



*Junior point guard Nate Tomlinson has been a steady influence for the Buffs.
Photo Courtesy: Tony Harman*



12/28/2010 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

Brooks: Buffs Buoyed By Break-Even Vegas Trip

BOULDER - Not many Las Vegas visitors break even, so from that standpoint Tad Boyle considers himself ahead of the pack. On a two-night stand last week in Vegas, his Colorado men's basketball team lost a game and won a game, returning to Boulder upbeat after its appearance in the 10th Annual Las Vegas Classic.

BUFFALO EXTRAS

[Game Notes vs. UMES](#)

The Buffaloes gave themselves good reason to be buoyant, rallying from a disappointing first-game loss (89-76) to New Mexico with a more gratifying performance (78-69) against Indiana in the consolation game.

The game against the Lobos was a 40-minute reaffirmation of what Boyle has been trying to hammer into his team since mid-October. Unable to counter UNM's frontcourt size, CU compounded that problem by frequently going soft inside defensively. Rebounding suffered, too, as the Lobos led from start to finish and in reality were in control throughout.

But in those 40 minutes with the Hoosiers, the Buffs proved several things to themselves that should prove beneficial in January and beyond. They showed they are highly capable of fashioning a big lead (19 points), fizzling it away (Indiana pulled to within three points), then regrouping and finishing.

Had they been unable to hold off the Hoosiers in the final minutes, well, the Buffs might have lost more than a non-conference game. But with leading scorer Alec Burks fouled out, senior Cory Higgins took a large step forward in the

stretch and CU was able to make a safe, successful exit.

"It showed that these guys have a backbone as a team; we bowed our backs a little bit there," Boyle said. "Close games in college basketball come down to teams and players that make plays at critical times of games. That's not any secret. But I thought Cory Higgins made some plays for us down the stretch that you expect and hope your seniors are going to do. And he played like a senior the last three or four minutes of that game. I thought he played well the whole game, but he made plays for us down the stretch."

Boyle also pointed out that the Buffs ratcheted up their defense from the previous night: "We made a commitment to it that, quite frankly, we didn't have the night before against New Mexico.

UNM shot 61 percent from the field, Indiana 40 percent. Boyle called both UNM and IU "good teams," but conceded that the Lobos' size and guard play - particularly that of senior Dairese Gary - separated the teams.

"I think in the Indiana game our guys realized that we have to rebound the basketball to keep leads," Boyle said. "Our first possession defense was pretty good; we just let them get second and third shots . . . that was one of the reasons we were fouling a lot; we were letting them get offensive rebounds. Part of getting a complete stop is getting the rebound.

"But I thought our guys were dialed in defensively. We kept talking about the only way to extend leads is by getting stops - and that's the only way to keep leads as well. It's the focus of what we've talked about every time out and before and after every game."

The Buffs haven't had problems scoring. Averaging 83.6 points, they're eighth nationally and third in the Big 12 Conference. Four players are scoring in double figures - Burks (19.3), Higgins (16.9), Marcus Relphorde (11.9) and Levi Knutson (11.8). CU leads the Big 12 in free throw percentage (.780) and is second (.495) and third (.381), respectively, in field goal and three-point shooting percentage.

But in two major defensive categories (overall defense, three-point defense) and rebounding, they're No. 11 in the conference.

"We're scoring plenty of points at home and on the road," Boyle said. "We just have to concentrate on defense and rebounding. If we get that in check we can play with a lot of teams."

Counting Wednesday's game against Maryland-Eastern Shore (7 p.m., Coors Events Center, FSN RM), CU has three games to continue tuning up before No. 10 Missouri visits on Jan. 8 to open Big 12 play. Fall semester finals ended the week before Christmas, with spring semester classes not beginning until Jan. 10. Boyle called the period "the best time to be a college basketball player . . . in terms of just getting better individually and as a team."

The Buffs' offense might not be what keeps Boyle up at night once league play begins. He's also feeling better about the way his players have begun sharing the ball, particularly how point guard Nate Tomlinson is distributing it.

Through 12 games, Tomlinson has a team-best 35 assists, with 24 of them recorded in the past seven games. His turnover totals during those same spans are 18 and 12, respectively, with almost half (five) of his dozen errors in the past seven games coming against Indiana. That was uncharacteristic, noted Boyle: "Nate has been really steady for us. His assist to turnover ratio (1.9) has been terrific, which is the first thing you look for in a point guard. The thing I appreciate about Nate is his unselfishness; he makes everybody around him better."

CU usually is scoring enough now minus a contribution from its point man. However, both coach and player foresee a period coming - it might arrive on or about Jan. 8 - when the Buffs need Tomlinson "to be more aggressive offensively . . . and keep the defense honest," said Boyle. "I don't think he necessarily has to hunt his shots, but he has to take them when they're there. He's a good shooter, more than a capable shooter."

