



CU students rushed the floor following the Buffs' victory.  
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



02/26/2011 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

## Bufs' Amazing Second-Half Rally Overtakes No. 5 Horns

**BOULDER** - All Tad Boyle has ever wanted from his Colorado basketball team was for it to compete. But at halftime Saturday at the Coors Events Center his Buffaloes' competitive spirit might have been measured in single figures . . . very low single figures.

Not surprisingly, their halftime deficit against No. 5 Texas was in double figures - 15 points - and that was an improvement on the 22-point advantage the powerful Longhorns had punched up just shy of 5 minutes before the break.

But what was headed toward becoming a UT yawner headed in another direction in the second half. The roaring, rollicking Events Crowd - a record fourth this season above 11,000 - was treated to 20 glorious minutes of gotcha: CU got competitive, got Texas

### BUFFALO EXTRAS



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91-89, and got itself squarely back into the NCAA Tournament picture.

"We're back in the conversation now," said senior Levi Knutson, who with sophomore Alec Burks provided the Buffs with their second-half offensive lift. "We just have to take care of business this week. These (last) two games are bigger now; they're probably going to determine it."

As large as Saturday's win was in giving CU a signature victory, a pair of final regular-seasons games becomes even larger in nudging the Buffs closer to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2003. CU plays at Iowa State Wednesday night, then returns to the Events Center to face Nebraska Saturday, March 5 in the regular-season finale. The Big 12 postseason tournament begins Wednesday, March 8 in Kansas City.

The Buffs' stunning Saturday comeback, believed to be the largest in CU hoops history, squared their Big 12 Conference record at 7-7 (18-11 overall) and dealt the Longhorns only their second Big 12 loss (12-2, 24-5 overall). Said CU senior Cory Higgins: "I've been part of a comeback before, but never of this significance."

Boyle said he was "very, very proud of our team," but admitted that he's "not a bracketologist, not a politician" and simply will depend on his team to play its way more solidly into NCAA Tournament contention. Yet he did call Saturday's outcome "a marquee win that goes to the top of our resume . . . we've had some good wins."

But Saturday's first half saw CU leave the court trailing 48-33 and Boyle "embarrassed . . . I didn't yell or scream (in the locker room), but I probably should have," he said.

Of the halftime atmosphere in the CU locker room, Knutson noted: "I wouldn't say it was angry. Obviously we were frustrated we didn't play well . . . we had urgency, that was the main feeling. We had to pick it up as soon as the ball got checked in for the second half."

Boyle's players knew what they had done (or had not) in the first 20 minutes and knew what was at stake.

"We were getting punked," Higgins said. "We weren't playing like ourselves. They were outthrusting, out-rebounding us . . . we knew we had to change that in the second half."

"If we wanted to do what we set out to do this year, we had 20 minutes to turn it around . . . we felt like the postseason might come down to the second half. We just left it all out there."

The Buffs were night-and-day different in the second half, which featured a 24-3 CU run. After losing track of Texas' shooters in the first half, "we wanted to make sure we got out on their shooters (in the second half)," Knutson said. The Buffs were doing little more than waving at J'Covan Brown's three-point attempts, allowing him ample space to hit four-of-five in the first 20 minutes. He hit none in the second.

And there was this very telling stat: At halftime, the Buffs were being out-rebounded 18-14. They finished the game with a 43-39 board edge against the Big 12's top rebounding team.

"Rebounding is a mentality," said Boyle, who had a pair of players in double digits on the boards - freshman Andre Roberson with 11, Burks with 10. "That (second half) shows what we're capable



of."

It also showed what Burks is capable of when his game gets in gear. Of his game-best 33 points, 24 were scored in the final 20 minutes. "Alec got us going," Boyle said, calling him "a special player." Higgins said his young teammate "really put us on his back - him and Levi especially putting down big shots the whole second half."

Knutson finished with 21 points, while Higgins added 11. The Buffs also had 21 assists, and their 91 points were the most scored against the Longhorns this year. And CU's 53.3 percent shooting from the field (32-of-60) marked the first time this season Texas had allowed an opponent to top 50 percent.

Longhorns Coach Rick Barnes summed up his team's surprising loss like this: "It's pretty simple; the team that played for 40 minutes won the game. I didn't think we had a real sense of urgency defensively from the get-go."

The Buffs stayed close for the first 4½ minutes, matching the Longhorns basket-for-basket and even taking an 11-9 lead on Burks' first field goal. But then the drought hit and Texas flourished.

Over the next 6:21, the Longhorns outscored the Buffs 16-0 and took a 25-11 lead. CU broke the dry spell on a Knutson layup, but Texas' 18-2 run had put the crowd in a trance.

The Longhorns led by as many as 22 (43-21) on a three-point play by Gary Johnson with 4:39 before the break. By intermission, the Buffs had stirred a little and trailed 48-33 - their largest halftime deficit of the season.

Burks was a paltry 3-of-11 from the field in the first half, which should have been an incentive for the second. Apparently, it was.

With Texas up 58-43, Burks went on a tear, scoring 11 of CU's next 14 points as the Buffs pulled to 58-55 with 12:55 to play. Burks got his points in a variety of ways, finally finding his jump shot as well as fiercely going to the basket. In the midst of CU's comeback, Texas had an unthinkable one field goal on 25 possessions, going 1-of-17 over a six-minute span.

The only downside of Burks' afternoon was his free throw shooting: He was 12-of-20 from the line, and the Buffs finished 19-of-32 from the line. But Texas was no better, hitting just 20 of its 34 attempts. Boyle attributed some of that to his team's second-half pace at altitude: "Thank God for the altitude."

But Boyle and his players called the Buffs' free-throw misses atypical. "I'll trust our team with free throws any day," Boyle said, and Knutson added of Burks: "Alec isn't going to have too many of those days."

