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Bufs to take final shot at Kansas

Men's basketball to battle No.1 Jayhawks on the road

By Caryn Maconi on February 18, 2011

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This weekend marks the final chance for CU men's basketball team to beat the Kansas Jayhawks as conference opponents.

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Saturday's game at the Allen Fieldhouse in Lawrence, Kansas is the last time the Bufs will play Kansas this season before heading to the Pac-12 Conference next year.

The Jayhawks are currently ranked No.1 in the country, and the Bufs have yet to beat a top-ranked team. Colorado head coach Tad Boyle, says he sees the statistic as an opportunity, not an obstacle.

"Rankings don't really mean anything," Boyle said. "It will give us an opportunity to play against a team people think is No.1 in the country."

Redshirt freshman guard Shannon Sharpe said facing the Jayhawks on their home court will be a challenge.

"They have one of the best student sections in the country, so it should be interesting," Sharpe said.

Earlier this season, Kansas beat Colorado at the Coors Events Center, 78-82. Coming off of two buzzer-beater conference games against Texas A&M and Kansas State last week, Sharpe feels his team is well prepared for another potentially close match-up.

"We play well against pressure," Sharpe said. "And a good percentage [of conference games] should be close games."

Sharpe faced some unexpected responsibility in recent games. Starting junior guard Nate Tomlinson injured his ankle during the game against Missouri on March 5, and Sharpe has helped fill his spot since then.

Tomlinson was out for both of last week's games against A&M and Kansas State, and his status for Saturday's game is still unclear.



Kansas freshman Josh Selby drives between junior guard Nate Tomlinson and senior guard Cory Higgins during the second half of the Buffaloes' 82-78 loss to the Jayhawks on Tuesday, Jan. 25. (CU Independent/Patrick Ghidossi)

“Honestly, I feel like I’ve got the same role, to come in and be a point guard,” Sharpe said.

The Buffs took two days off of practice early in the week, and Sharpe said that mid-season rest was crucial to keeping the team’s energy up.

“When you go too many days in a row, you wake up and you can feel it in your body,” Sharpe said. “Every time you have an opportunity to rest, it’s a good thing.”

Not every player got to rest on Monday. Freshman center Ben Mills, who got his first nine minutes of conference play last Saturday against Kansas State, has been working outside of regular practice with Assistant Coach Mike Rohn.

“Ben has improved, and he showed it against K-State,” Boyle said. “It’s a blessing in disguise that we got into some foul trouble [against Kansas State], because he got to show he’s up to the challenge.”

Boyle said he did not know if Mills would play on Saturday, but that he has great potential for the team.

“He’s still a work in progress,” Boyle said. “But I think he’s going to be a terrific player for CU basketball.”

Mills said he has noticed growth in himself and in the team as a whole from the recent match-ups against Texas A&M and Kansas State.

“We have a good team chemistry, so we all came together,” Mills said. “I think we’ll go out strong against Kansas.”

The biggest challenge the Jayhawks will pose on Saturday is their inside presence.

“They have really good guards that we’re going to have to deal with,” Mills said. “It’s going to be a battle the whole way through.”

Contact CU Independent Staff Writer at Caryn.maconi@colorado.edu.

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