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CU BASKETBALL

CU Buffs win at Texas Tech for sixth Big 12 victory

Special to The Denver Post

POSTED: 02/23/2011 07:55:21 PM MST
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LUBBOCK, Texas — Tad Boyle did not want to play overtime.

With Alec Burks in foul trouble and Cory Higgins already on the bench, the Colorado basketball coach knew it would be tough to win if he did not have his leading scorers.

Boyle got his wish as CU beat Texas Tech 71-68 on Wednesday by forcing a turnover and blocking a shot on the Red Raiders' last two possessions.

"I love winning a game on defense," Boyle said. "I liked not fouling. We had talked about the possibility of fouling, but I said if we're having a great defensive possession, let's play it out, and our guys did."

Levi Knutson led the Buffaloes (17-11, 6-7 Big 12) with 18 points, while Marcus Relphorhe scored 15 and Burks added 14 points

and eight rebounds.

"I think we did a better job executing and sharing the ball so everyone was involved," Knutson said. "A lot of guys contributed. It was a great team win for us."

With his team leading by 14 points with 1:11 to play in the first half, Boyle couldn't help thinking back to the team's loss at Baylor on Jan. 29. Colorado led by 14 points in that game as well, but watched it slip away.

"We really have grown up and played better down the stretch than we did against Baylor," Boyle said. "We were up 14 at Baylor, and they made a run back and we didn't handle it well. Tonight we kept our composure."

CU BASKETBALL

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Colorado held Texas Tech scoreless for nearly five minutes, using a 9-0 run to build a 15-6 lead before John Roberson hit a 3-pointer from the top of the key with 11:26 left in the first half.

Colorado was 5-of-11 to open the game, while Texas Tech made just two of its first 12 field-goal attempts.

Colorado led 33-21 at the break, having shot 44 percent from the field. Texas Tech made 25 percent of its first-half shots.

"It was flat, guys were playing one-on-one, bad shots," Tech coach Pat Knight said of his team's first-half offense. "We shot 25 percent. It was awful."

The Red Raiders turned that around in the second half's opening minutes, making seven of their first 10 shots to close Colorado's lead to 42-38 with 14:58 to play.

They took the lead — their first since it was 3-2 — when Roberson hit a 3-pointer to make the score 44-43 with 13:27 left. That capped a 21-5 run by Tech.

Colorado trailed 54-53 when Burks scored six points in a 9-2 run to make it 60-56 with 7:23 to go.

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"We know we're a team that can take a team's run and respond," Colorado guard Nate Tomlinson said. "We did that tonight."

Mike Singletary, who missed Tech's trip to Baylor on Saturday with a knee injury, tied the game on two free throws and a jump shot. Yet it remained a one-possession game until Higgins hit two free throws to give Colorado a 70-65 lead with 1:19 remaining.

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FEBRUARY 24, 2011, 2:17 PM

CU road win over Texas Tech a confidence boost, players say

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

BOULDER — Wednesday night's 71-68 victory at Texas Tech "was big" for Colorado's psyche, CU junior forward Austin Dufault said Thursday prior to practice.

"We had been struggling on the road lately. It was nice to go in there and get a win," Dufault said. "We gave up a lead a little bit in the second half. But we fought through that, fought through some adversity. It was big to fight through all that and get a win."

Unlike in the Jan. 29 game at Baylor, when the Buffs let a 14-point halftime lead get away, Colorado quickly regained the lead against Texas Tech and then withstood several potential spurts by the Red Raiders.

"We definitely kept our composure a little more," Dufault said. "We stuck to the game plan and what we wanted to do. And we executed a lot better down the stretch than we did previously on the road."

CU sophomore guard Alec Burks said gaining a second conference road victory to go along with the Jan. 12 win at Kansas State "helps our confidence."

"It shows us that we can beat a team on the road that was playing good (Texas Tech was coming off a win at Baylor), so it's a great confidence boost," Burks said.

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Breaks finally go CU Buffs' way in win over Texas Tech

Knutson leads CU scorers with 18

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 02/23/2011 07:51:31 PM MST

LUBBOCK, Texas -- The Buffs were headed for another somber charter flight back to Boulder.

Marcus Relphorde missed two dunks. Levi Knutson missed two key free throws. Cory Higgins was 3-for-11 from the field and fouled out with the game on the line. Alec Burks was 4-for-12 shooting with four fouls.