After Marcus Relphorde buried a three-pointer from the right corner to cut the Horns' lead to 58-53, Burks hustled for a loose ball, beat his defender down the court and twisted inside for a layup. CU had pulled to 58-55, and the once-subdued Events Center crowd rediscovered its voice.

Burks came out for a 90-second breather and Texas got three free throws from Tristan Thompson to go up 61-55 with 11:28 remaining. But Burks countered, making four of six free throws as CU



closed to 61-59.

Then it was Knutson Time. The steely senior scored nine of CU's next 11 points, draining three treys as the Buffs surged ahead 70-65 - their largest lead of the game to that point - with 6:58 to play. Knutson's first three-pointer in that run put CU ahead 62-61 - its first advantage since 11-9.

Over the next 2 minutes, Burks and Knutson kept applying the pressure, accounting for 10 points between them - each hit a trey - as the Buffs built a 75-67 lead with under 5 minutes remaining.

Next, it was Higgins' turn. Playing in his school record 123rd game, the senior converted a conventional three-point play to push CU up 78-67 - a remarkable 11-point lead after once trailing by 22 - at the 4:06 mark.

But the Longhorns didn't cower. A dunk and a free throw by Thompson brought them to 81-73 with 2:32 left, and six points - three free throws and a deep trey by Jordan Hamilton - he and Brown led UT with 21 each - cut CU's lead to 87-83 with 29.7 seconds left.

Less than 10 seconds later, another deep three by Hamilton trimmed Texas' deficit to 88-86, but Burks answered with a pair of free throws to push CU ahead by four (90-86) with 14 seconds showing.

Finally, Hamilton misfired. Higgins pulled down maybe the biggest rebound of his career, was fouled and hit one of two free throws. Johnson buried a three at the buzzer - but the Buffs' two-point win was secure and ecstatic CU students rushed the court.

And this time, it was justified.

"It was crazy," Burks said of the wild on-court scramble. "You got to defend yourself. I wanted to get out of there . . . people were grabbing at me."

But they were grabbing for all the right reasons. For the Buffs and their fans, it was that kind of special afternoon, maybe inching toward a special season. Next week could determine it.

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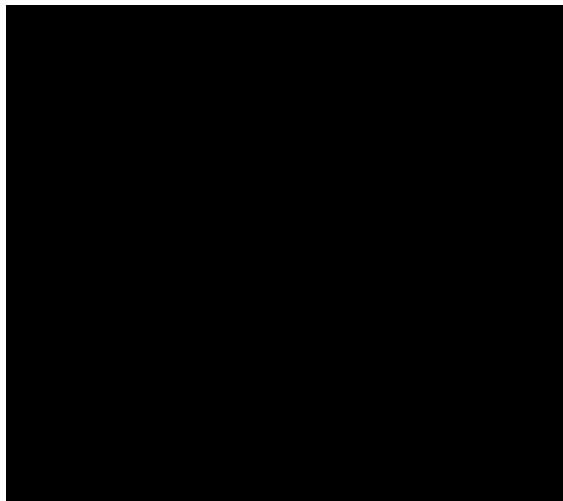


# CU rallies from 22 down to shock No. 5 Texas

## Burks' 33 has Buffs thinking tourney

**By Ryan Thorburn** Camera Sports Writer  
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 02/26/2011 04:19:04 PM MST



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Sox Walseth Court was the place to be late Saturday afternoon.

The student body took the celebration to the hardwood after Colorado's stunning 91-89 victory over No. 5 Texas on Saturday at the Coors Events Center.

The CU players were mobbed like rock stars after overcoming a 22-point deficit with a résumé-building win in late February that had a mid-March feel to it.

First-year Buffs head coach Tad Boyle was as giddy as any of the 11,034 witnesses, but some day he would like to play the role of favorite instead of Cinderella.

"Where the program is right now and where Texas is right now ... I want them to have fun. And if that's what they want to do, I don't want to take it away from them," Boyle said on the subject of fans storming the court. "But I do want to get to the point where we're playing on the road and get beat and they're

rushing the court on Colorado.

"Then we know we've arrived."

The Buffs (18-11, 7-7) might not have arrived yet, but they're trending towards the NCAA Tournament bubble after outscoring the Big 12-leading Longhorns (24-5, 12-2) 58-41 in the second half.

"We knew we didn't have much time if we wanted to do what we set out to do this year," Cory Higgins said of the 48-33 halftime hole CU dug itself. "We knew we had 20 minutes to turn it around and our sense of energy picked up.

"We even talked about it in the locker room that our postseason might come down to the second half. We left it all out there."

In the first half it was men vs. Buffs. Texas shot 55.9 percent from the field, went on a 14-0 spurt, and led 43-21 after Gary Johnson completed an and-one with 4:39 remaining before the intermission.

"I just didn't think we were competing," Boyle said. "I thought that was the first time all year long where we got outplayed significantly in our own building. ... It was disheartening."

CU switched to a 2-3 zone defense and finally showed some signs of life with seven unanswered points.

"That's a last resort for me if you see me go into a 2-3 zone," Boyle said. "I'm one step away from a white towel over there."

True to the coach's instincts, the Buffs did not abandon the man-to-man and played their best 20 minutes of defense of the season in the second half.

Texas, which looked like a No. 1 NCAA Tournament seed in the first half, shot 29.4 percent from the floor in the second



half. During a 24-possession stretch, the Longhorns went 1-for-17 from the floor and 6-for-15 at free-throw line.

Alec Burks scored 11 of his game-high 33 points during a 14-0 CU run to cut the deficit to 58-55 with 12:56 remaining.

Levi Knutson, who finished with 21 points off the bench, gave the Buffs a 62-61 lead on a 3-pointer with 9:48 to go and extended the cushion to five points with another swish from behind the arc moments later.