Tomlinson averages 23.4 minutes but has taken only 29 shots in 12 games. He concedes, "Yeah, sometimes I hurt us not shooting enough. I need to take the shots when they're given to me. But I think we're all playing together well at the moment; we're sharing the ball. I just have to step up (as a shooter)."

Now a junior, Tomlinson was the Buffs' assist leader for the past two seasons under former coach Jeff Bzdelik, averaging 3.0 dishes in his first year and 4.2 in his second. Tomlinson averaged 7.4 points as a freshman, 5.3 as a sophomore. He's at 3.5 points and 2.9 assists this season.

He calls himself "a confident shooter, so I need to knock them down. I do have to be more aggressive. It's just been two years of being hand-cuffed; I'm just trying to break them off and get my game back."

Tomlinson's father (Billy) is a basketball coach in Australia and Nate hopes to land in his dad's profession. He judges his game with a critical eye and says with only a small bit of sarcasm that he "did everything I could to make us lose" against Indiana. "But we came together as a team and pulled that one out."

The Buffs are 8-4 overall, but 6-1 in their last seven games - a run Tomlinson credits to him and his teammates "realizing the potential we have as a ball club and starting to get that as the Big 12 (season) comes around. It's been good for us.

"We just have to be consistent. Against Indiana, we probably played 15 good minutes in the second half, then in two or three bad minutes we let them back in the game. We just have to play consistent basketball. We may not be playing against Big 12 competition coming up, but that's not the point.

"It's how *we* play; if we do the right things and prepare ourselves we'll be ready for Missouri."

That's been Boyle's aim for the past 21/2 months.

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SHOW MENU



CU Buffs hope to cash in on confidence gained

Boyle's Buffs hope to build off road win

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 12/28/2010 07:23:10 PM MST

In this case, what happened in Las Vegas should come home with the Buffs.

With three non-conference games remaining before the Big 12 gauntlet, Colorado wants to continue playing with the confidence it gained during a 78-69 victory over Indiana.

The Buffs (8-4) went 3-1 against the Las Vegas Classic field, rebounding from a deflating loss to New Mexico at Orleans Arena with a dramatic win over the Hoosiers less than 24 hours later.

CU hosts Maryland Eastern Shore of the MEAC tonight at the Coors Events Center (7:07 p.m., FSN).

"It was a great experience to play against two teams that are usually ranked. It will get our confidence going into league play," Alec Burks said of the split with the Lobos and Hoosiers. "I feel like we can play with anybody. We played together (against Indiana), and it was a great win."

The Hoosiers did not recover well from their Las Vegas hangover, returning home and losing to Penn State in the Big Ten opener. That does not diminish CU's performance last Thursday night.

After Alec Burks and Andre Roberson fouled out early, Indiana cut a 19-point deficit to three points with three minutes remaining. That's when Cory Higgins calmly scored seven of his 22 points in the final moments to make the brief holiday break a brighter one for the Buffs.

"Two years ago we would have lost that game. But we've been in those situations and we knew what to do," Higgins said. "We just needed to get back to executing."

CU is executing at a very high level on the offensive end. Tad Boyle's team ranks third in the Big 12 and eighth nationally in scoring, averaging 83.6 points per game. Burks (19.3 ppg) ranks second and Higgins (16.9 ppg) fifth in scoring among Big 12 players.

The key to beating Indiana was the Buffs' willingness to rebound and defend, two areas the new head coach has been preaching to the players about since taking the job.

Indiana had a slim 32-30 edge on the glass and shot 40.7 percent from the field. New Mexico had a 35-23 rebounding advantage and shot 61.2 percent in CU's previous game.

"We showed toughness when we had to," Boyle said. "This win (over Indiana) really helps us confidence-wise and stabilizes things a little bit."

The Buffs are 7-0 at the Coors Events Center and have won 19 consecutive non-conference home games. Maryland Eastern Shore is 3-8 overall and 1-6 on the road.

CU is 7-0 all-time against teams from the MEAC.

TODAY: The Buffs (8-4) host Maryland Eastern Shore (3-8, 0-1 MEAC) at 7:07 p.m. at the Coors Events Center.

BROADCAST: Television on FSN with Drew Goodman (play-by-play), Ceal Barry (analyst) and Marc Stout (sideline). Radio on KKZN (760 AM) with Mark Johnson (play-by-play) and Chris Lewis (analyst).

STORY LINES: The Buffs are coming off a 78-69 victory over Indiana in their final game at the Las Vegas Classic. ... Cory

Higgins scored seven of his 22 points in the final two minutes to make sure CU held on for the team's first win of the season outside Boulder. ... Alec Burks only scored nine points against Indiana due to foul trouble, but Marcus Relphorde (14 points), Levi Knutson (10 points) and Austin Dufault (10 points) helped pick up the slack offensively. ... Maryland Eastern Shore was ranked 294th in rebounding with an RPI of 212 as of Tuesday.

