

Clock is ticking for Boyle's CU Buffs

Four regular-season games remain

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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LUBBOCK, Texas -- Levi Knutson was named Academic All-American on Tuesday.

The senior shooting guard is also smart enough to know that time is running out on his opportunity to experience postseason play at Colorado.

The Buffs (16-11, 5-7) will probably have to win the final four regular season games and make a deep run at the Big 12 Tournament in Kansas City, Mo., to be considered for the 68-team NCAA Tournament field.

CU plays Texas Tech, another veteran team not living up to preseason expectations, tonight here at United Spirit Arena (5:30 p.m., KKZN AM 760).

"It's always in the back of our minds. It's our goal. If you look too far ahead the opportunities pass you by," Knutson said of the NCAA Tournament. "We have two big home games and two winnable road games. Anything can happen in these last four games and at the Big 12 Tournament.

"Obviously, we'd like to be a few games ahead of where we are now, but we're still in the thick of it."

To Knutson's point, Kansas State (18-9, 6-6) and Nebraska (18-9, 6-6) are just one game ahead of CU in the Big 12 standings. And both teams are considered to be on the bubble after respective upsets of Kansas and Texas last week.

If the Buffs were able to handle their business down the stretch they will have swept the Wildcats, pulled off an upset of a top-five team (Texas visits Boulder on Saturday) and split with the Cornhuskers (Nebraska is CU's final home game on March 5).

"Every game is a must-win for us," Nate Tomlinson said. "We've proven we can beat anyone when the right (CU) team shows up."

CU opened Big 12 play 3-0 by rebounding and playing solid defense. In the seven losses since, the team has given up an average of 78.4 points per game and allowed the opposition to shoot over 50 percent from the field.

"We're just inconsistent," head coach Tad Boyle said. "The inconsistency is something all coaches fight to some degree. ... When we go on the road, we have to defend and rebound to give ourselves a chance."

The Red Raiders (12-15, 4-8) beat CU in the first round of last year's Big 12 Tournament in what was essentially an NIT play-in game. With a senior-dominated team -- led by Mike Singletary, John Roberson and D'walyn Roberts -- Texas Tech was expected to get invited back to the Big Dance this March for the first time since Bob Knight was still on the bench.

Instead, Pat Knight's team has lost to the likes of North Texas, South Florida and TCU. Which made last Saturday's impressive 78-69 win at Baylor bittersweet for the head coach.

"Believe me, it bothers me every single minute," Pat Knight said of a poor non-conference season and an 0-4 start to Big 12 play. "Even though it's a really good win for you, what it does is you get even more frustrated because you think about the ones that got away from you."

The Buffs know the feeling with their own list of bubble-bursting performances.

Now it's time to win or prepare to watch all the March madness at home.

"Every win is magnified and every loss is scrutinized in the month of February," Boyle said. "We have seniors who have been through this thing before and we have to dial in mentally as we head down the stretch here."

Notable

Knutson, who is on the CoSIDA Academic All-America second team, is the fourth CU men's basketball player to be so honored, joining Pat Frink (1968, second team); Jim Creighton (1972, third team); and Jack Magno (1980, third team). He is a business administration major with an emphasis in finance and carries a 3.92 grade-point average. ... Tomlinson is questionable with a slow-to-heal sprained ankle. The point guard did not score or have an assist in six minutes of action at KU. ... Andre Roberson needs 25 more rebounds to break Stephane Pelle's CU freshman record (218).

TODAY: The Colorado Buffaloes (16-11, 5-7) travel to Lubbock, Texas, to face the Texas Tech Red Raiders (12-15, 4-8) at 5:30 p.m. at United Spirit Arena.

BROADCAST: Television on ESPN Full Court with Brian Jensen (play-by-play) and John Harris (analyst). Radio on KKZN (760 AM) with Mark Johnson (play-by-play) and Chris Lewis (analyst).

STORY LINES: The Buffs are coming off an 89-63 loss at Kansas on Saturday. ... CU is now 3-9 outside of Boulder this season. ... Levi Knutson was named second-team Academic All-American on Tuesday. ... The Buffs lost to Texas Tech in the first round of the Big 12 Tournament last March in what was essentially an NIT play-in game. ... The Red Raiders are coming off a 78-69 victory at Baylor. ... Senior forward Mike Singletary missed the game with a bruised calf and sprained knee. He plans to play tonight. ... In the last 10 games, guard John Roberson has averaged 17.6 points while shooting 50 percent from 3-point range for Texas Tech.