"On the offensive end, (Burks) really put us on his back and knocked down big shots," Higgins said. "Him and Levi had unbelievable second halves to put us in position to win the game."

A three-point play by Higgins brought an 8-0 surge by CU to a close and gave the home team a 78-67 lead with 4:06 left.

The Longhorns were within 87-83 after a 3-pointer by Jordan Hamilton with 29.7 seconds left. CU then turned the ball over on the in-bounds play after a timeout, and Hamilton missed a 3-pointer as the capacity crowd held its breath.

Burks went 1-for-2 at the line after grabbing the rebound, and Hamilton made the score 88-86 with another 3-pointer with 18.4 seconds left.

Burks missed eight free throws in the game but converted two from the line with 14 seconds left to make it a two-possession game (90-86).

The Longhorns had won 12 Big 12 games by double digits and had given up an average of 55.7 points in 13 conference games entering their final trip to Boulder.

The Buffs will take the momentum into March when they play last-place Iowa State in Ames on Wednesday before wrapping up the regular season at home against Nebraska next Saturday.

"It's huge," Boyle said. "It's a marquee win, it goes to the top of our résumé. We've had some good wins. We have to continue to win and play well down the stretch. Iowa State on Wednesday is a huge game, but if we can finish strong, they have to take 68 teams."

## **Colorado 91, Texas 89**

### **TEXAS**

#### **FG FT Reb**

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

Johnson 34 5-11 7-15 3-7 1 4 17

Hamilton 30 7-24 2-2 3-7 1 3 21

Thompson 38 5-11 6-9 5-8 3 5 16

Balbay 27 1-1 0-0 1-3 4 4 2

Joseph 31 5-8 0-2 1-4 5 4 12

Lucas 5 0-1 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Brown 27 6-12 5-5 1-4 5 4 21

Hill 8 0-0 0-1 0-3 0 2 0

Totals 200 29-68 20-34 17-39 19 26 89



**Percentages:** FG .426, FT .588.

**3-Point Goals:** 11-23, .478 (Hamilton 5-13, Brown 4-6, Joseph 2-3, Lucas 0-1).

**Team Rebounds:** 3.

**Blocked Shots:** 3 (Hamilton 2, Thompson).

**Turnovers:** 6 (Johnson 2, Brown 2, Joseph, Thompson).

**Steals:** 5 (Brown 2, Hamilton 2, Balbay).

**Technical Fouls:** None.

## COLORADO

### FG FT Reb

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

Dufault 23 4-5 0-0 1-3 1 5 9

Tomlinson 27 1-1 0-0 0-3 3 2 3

Relphorde 28 2-6 0-0 0-4 3 4 5

Burks 36 10-21 12-20 2-10 4 1 33

Higgins 31 4-8 3-5 0-4 3 2 11

Sharpe 3 0-1 0-0 2-2 0 1 0

Roberson 26 3-4 2-5 3-11 5 4 9

Knutson 26 8-14 2-2 0-3 2 4 21

Totals 200 32-60 19-32 11-43 21 23 91

**Percentages:** FG .533, FT .594.

**3-Point Goals:** 8-21, .381 (Knutson 3-7, Dufault 1-1, Tomlinson 1-1, Roberson 1-2, Relphorde 1-3, Burks 1-6, Higgins 0-1).

**Team Rebounds:** 3.

**Blocked Shots:** 4 (Roberson 2, Dufault 2).

**Turnovers:** 10 (Higgins 3, Relphorde 3, Roberson 2, Burks, Knutson).

**Steals:** 2 (Dufault, Knutson).



**Technical Fouls:** None.

**Texas 48 41--89**

**Colorado 33 58--91**

**A --** 11,034.

**Officials --** Rick Hartzell, Andrew Walton, K.C. Ely.

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# CU Buffs undersized, but not overpowered by Texas

By **Ryan Thorburn** Camera Sports Writer  
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 02/26/2011 11:40:06 PM MST



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CU's fortunes in the rebounding department this season. The true freshman grabbed a game-high 11 boards against the likes of Tristan Thompson (6-8, 225 pounds) and Gary Johnson (6-6, 238).

"I didn't want a freshman to out-rebound me," Alec Burks said of Roberson's influence on the team.

Burks, who scored 33 points on Saturday, has been CU's most productive rebounder since Big 12 play began. The 6-6, 195-pound guard had 10 boards against Texas.

"Texas is the top rebounding team in the league, and we out-rebounded them by four," Boyle noted. "It just shows you what we're capable of."

Entering the game, Texas was averaging a conference-best 40.9 rebounds. CU was seventh (35.8 rpg) among Big 12 teams in the critical category.

Roberson has 214 rebounds this season and will likely break the CU freshman record held by Stephane Pelle (218) on Wednesday at Iowa State.

## Home cooking

The Buffs are now 14-2 at home this season with losses to No. 6 Kansas (82-78) and No. 22 Texas A&M (73-70, OT). That ties the record for most wins at the Coors Events Center in a season.

Saturday's crowd of 11,034 was the fourth sellout of the season, the most in the 32-year history of the venue.

CU will host Nebraska for the final Big 12 game at the Coors Events Center at 7 p.m. next Saturday.

The Cornhuskers are headed to the Big Ten and the Buffs to the Pac-12 next season.

"The crowd was huge," Cory Higgins said. "They don't get enough credit. I don't think we'd have such a good record if it wasn't for them."

Basketball players are bigger in Texas, too.

Especially when the Longhorns are standing next to the lean Buffs.

But Colorado head coach Tad Boyle's philosophy is that rebounding is a mentality.

And his undersized Buffs found a way to win the rebounding battle 43-39 during a 91-89 upset of No. 5 Texas on Saturday at the Coors Events Center.

