooting effort. Alec Burks has led the charge for Colorado, as the guard is averaging an impressive 20.5 ppg. Cory Higgins comes into tonight's game netting 16.9 ppg, to go along with a team- best 23 assists. Marcus Relphorde is helping out with 11.9 ppg this season, while Levi Knutson is chipping in 11.8 ppg. Colorado's strong play offensively continued in the team's win over Colorado State, as the Buffs shot 48.1 percent from the floor and connected on 35-of-41 attempts from the foul line. Burks led four players in double figures with 25 points, while Relphorde added 18 points. Higgins tallied 15 points in the win, while Knutson chipped in 14 points off the bench.

The Buffs are the stronger offensive team and getting this one at home will certainly aid the cause for Colorado as well.

Fact Stats

Game Date and Time

Predicted Outcome