COACHES: Tad Boyle is 16-11 in his first season at CU. Pat Knight is 49-57 in his fourth season at Texas Tech.

PROBABLE STARTERS: **Colorado** -- G Levi Knutson, 6-4, Sr., 11.4 ppg, 3.0 rpg; G Marcus Relporhe, 6-7, Sr., 11.2 ppg, 4.2 rpg; G Alec Burks, 6-6, So., 19.4 ppg, 6.0 rpg; G Cory Higgins, 6-5, Sr., 16.2 ppg, 3.5 rpg; F Austin Dufault, 6-9, Jr., 7.8 ppg, 4.4 rpg. **Texas Tech** -- G John Roberson, 5-11, Sr., 13.8 ppg, 2.0 rpg; G David Tairu, 6-3, Sr., 9.5 ppg, 2.7 rpg; F Brian Reese, 6-6 Sr., 11.8 ppg, 4.4 rpg; F D'walyn Roberts, 6-7, Sr., 5.9 ppg, 4.9 rpg; F Robert Lewandowski, 6-10, Jr., 9.1 ppg, 5.2 rpg.

KEY STAT: The Buffs are 2-7 in their last nine games. In the seven losses they are averaging 68.1 points on 41.1 percent shooting and allowing 78.4 points with the opponents shooting 50.1 percent.

SERIES: CU leads the all-time series 17-13 with a 7-6 record in Lubbock. Texas Tech has won five of the last six meetings and is 9-8 vs. the Buffs in Big 12 games.

UP NEXT: The Buffs will host No. 5 Texas on Saturday at a sold-out Coors Events Center (2 p.m., Altitude).

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sports - region report

UNC, CU seniors earn salute

Denver Post staff and wire services

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Northern Colorado's Devon Beitzel was named a first-team academic All-American on Tuesday, making him just the second UNC basketball player to earn the honor and the first in more than 40 years.

Beitzel, a senior guard from Centaurus High School who leads the Big Sky Conference in scoring with an average of 20.3 points, was one of five Division I players named to the first team. Beitzel is a finance and accounting major and has a 3.69 grade-point average. He was a third-team academic All-American last season.

"I've coached college basketball for 15 years," said UNC head coach B.J. Hill, "and Devon is in the top three of the toughest kids I've ever been around. He holds himself to such a high standard in everything he does, and not just on the basketball court. That's what sets him apart. I tell everyone who will listen how fortunate I feel to be able to coach a kid like that."

Colorado's Levi Knutson was named to the second team. A senior guard from Arapahoe

majoring in business administration, Knutson averages 11.4 points for the Buffaloes and has a 3.92 grade-point average.

To be eligible for academic All-America status, a player must have at least a 3.3 GPA.

Carwin, Hollingshead honored.

Two former Western State wrestlers will be among the four inducted into the NCAA Division II Wrestling Hall of Fame.

National champion and two-time runner-up Shane Carwin and national champion and runner-up Bob Hollingshead will be inducted on the eve of the national championships, March 10, in Kearney, Neb.

The other half of the class also has a Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference flavor: Nebraska-Kearney's Frank Kuchera and Jeff Sylvester.

Carwin was the 1999 national champion at 285 pounds after finishing runner-up in 1997 and 1996. The Greeley West High School graduate was also a two-time all-American football player for the Mountaineers. Carwin currently works as an engineer for the North Weld County Water District — and fights in mixed martial arts as a heavyweight. Carwin is 12-1 in the UFC with his only loss at the hands and feet of Brock Lesnar in the main event of UCC 116.

Hollingshead was national runner-up in 1963 and was national champion in 1964, helping the Mountaineers to the team title.

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He now lives in Grand Junction and is still active with the company he founded, RDH, Inc.

Vandiver to set Wyoming hoops record.

University of Wyoming senior guard Aubrey Vandiver will set a milestone tonight when the team plays at Air Force.

Vandiver will be in her 126th game as a Cowgirl. That will break the all-time record of 125 held by current graduate assistant Dominique Sisk, Megan McGuffey and Vandiver.

Eagles coach fined for stripping at game.

An assistant coach for the Colorado Eagles has been suspended for the rest of the regular season for stripping down to his slacks and socks during a sideline outburst over a skirmish among players.