"We don't have better athletes and we don't have better size. We just battled them," Boyle explained of David cleaning the glass better than Goliath. "Bodies were flying, guys were hitting the deck and coming over to the bench with cuts on the arm. We just had to compete."

Andre Roberson, who is from San Antonio, has helped change



**Higgins milestone**

Higgins tied Pelle (1999-2003) and Will Smith (1996-2000) for the most games played at CU with 123. The senior, who has started 122 games for the Buffs, will break the record on Wednesday at Iowa State.

The senior finished with 11 points, four rebounds and three assists.

**Series update**

Texas leads 14-9 but had its six-game winning streak in the series snapped. The Longhorns have a 13-6 edge in Big 12 games and dropped to 4-6 all-time in Boulder.

**Quotable**

"I trust our team with free throws. Today was atypical. We're third in the country in free-throw shooting, so I trust our guys at the line. We'll take a free-throw shooting contest with anybody," Boyle on CU's shaky 19-for-32 effort at the line.

**Notable**

CU scored 58 points in the second half. Texas had held 13 opponents under that total for entire games this season. ... The 91 points was the most the Longhorns had allowed this season. Texas gave up 82 in an OT loss to UConn.

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## Ringo: Colorado proves its mettle vs. Texas

**By Kyle Ringo** Camera Sports Writer  
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 02/26/2011 08:34:45 PM MST

It was fair to wonder late in the first half Saturday afternoon at the Coors Events Center whether the Colorado Buffaloes had any heart.

Sure, coach Tad Boyle's men's basketball team had turned in some inspired performances and defeated some good teams earlier in the season, but the Texas Longhorns were making the Buffs look awful in a game crucial to the their postseason hopes. CU was down by 22. It was an embarrassment in the making.

A sellout crowd that included a healthy dose of burnt orange T-shirts soon had its answer.

Against a top-five team from deep in the heart of Texas, we found out what is deep in the heart of this group in silver, black and gold.

Character and resiliency come to mind.

Pride and toughness seem to fit well, too.

Those characteristics and a coaching staff that didn't panic and kept working hard and encouraging players to do the same allowed the Buffs to win 91-89 and keep their NCAA Tournament dreams alive by a slim margin.

Overcoming a 22-point lead against anyone in basketball is an accomplishment. It requires uncommon effort and determination. Doing it against the No. 5 team in the nation takes it to another level. Now consider that the Buffs did it with basically seven players.

A total of eight Buffs played in Saturday's triumph that sent people spilling out of the building grinning ear to ear. One of those players, freshman guard Shannon Sharpe, played only 3 minutes and all of it came in the first half when CU was floundering.

There aren't many comeback wins in the history of this program that can match what these Buffs accomplished Saturday, especially considering their lack of depth.

"It's amazing," senior Cory Higgins said.

He will get no argument here.

The final score belies just how impressive the Buffs' effort was. With about 2 minutes remaining in the game, CU had not only come all the way back, it led by 11 and was threatening to totally reverse the blowout. Some sharpshooting and a refusal to go away by the Longhorns prevented that, but not the Buffs' victory.

Students rushed the court when the final horn sounded. It was a scene you might have thought impossible while sitting through dozens of losses in recent years often with more gold seats available than filled.

If you missed Saturday's game, you missed the best overall performance in the two-year career of sophomore Alec Burks.

He scored 33 points with 10 rebounds and four assists. He committed only one turnover. The comeback, the victory, the celebration, he was at the center of it all.

Burks took over the game during one stretch in the first 10 minutes of the second half. It was the kind of performance yours truly questioned whether Burks had in him earlier this season. At that point, he hadn't demonstrated it. Now there is no question he is among the elite players in the Big 12 Conference and the nation.



Someone is going to have to do the sales job of a lifetime to convince the young man to stay at CU for another year at the end of this season instead of turning pro. No, he won't immediately be a star at the next level, but he can succeed there and develop into one later.

But there is plenty of time to worry about that.

Now the Buffs have no choice but to build on their accomplishment. A loss at Iowa State on Wednesday or at home next weekend against Nebraska would certainly sour them in the eyes of what already figures to be a skeptical NCAA Tournament selection committee.

The Buffs have a chance to get to 20 wins in these next seven days and claim a decent seed in the conference tournament. As players correctly pointed out Saturday, if they play the way they did against the Longhorns, they can beat anybody.

The Buffs' next outing will be their first in the month of March this season. But it will be the first relevant game they have played in March in years made possible by one heck of a second half Saturday.

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CU BASKETBALL

## Bufs state postseason case with upset of No. 5 Texas

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

POSTED: 02/27/2011 01:00:00 AM MST

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BOULDER — At this time of the college basketball season, when the NCAA Tournament selection committee isn't talking and nobody knows what its members are thinking, getting "in the conversation" is about all a potential bubble team can hope for.

With 33 points from sophomore guard Alec Burks and feeding off energy provided from a sold-out Coors Events Center, Colorado not only jumped into that conversation Saturday with its come-from-behind 91-89 victory over No. 5 Texas, the Buffaloes became a talk of the sports world by knocking off a possible No. 1 seed.

Colorado (18-11, 7-7 Big 12) trailed by as many as 22 points in the first half and was still down 48-33 at the break. At game's end, many of the 11,000-plus fans



CU fans swarm Alec Burks after the sophomore's 33 points help the Buffaloes defeat Texas, a top contender for a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament, on Saturday at the Coors Events Center. (Kathryn Scott Osler, The Denver Post)

stormed the court.

"We had 20 minutes to turn (our season) around," senior guard Cory Higgins said of the second half. "I can't describe how good this feels from where we had to come."

Not giving up or giving in after what Colorado coach Tad Boyle called "an embarrassing" first half, Colorado stepped up the intensity of its man-to-man defense and hit 58.1 percent from the field in the second half against a Longhorns team (24-5, 12-2) that began the day leading the Big 12 in field-goal shooting defense.