COACHES: Tad Boyle is 8-4 in his first season at CU after going 56-66 in four seasons at Northern Colorado. Frankie Allen is 21-52 in his third season at Maryland Eastern Shore.

PROBABLE STARTERS: Colorado -- G Nate Tomlinson, 6-2, Jr., 3.5 ppg, 2.0 rpg; G Marcus Relphorde, 6-7, Sr., 11.9 ppg, 4.1 rpg; G Alec Burks, 6-6, SO., 19.3 ppg, 4.1 rpg; G Cory Higgins, 6-5, Sr., 16.9 ppg, 3.6 rpg; F Austin Dufault, 6-9, Jr., 8.2 ppg, 4.6 rpg. **Maryland Eastern Shore --** C Freddy Obame Obame, 6-6, Sr., 7.2 ppg, 4.1 rpg; G Kevin White, 6-0, Sr., 8.9 ppg, 2.2 rpg; G Dishawn Bradshaw, 6-2, Jr., 13.1 ppg, 2.9 rpg; G Hillary Haley, 6-6, Jr., 14.0 ppg, 4.5 rpg; F Tyler Hines, 6-6, Jr., 8.4 ppg, 6.5 rpg.

KEY STAT: Levi Knutson has made 72.3 percent of his shots in the last seven games. CU is 6-1 in those games.

SERIES: CU leads 1-0, a 75-62 victory on Dec. 30, 1993, and is 7-0 all-time against MEAC teams.

UP NEXT: The Buffs will try to pick up their elusive first true road win of the season on Sunday at Cal State Bakersfield (6 p.m., no television).

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CU basketball with Ryan Thorburn

Bufs need RPI help

Posted on [December 29, 2010](#) by [ryan](#)

Tad Boyle and the Buffs aren't going mark the next three games with 'Ws' before t go ahead and pencil in non-conference wins over Maryland Eastern Shore, Cal Sta Mexico.

That would make Colorado 11-4 entering Big 12 play. A good start, but not good er consideration.

The Buffs' loss at San Francisco in November could come back to haunt them in M including a home loss to Colorado State on Tuesday night, with a Ratings Percenta Wednesday's action.

Speaking of RPI, CU checks in at 156 with the computers. That's 10th among Big 1 (178) and Texas Tech (195).

The good news is wins, or even losses, in conference play will improve CU's RPI. T RPI (Kansas has the nation's No. 1 RPI ranking).

Here is the breakdown of the Centennial State's RPI as non-conference play winds

84. CSU (lost in overtime in Boulder)

156. CU

160. Air Force

263. Northern Colorado (Boyle's former team)

305. Denver

And some other programs with CU ties:

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UMES Travels to Colorado for Showdown in Boulder

Posted: Dec 28, 2010 8:50 PM MST



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Hawks Travel to Colorado

BOULDER, Colo. -- After an eight-day hiatus for the holidays, the University of Maryland Eastern Shore men's basketball team travels to Boulder, Colo. to take on the Colorado University Buffaloes. Tipoff is slated for 9:07 p.m. EST at the Coors Events Center. The Hawks, who are playing their sixth of the last seven games on the road, defeated Washington College on Dec. 21, 102-86. The win snapped a four-game losing skid and was their first since Nov. 27 (overtime at Navy).

Redshirt junior Hillary Haley (Oxon Hill, Md.) and junior Dishawn Bradshaw (Baltimore, Md.) led the way with 21 points each. Haley also added in 10 rebounds for a double-double on the day. Haley leads UMES (3-8) in scoring with an average of 14.0 points per contest while Bradshaw is not far behind with 13.1 per. Junior Tyler Hines (Sicklerville, N.J.) marks an average of 6.5 rebounds per game while Bob Cousy Award candidate Kevin White (Brooklyn, N.Y.) dishes out an average of 4.6 assists for the Hawks. The Buffs (8-4) are coming off of a 78-69 victory over Indiana on Dec. 23 in the third-place game of the Las Vegas Classic.

Senior Cory Higgins led CU with 22 points including a perfect 9-of-9 from the free throw line. The Buffs have a plus-5.1 turnover margin through 12 games, committing only 11.1 turnovers per game while causing 16.2 miscues. Colorado has four players who average double-figures in scoring for the season in Alec Burks (19.3), Higgins (16.9), Marcus Relphorde (11.9) and Levi Knutson (11.8). Andre Roberson leads the team with 7.1 rebounds per contest. Wednesday's game marks the second matchup between the Hawks and Buffaloes.

Colorado leads the series, 1-0, as they defeated UMES, 75-62, on Dec. 30, 1993 at the Coors Events Center. The game will be broadcast live on the Hawks Radio Network at 95.9 The Sports Animal and on the Internet at UMESHawks.com thanks to allinbroadcasting.com. Bret Lasky has the call for the Hawks while Dave Vatz will host the studio show. The game will also be broadcast live on Fox Sports Rocky Mountain and on DirecTV channel 683 and Dish Network channel 414