And Texas Tech had turned a 14-point deficit in the first half into a four-point lead (51-47) with 11:38 remaining.

"I don't think we were thinking, 'Here we go again,'" Relphorde said. "We knew we weren't catching any breaks and we tried to focus on our defense and stuff we could control. Eventually, we were able to get some breaks at the end."

As the buzzer sounded, David Tairu missed a tough potential game-tying 3-pointer, and Colorado escaped West Texas with a 71-68 victory over the Red Raiders at United Spirit Arena.

CU, which was in the same position on the final regulation possession of the 73-70 overtime loss to Texas A&M and 58-56 victory over Kansas State earlier this month, opted to play defense instead of foul.

"There's something about our team and three-point games. I don't know what it is, but we're in a bunch of them," first-year Buffs head coach Tad Boyle said. "I think our experience helped. I love winning the game on defense. I like not fouling, and we had talked about the possibility of fouling, but I said, 'If we're having a great defensive possession, let's play it out.'"

"And that's what our guys did. That was the name of the game."

Knutson, who went 1-for-2 at the line with 15.3 seconds left, led the Buffs with 18 points.

"It was in and out," Knutson said of the missed free throw that would have ended the drama a little earlier. "But we've been in that situation up three with 15 seconds three times in the last couple weeks, and that definitely helped. We were confident we were going to get a stop."

Trailing 70-68, Jaye Crockett had an opportunity to tie the score at the line. He missed the first free throw, and Texas Tech was called for a lane violation on the second.

The sequence sapped the life out of the announced crowd of 8,085 moments after Brad Reese had made a key 3-pointer and Higgins was called for his fifth foul.

"It was really big for our confidence moving forward," point guard Nate Tomlinson said after making his first start since Feb. 5. "We know we're a team that can take a team's run and respond. We did that (Wednesday)."

Relphorde had a chance to give CU a 40-25 lead early in the second half but missed a left-handed slam dunk on the break.

Mike Singletary scored immediately on the other end, and after a 3-pointer by Tairu the Red Raiders had closed to within 40-32 with 16:51 remaining.

John Roberson hit three consecutive 3-pointers for the Red Raiders during a 22-4 run to give the home a 49-47 lead.

At that point, the game looked a lot like the Buffs' 70-66 loss in Waco on Jan. 29 when they coughed up a 17-point lead against Baylor.

"We really have grown up obviously and played better down the stretch than we did against Baylor," Boyle said. "This was the same deal. At Baylor, they made a run back and we didn't handle it as well. (Wednesday) we handled it, kept our composure, executed and made shots when we had to make shots."

The visitors took a deep breath and regained a 60-56 advantage after a dunk in transition by Alec Burks and a timely 3-pointer by Andre Roberson.

A 7-2 answer by the Red Raiders was capped with a dunk by D'wayn Roberts, but Knutson answered with a clutch jumper to give CU a 64-63 lead with 3:55 to go.

"Levi was rock solid," Boyle said. "We executed out of timeouts, and he made big shots when we needed big shots. He played like a senior does on the road."

Higgins, despite struggling offensively for most of the game, made a key shot with his toe on the arc and two free throws to give the Buffs a 70-65 edge with 1:19 left.

"Cory had a rough game, Alec had a rough game, Marcus had a rough game. Those three guys are pretty important to us," Boyle said. All three still scored in double figures. "The thing I liked about it is they played through it and they didn't let their frustrations on offense, their shots not going in and the lack of flow that they might have had on that end, affect the other end."

The Buffs had a 33-21 lead at the intermission after Texas Tech shot 25 percent (7-for-28) from the field.

Knutson had 10 points at the break despite missing his first free throw of the Big 12 season and going 1-for-5 from behind the arc.

The Red Raiders missed 10 of their first 12 shots. Roberson ended a Texas Tech scoring drought of 5:37 with 3-pointer to cut the deficit to six points.

The Buffs took their largest lead (33-19) on a basket by Knutson with 1:09 remaining. Both teams had eight turnovers during a sloppy first half and combined for 23 turnovers.

The disappointing Red Raiders (12-17, 4-9) were coming off a road victory at Baylor.

"I have a lot of respect for Pat Knight in this program," Boyle said. "That's why our kids are so happy in that locker room. It's not like we beat a bad team, we beat a good team."