Texas shot just 29.4 percent after halftime and appeared to get rattled when Colorado got back into the game with a 14-0 run.

Colorado defeated a top-five team for the first time since clipping

then-No. 3 Texas here in 2003 — which happens to be the last season in which the Buffs played in the NCAA Tournament.

"I'm not a 'bracketologist' . . . but this goes to the top of our resume," Boyle said when asked about postseason play. "We don't have their athletes, we don't have their size. We just had to compete. We had to rebound. We had to have that mentality."

Against a Texas frontcourt that includes at least two ready-made future pros in 6-foot-7, 220-pound sophomore

Jordan Hamilton and 6-8, 225-pound Tristan Thompson, Colorado fought for a 43-39 rebounding advantage. Texas tops the conference in rebounding, but on this day the only Texan on CU's roster, 6-7 freshman Andre Roberson, did the most damage.

The San Antonio native held his ground and finished with 11 boards, one more than the 6-6 Burks.

### COLORADO BUFFALOES

Krieger: Goal now for Buffs: Outrun the pack  
 Buffs state postseason case with upset of No. 5 Texas  
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 Roberson needs Texas-sized effort  
 Beating No. 5 Texas could propel Colorado


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"It was tough in there," Boyle said. "Guys were coming to the bench bleeding."

With more than a dozen NBA scouts credentialed for the game, Burks put on a show — scoring 24 of his 33 points in the second half on an array of jump shots, pull-up moves and baseline drives.

"I was just trying to make plays," he said.

Had Burks been better at the free-throw line (he was 12-for-20) and hit another 3-pointer or two (1-for-6), he might have reached 40 points or more.

"He really put us on his back," Higgins said of Burks.

Also sparking the comeback was senior guard Levi Knutson. The former Arapahoe High standout finished with 19 points and hit three 3-pointers from the left corner in quick succession, the first of which gave Colorado a 62-61 lead, its first since going up 11-9 in the early minutes of the game.

To say that this was a must-win for Colorado would be an understatement. The Buffs, who have regular-season games remaining Wednesday night at Iowa State and Saturday night's home finale against Nebraska, entered last Monday with an official RPI of 93, meaning 92 teams were listed ahead of them for the expanded 68-team NCAA Tournament.

"We just said we were going to do it at the defensive end," Higgins said. "We just know now that if we do what we're supposed to do, we can play with anybody in the country."

That's exactly what the NCAA Tournament selection committee wants to see.

#### FG FT Reb

##### UT (24-5, 12-2) Min M-A M-A O-T A PF Pts

Johnson 34 5-11 7-15 3-7 1 4 17

Hamilton 30 7-24 2-2 3-7 1 3 21

Thompson 38 5-11 6-9 5-8 3 5 16

Balbay 27 1-1 0-0 1-3 4 4 2

Joseph 31 5-8 0-2 1-4 5 4 12

Lucas 5 0-1 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Brown 27 6-12 5-5 1-4 5 4 21

Hill 8 0-0 0-1 0-3 0 2 0

**Totals 200 29-68 20-34 17-39 19 26 89**

Percentages: FG .426, FT .588. **3-point goals:** 11-23, .478 (Hamilton 5-13, Brown 4-6, Joseph 2-3, Lucas 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 3. **Blocked shots:** 3 (Hamilton 2, Thompson). **Turnovers:** 6 (Johnson 2, Brown 2, Joseph, Thompson). **Steals:** 5 (Brown 2, Hamilton 2, Balbay). **Technical fouls:** None.

#### FG FT Reb

##### CU (18-11, 7-7) Min M-A M-A O-T A PF Pts

Dufault 23 4-5 0-0 1-3 1 5 9

Tomlinson 27 1-1 0-0 0-3 3 2 3

Relphorde 28 2-6 0-0 0-4 3 4 5

Burks 36 10-21 12-20 2-10 4 1 33

Higgins 31 4-8 3-5 0-4 3 2 11

Sharpe 3 0-1 0-0 2-2 0 1 0

Roberson 26 3-4 2-5 3-11 5 4 9

Knutson 26 8-14 2-2 0-3 2 4 21

**Totals 200 32-60 19-32 11-43 21 23 91**

Percentages: FG .533, FT .594. **3-point goals:** 8-21, .381 (Knutson 3-7, Dufault 1-1, Tomlinson 1-1, Roberson 1-2, Relphorde 1-3, Burks 1-6, Higgins 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 3. **Blocked shots:** 4 (Roberson 2, Dufault 2). **Turnovers:** 10 (Higgins 3, Relphorde 3, Roberson 2, Burks, Knutson). **Steals:** 2 (Dufault, Knutson). **Technical fouls:** None.

**Texas 48 41 — 89**

**Colorado 33 58 — 91**

A — 11,034. **Officials** —Rick Hartzell, Andrew Walton, K.C. Ely.

Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280 or [tkensler@denverpost.com](mailto:tkensler@denverpost.com)

## Bufs' brag sheet

A look at CU's NCAA Tournament resume heading into the final week of the regular season:



Fans storm the court and swarm Alec Burks (10) as CU came from behind to beat Texas 91-89. The University of Colorado Buffaloes men's basketball takes on the Texas Longhorns at the Coors Events Center in Boulder.

Kathryn Scott Osler, The Denver Post  
(THE DENVER POST | Kathryn Scott Osler)



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**RPI:** Officially 93 on Monday by the NCAA (rankings come out weekly); currently 77 (according to [live-RPI.com](#)) after wins over Texas Tech on Wednesday and No. 5 Texas on Saturday.

**Big wins:** Indiana (in Las Vegas), then-No. 9 Missouri, at No. 21 Kansas State, Oklahoma State, Kansas State, at Texas Tech, No. 5 Texas.