The Coloradoan in Fort Collins reported that the Central Hockey League said Greg Pankewicz is also being fined an undisclosed amount of money for the incident during a game Saturday against the Mississippi RiverKings at the Budweiser Events Center in Loveland.

The league and the team say Pankewicz tore off his suit jacket, tie, shirt and undershirt and threw them and his shoes on the ice after linesman Chris Wilson tackled defenseman Joe Grimaldi to keep him out of a fight in the third period. The Eagles won 5-1.

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colorado

Bufs must be almost perfect to gain NCAA berth

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 02/23/2011 01:00:00 AM MST

Beginning with tonight's game at Texas Tech, only four regular-season games remain on the Colorado men's schedule, and the Buffaloes may need to win them all, plus make a run in the conference tournament, to have a shot at getting into the NCAA Tournament.

All that pressure must make it hard for players to even dribble, right?

That's not how CU coach Tad Boyle sees it.

"I don't think our guys feel extra pressure," he said after a practice this week. "One thing we talk about is to just try to enjoy it. This is the best time of the year to be a college basketball player.

"Every game means something. The wins are magnified. The losses are magnified. But you just have to enjoy the ride, enjoy the journey, enjoy the process."

Colorado (16-11, 5-7 Big 12) became the talk of the conference after opening with headline-grabbing victories over Missouri, Kansas State and Oklahoma State. Since then, however, the Buffs have won just two of nine games.

In order to finish the regular season with a winning Big 12 record, Colorado must sweep road games against Texas Tech (12-15, 4-8) tonight and March 2 against Iowa State (14-13, 1-11), and hold serve at home Saturday against fifth-ranked Texas (23-4, 11-1) and March 5 against Nebraska (18-8, 6-6).

Colorado senior guard Levi Knutson said the team believes it still has a shot at an NCAA Tournament bid. CU's current RPI of No. 93 suggests a trip to the National Invitation Tournament (NIT) is more likely. But running the table in the last four, including a win over the top-five Longhorns, could give the Buffs the bounce they need.

"Obviously, we would have liked to be a few games ahead of where we are right now," Knutson said. "But we're still in the thick of it (for the NCAA Tournament), absolutely."

Sweeping the last four won't be easy. Texas is as physically gifted as any team in the nation. Nebraska beat the Longhorns last week. And Texas Tech comes off perhaps its most impressive and improbable victory of the season.

Without their top offensive talent, senior forward Mike Singletary, being left at home with a calf injury, the Red Raiders won 78-69 at Baylor on

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Saturday.

On Jan. 29, Colorado blew a 14-point halftime lead and fell 70-66 at Baylor.

"That was a great win for Texas Tech," Boyle said of the Red Raiders winning in Waco last weekend. "I was watching the game thinking: 'Man, that should have been us. That should have been us.' "

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Colorado at Texas Tech

5:30 p.m. tonight, 760 AM

Spotlight on John Roberson: If it seems like the 5-foot-11 Roberson and 6-5 forward Mike Singletary have been in Lubbock for a decade, it's because both seniors have been starters since they were freshmen. Roberson, a point guard, is on a roll. He is averaging 17.6 points for the past 10 games, hitting 50 percent of his 3-pointers. Roberson also has dished out 42 assists in that span. His perimeter play figures to be a focal point of CU's defensive strategy.

Colorado: With one more conference victory, the Buffs would match last year's total (six). . . . CU is 1-5 in road play in the Big 12. . . . Sophomore guard Alec Burks became the 27th player in school history to reach 1,000 career points and stands at No. 24 with 1,035. . . . Buffs are 12-0 when shooting a higher percentage than their opponent, and 12-1 when reaching 80 points.

Texas Tech: In a rarity, the Red Raiders played Colorado back-to-back last season. In the lone regular-season meeting, CU won the regular-season finale 101-90 in Boulder, but four days later Texas Tech gained revenge. The ninth-seeded Red Raiders ousted No. 8 seed CU 82-67 in the first round of the Big 12 Tournament in Kansas City, Mo. That earned Texas Tech a spot in the National Invitation Tournament and sent CU home. The reverse might have happened if CU had won. . . . Red Raiders had four scorers in double figures Saturday in the win at Baylor, led by senior forward Brad Reese (17). . . . Mike Singletary (calf injury) did not play in the game at Waco, but CU coaches are expecting him in the lineup tonight.

Tom Kensler, The Denver Post

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