The Buffs (17-11, 6-7) won their third true road game of the season and bring some momentum home for Saturday's game against No. 5 Texas at a sold out Coors Events Center.

"We're not used to being happy coming back from a road trip," Relphorde noted. "It's so much easier to fly home and the film is way better."

Colorado 71, Texas Tech 68

COLORADO (71)

FG FT Reb

Min M-A M-A O-T A PF PTS

Dufault 21 1-1 0-0 1-5 1 2 2

Tomlinson 24 1-2 0-0 0-2 2 0 3

Relphorde 27 6-14 3-3 1-6 2 3 15

Burks 25 4-12 6-6 3-8 2 4 14

Higgins 36 3-11 6-8 1-3 3 5 12

Sharpe 12 0-0 0-0 1-2 2 1 0

Coney 0 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Roberson 21 3-5 0-0 3-9 0 3 7

Knutson 30 7-14 2-4 1-1 0 1 18

Mills 4 0-0 0-0 0-1 0 0 0

Totals 200 25-59 17-21 12-40 12 19 71

Percentages: FG .424, FT .810.

3-Point Goals: 4-14, .286 (Knutson 2-7, Roberson 1-1, Tomlinson 1-2, Relphorde 0-4).

Team Rebounds: 3.

Blocked Shots: 0.

Turnovers: 11 (Higgins 4, Burks 4, Knutson 2, Roberson).

Steals: 6 (Roberson 3, Burks, Higgins, Dufault).

Technical Fouls: None.

TEXAS TECH (68)

FG FT Reb

Min M-A M-A O-T A PF PTS

Reese 23 3-10 0-1 4-7 4 4 7

Roberts 26 2-4 0-0 1-2 0 3 4

Lewandowski 20 2-5 2-2 0-2 1 1 6

Roberson 38 6-12 2-4 0-3 7 3 18

Tairu 21 2-9 2-4 1-1 0 4 8

Davis 4 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Willis 11 0-2 0-0 0-3 2 0 0

Dunn 0 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Crockett 24 4-7 0-2 1-4 1 3 8

Cooper 4 0-1 0-0 1-1 0 0 0

Singletary 29 6-11 5-7 2-6 1 2 17

Totals 200 25-61 11-20 12-34 16 20 68

Percentages: FG .410, FT .550.

3-Point Goals: 7-18, .389 (Roberson 4-9, Tairu 2-4, Reese 1-3, Willis 0-1, Crockett 0-1).

Team Rebounds: 5.

Blocked Shots: 4 (Reese 3, Crockett).

Turnovers: 12 (Roberson 3, Reese 2, Singletary 2, Crockett 2, Tairu 2, Willis).

Steals: 5 (Reese 3, Lewandowski, Singletary).

Technical Fouls: None.

Colorado 33 38--71

Texas Tech 21 47--68

A -- 8,085.

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Tomlinson knocked down a 3-pointer in the first half to give the Buffs a 31-18 lead and finished with two assists and no turnovers in 24 minutes.

Perfect no more

Levi Knutson played a terrific road game for the Buffs, scoring 10 of his 18 points in the first half. But the senior shooting guard missed a free throw. Two of them, actually, including one with a chance to ice the game in the final seconds.

That's news because Knutson had made all 14 shots from the stripe he had taken in the previous 12 Big 12 games.

The Buffs, who were shooting a conference-best 78.9 percent from the line (third nationally) entering the game, finished 17-for-21 (81 percent) at the stripe.

Meanwhile, Texas Tech went 11-for-20 (55 percent) at the line.

Knutson had not missed a free throw since Dec. 29 against Maryland Eastern Shore.

Series update

CU leads the all-time series 18-13 and evened its record in Lubbock at 7-7. The Buffs' last win at United Spirit Arena was on Jan. 20, 2001, (88-71).

The Red Raiders had won five of the previous six meetings, including a victory over the Buffs in the first round of the Big 12 Tournament last March.

Notable

The Buffs have won three true road games for the first time in three years. ... CU has won two Big 12 road games for the first time since 2005-06 season. ... The Buffs improved to 13-0 this season when shooting a higher percentage from the field than the opponent.

Quotable

"Me personally, I can't sit here and complain. Yeah, I'm upset we lost, but there are a lot more people worse off than I am. I'm just coaching basketball. I'm not a fireman or a policeman or a doctor, who add something to this world. I'm just coaching basketball," Texas Tech head coach Pat Knight after the loss to CU.

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