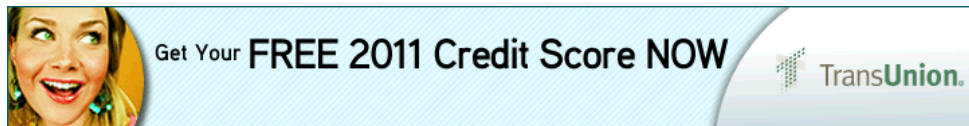
**Bad losses:** at San Francisco, at Harvard, at Oklahoma.

### How the comeback was completed

- Texas leads 43-21 with 4:39 left in the first half, but CU cuts its deficit to 48-33 at halftime.
- Texas has a 58-41 lead on an alley-oop dunk by Tristan Thompson with 16:28 remaining. A short jumper by Alec Burks starts a CU rally.
- Colorado goes on 14-0 run and pulls within three at 58-55, after a layup by Burks off a steal with 12:55 to go.
- A 3-pointer from the right corner by CU senior guard Levi Knutson with 9:47 left gives the Buffs their first lead, 62-61, since 11-9.
- Colorado never trails again, going up by as much as 81-70 before hanging on for the win.

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DAVE KRIEGER  
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Columnist

DAVE KRIEGER

## Krieger: Goal now for Buffs: Outrun the pack

By Dave Krieger  
Denver Post Columnist

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Krieger: Goal now for Buffs: Outrun the pack

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Krieger: Nuggets blinked first, and Anthony is the winner

Krieger: Departing sports heroes often good guys off court or field

Krieger: Lockout is a lock, sadly

Krieger: CU Buffs' lack of depth, big men catches up to them

Krieger: Finances may sway Broncos

Krieger: Sharpe set standard for play, one-liners

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BOULDER — History will record that the Tad Boyle era at CU began when this season did, but in fact it began Saturday afternoon before a full house at Coors Events Center that couldn't quite believe what it was seeing.

Not just because of the signature victory over a top-five program. And not just because of the stunning comeback from a 22-point first-half deficit. Not even because sophomore Alec Burks justified a mountain of hype and expectations by putting the Buffs on his back with a dominating 33-point, 10-rebound effort.

No, what happened to Rick Barnes' No. 5-ranked Texas Longhorns was the sort of high-altitude blitzkrieg Boyle wants to make CU's calling card. To keep his players on board with the lung-burning, heart-thumping anaerobic effort it requires, Boyle needed them to see it pay off.

Man, did it ever. The Buffaloes outscored the Longhorns 58-41 in the second half and by an amazing 70-46 from the moment Boyle took his second timeout with 4:39 left in the first half, his team down 43-21.

"The way we play, the tempo we played at, you saw them miss a lot of free throws down the stretch," the first-year CU coach said. "You saw them miss a lot of shots down the stretch. I think there's something to it. The style of play that we're playing is the right thing to do in Boulder, Colorado. And they're not the first team to get gassed in the second half.

"Thank God for the altitude. I believe it. Other coaches don't believe it, but I believe it."

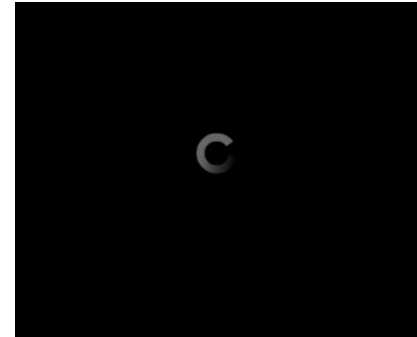
In fact, Boyle could tell the pace was where he wanted it to be from the effect on his own guys, who train at Boulder's 5,430 feet.

"I did look out on the floor a couple times and (Burks) was gassed," he said. "I tried to use the media timeouts. Levi (Knutson) called out one time and I got him out. And then Alec's like, 'Coach, I might need a blow here.' I was like, 'All right, Levi, hurry up and get your oxygen back.'"

This is why Boyle is always talking about Doug Moe. The former Nuggets coach made Denver's mile-high altitude such a factor in the minds of opponents that Houston's Hakeem Olajuwon famously brought bottled oxygen with him to the visitor's bench, psyched out before the game even began. Moe's teams routinely dominated at home, which is Boyle's first goal in resurrecting CU basketball.

"I want to have the best home-court advantage going forward into the Pac-12, and I want our fans to take pride in it," he said. "The only way we're going to do that is if we keep doing what we need to do on the court, and playing the right way and playing with unbelievable energy."

So far, so good. The Buffs are 14-2 at home. A 15th win over Nebraska on senior



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night next weekend would set a school record and lend credibility to Boyle's high-octane game plans. Nothing persuades like success.

"We just knew we didn't have much time," senior Cory Higgins said. "If we wanted to do what we set out to do this year, we had 20 minutes to turn it around, so I guess you could say our sense of urgency picked up. We even talked about it in the locker room — 'If we want to do things in the postseason, it's going to come down to the second half.' So I felt like we just left it all out there."

That's pretty much Boyle's game plan in a nutshell: Run 'em into the ground. Texas, the Big 12's best rebounding team, was outrebounded by the smallest team in the conference through hustle, effort and pace. The Longhorns wouldn't admit it — in fact, Barnes groused mostly about the refs afterward — but the Buffs wore them out.

Suddenly, seniors such as Higgins and Knutson have a chance to go out with more than a murmur. Wins at Iowa State and at home against Nebraska would give the Buffs 20, often a requirement for a role in March Madness. CU now has a realistic shot at sixth place in the Big 12 — the NCAA Tournament bubble spot.

"It's a marquee win," Boyle said. "K-State's playing awful well down the stretch, and we swept them. Missouri's a good team, and we beat them. We've had some good wins. We've got to continue to win. We have to continue to play well down the stretch. Iowa State on Wednesday is a huge game, but if we can finish strong, they've got to take 68 teams."

It would be a memorable finish to Boyle's first season at the helm. But whether or not it plays out that way, Saturday's upset is now Exhibit A of how the Buffs intend to play.

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## NCAA Men's Basketball

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Updated: 2/26/2011 - 9:19 PM - Note: all times are Eastern Time

**Colorado 91, Texas 89**

Coors Events Center - Attendance: 11034

Box score

Game story

Boulder, CO (Sports Network) - Alec Burks scored 24 of his game-high 33 points in the second half, and the Colorado Buffaloes overcame a 22-point first-half deficit to top the fifth-ranked Texas Longhorns, 91-89, at Coors Events Center.

"We knew we would have to play really well to beat these guys," Colorado coach Tad Boyle said. "And in the second half we sure did. I think that says something about our character and toughness, both mentally and physically."

Burks shot 10-of-21 from the field and grabbed 10 rebounds for Colorado (18-11, 7-7 Big 12), which has won three of four. Levi Knutson scored 21 points while Cory Higgins added 11 for the victors.

Jordan Hamilton and J'Covan Brown both finished with 21 points to lead the Longhorns (24-5, 12-2), who have dropped two of three. Gary Johnson added 17 points while Tristan Thompson scored 16 and added eight boards in the loss.

"It's pretty simple," Texas coach Rick Barnes said. "The team that played for 40 minutes won the game. I didn't think we had a real sense of urgency defensively from the get-go."

Texas shot 56 percent in the first half, but a paltry 29.4 percent in the final 20 minutes to drop its second consecutive road game. The Longhorns lost at Nebraska last Saturday.

Texas took a 48-33 lead into the locker room, and after the teams traded baskets to open the second half Burks' jumper at 15:54 started a 14-0 Buffaloes run to begin the comeback. Burks ended the run with a full court driving layup at 13:03, making it a one-possession game, 58-55.

Burks scored 11 in the run, and after a Knutson three-pointer at 9:46 the Buffaloes took a 62-61 lead. Colorado widened their lead to 65-61 with another Knutson three at 9:06. The basket capped an even longer 21-3 run that eclipsed most of the second half.

Texas ended the bleeding with a Hamilton three at 7:49, but another Knutson triple just inside seven minutes gave Colorado a 70-65 advantage. The Buffaloes lead reached 78-67 with a Higgins three-point conversion at 4:06.

The Longhorns attempted a late comeback, and after Knutson fouled Brown in the act of shooting on a three with 38 seconds remaining, he made all three to cut the deficit to 85-80.

Hamilton made a three-pointer with 18 ticks remaining to cut the deficit to two, however Burks made a pair from the line with 14 seconds remaining and Higgins made 1-of-2 from the line in the final three seconds to secure the victory.

The game remained close in the first half, with the teams trading the lead in the opening minutes. However, Hamilton tied the game at 11-11 with a jumper at 15:19, the basket started a 20-2 Texas run, capped by a 1-of-2 effort the line from Thompson, to give the Longhorns a 29-13 advantage.

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Brown and Johnson paced the Longhorns with 14 and 13 points, respectively, in the first half. The Buffaloes ended the opening 20 minutes on a 12-5 run, cutting their deficit to 48-33 entering the locker room.

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## Colorado basketball upsets Texas Longhorns

Bufs rally from 22 point deficit for the win

*By Caryn Maconi on February 27, 2011*

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The Buffs rallied from behind, and they never looked back.

On Saturday afternoon in the Coors Events Center, the Colorado men's basketball upset the No.5 Texas Longhorns, 91-89.

Starting the second half with a 15 point deficit, the Buffs saw an opportunity for a comeback, and they took it.

"We were pretty amped up because we knew we could play a lot better," said senior guard Levi Knutson, who scored 21 points against the Longhorns.



Sophomore guard Alec Burks is swarmed by students who rushed the court following the Buffaloes' 91-89 victory over the 5th-ranked Texas Longhorns on Saturday. (CU Independent/Jonathan Zwick)

The Buffs' effort in the first half was nothing to be proud of. With the score 11-11 early in the half, CU entered a scoring drought and fell behind, 11-25. The Longhorns widened their lead to 43-22 with 4:39 left in the half.

Colorado was able to make up only seven of those points before the buzzer, making the halftime score 48-33. It was the CU's biggest halftime deficit of the season.

"They were out-hustling us and out-rebounding us," said senior guard Cory Higgins.

Head coach Tad Boyle said he knew what needed to be done in the second half, but he wasn't sure whether or not his Buffs could make it happen.

"We talked about defending, we talked about rebounding, and we talked about executing on offense," Boyle said. "[But] I didn't know what to expect."

But when the second half started, something clicked, and the energy in the Coors Events Center started to change.

Four minutes into the second half, sophomore guard Alec Burks, who shot just 3-of-11 from the field in the first half, went on a scoring streak.



When Burks closed the gap to single digits at 58-50, Knutson felt the momentum kick in.

"That's when I knew we were there to fight until the end of the game," Knutson said.

Senior forward Marcus Relphorde then hit a three-pointer, bringing the score within five points.

Burks kept on scoring, slowly closing the point gap to two. It was a three-pointer from Knutson with 9:43 left in the half that finally gave the Buffs the lead, 62-61.

From that point on, Knutson's momentum was unstoppable. He hit two more three-pointers over the next three minutes, giving CU a five-point lead at 70-65.

"It was an unbelievable accomplishment to be up five," Boyle said. "That's when I thought, okay, we can finish this thing off."



Sophomore guard Alec Burks shoots over Texas defender Dogus Balbay during the second half of the Buffaloes' 91-89 win over the 5th-ranked Longhorns on Saturday. (CU Independent/Jonathan Zwick)

Burks, Knutson, and Higgins didn't let up, hitting shot after shot to give the Buffs a game-high 11 point lead with 4:06 left in the half.

The Longhorns didn't give up the fight.

Texas freshman Tristan Thompson scored on a dunk and a free throw with 2:32 left in the half. Sophomore Jordan Hamilton then added seven with three free throws and two treys, bringing the score uncomfortably close 88-86 with 14 seconds to go.

"They didn't make it easy for us," Boyle said.

The Buffs have seen plenty of close games this season, and they're used to the pressure.

"We've been in so many games like that," Higgins said. "So we knew what we had to do."

Burks eased the pressure by making two free throws. Hamilton went for another three, but missed this time, and with three seconds to go, Burks made another free throw to bring the score to 91-86.

Texas senior Gary Johnson made a three-pointer at the final buzzer, but the Buffs had already secured their win. With a final score of 91-89, the crowd rushed the court to celebrate the upset.

"It's crazy with all those people around you," said Burks, who led all scorers with 33 total points. "You can't move."

Boyle said the support from fans was key, but that he hopes one day a win like this won't seem like an upset.

"I want to get to the point where we're on the road and we get beat, and they rush the court because they beat Colorado," Boyle said. "That's when we know we've arrived."

Saturday's win may have meant the most to senior Cory Higgins. It was his 123rd career game, tying CU's all-time record.



"I've always wanted to be a part of that since freshman year," Higgins said. "I can't describe how good it feels just knowing where we came from."

After such a crucial win, the Buffs look forward to the last two games of the season and their chances at a spot in the NCAA Tournament.

**Will the Buffs make it to the NCAA tournament?**

**Yes at 50%, No at 50%**



"It puts us in the mix- we're in the conversation now," Knutson said. "We can't look back, so we've just got to look to the next two games."

The Buffs play Iowa State on the road this Wednesday. On Saturday, they take to the Coors Events Center one more time, battling Nebraska in their last regular season conference game.

"[The win] gave us added confidence, if anything," Higgins said. "If we play like we're supposed to, we can beat anybody."

Contact CU Independent Staff Writer at [Caryn.maconi@colorado.edu](mailto:Caryn.maconi@colorado.edu).

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# UT men see 22-point lead vanish in loss to Colorado

By **Mark Rosner**

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Updated: 10:35 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 26, 2011

Published: 10:28 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 26, 2011

Dogus Balbay didn't necessarily see the collapse coming.

He just warned his teammates about the possibility.

When the fifth-ranked Longhorns went to their locker room at Colorado ahead by 15 points, after once leading by 22, Balbay offered some perspective.

"Fifteen points, I told my teammates, it was nothing," Balbay said later.

Nothing indeed. Colorado, led by 24 second-half points from hard-driving guard Alec Burks, came back to defeat the Longhorns 91-89 in front of 11,034 fans at the Coors Events Center, a sellout.

The 6-foot-6 Burks finished with 33 points and 10 rebounds.

The Longhorns (24-5) finished in a tie with Kansas for first place in the Big 12 at 12-2, after losing for the second time in three games.

Colorado (18-11, 7-7) led by 11 with less than three minutes left.

Not long ago, the Longhorns seemed to have reservations for the NCAA tournament as a No. 1 seed. Now, after losing at unranked Nebraska and Colorado a week apart, the Longhorns will likely need the misfortune of others to be awarded a top seed.

When coach Rick Barnes was asked about the damage to the Longhorns' seeding caused by the two recent defeats, he said, "We've done a good job up to this point. If we are good enough, we're good enough."

Colorado set a season high for points scored against the Longhorns. Illinois needed overtime for the previous best, 84. The Buffs shot 58 percent in the second half and 53.3 for the game, the highest by a Longhorn opponent this season.

Lately, Texas is making a habit of losing leads, though not always the game. A seven-point halftime lead at Nebraska vanished.

Colorado made a 14-0 push during the second half. The Longhorns, meanwhile, went more than eight minutes without a field goal. Buffs guard Levi Knutson scored 13 of his 21 in the second half, shaking loose for three three-point baskets despite his reputation for accuracy — 47 percent — behind the line.

Colorado coach Tad Boyle said Burks' success enabled others to thrive. "It just kind of fed off itself," Boyle said.

Nebraska hit 47.1 percent against Texas a week earlier, the third-highest mark against the Longhorns.

Nebraska and Colorado shredded one of the best defenses in the country by spreading the court and driving. That not only enabled them to score inside, it created open three-pointers against the scrambling Longhorns.



"We try to help each other," Balbay said. "We couldn't stay in front of the ball."

Burks, a sophomore who is an NBA first-round draft prospect, converted 7 of 10 shots in the second half, most of them inside. He also shot 13 free throws, hitting nine. He made 12 of 20 for the game.

The tone of the game changed in the second half, when the officials repeatedly sent players to the free-throw line. Texas converted just 16 of its 29 free throws in the half, with Gary Johnson (17 points) missing 8 of 12. Colorado made 16 of 25.

The teams combined to shoot 12 free throws in the first half, seven by Colorado.

The Longhorns scored in bunches during that first half, making a 16-0 run and finishing with 48 points. J'Covan Brown had 14 of his 21 in the half to lead the way.

Texas shot just 29.4 percent in the second half.

Jordan Hamilton scored 16 of his 21 points in the second half. Eight of those were in desperation as the Longhorns climbed out of an 11-point hole. His final basket, with 18 seconds left, cut the deficit to two. Burks made two free throws four seconds later, and Cory Joseph's three-pointer with one second left meant nothing.

"We're not as good as we thought," Hamilton said. "Let me rephrase that: We didn't execute. That's what I meant to say."

mrosner@statesman.com; 445-3958

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