

Win over Missouri just the beginning according to Boyle

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

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Tad Boyle could get used to this.

Colorado's first-year head coach doesn't plan on the Buffs' victory over No. 9 Missouri being the highlight of the season or his run in Boulder.

Far from it.

Boyle envisions encore performances during CU's final season in the Big 12 and similar atmospheres at the Coors Events Center in the future against UCLA and other Pac-10 powers.

"(Saturday) at the Coors Events Center is great and how we want Saturdays to be in January and February for the Colorado basketball program for years to come," Boyle said after the Buffs snapped a 13-game losing streak in Big 12 openers in front of an appreciative crowd of 8,694.

The Buffs improved to 12-4 overall and 1-0 in the conference with their 10th win in the past 11 games.

Alec Burks, after scoring a career-high 36 points on the Tigers, will almost certainly earn conference player of the week honors.

Now it's time to play at a high level outside the Coors Events Center with three of the next four games on the schedule on the road. The Buffs will certainly have No. 17 Kansas State's full attention Wednesday night in Manhattan.

"We have to continue doing what we've been doing. We have good basketball players on this team. We have been executing at a high level," Boyle said. "We have some talented players offensively and obviously our numbers show it. I think defense and rebounding is why we beat Missouri."

CU is seventh nationally in scoring (85.1 ppg) and field-goal percentage (.496). The Tigers entered the game ranked fifth nationally in scoring offense, but the Buffs held them 10 points under their average during the 89-76 win. Boyle's aggressive and confident team also out-rebounded Missouri 47-33 and held the visitors to 40.6 percent shooting.

"We just did the little things right," Austin Dufault said after scoring 12 points and grabbing seven rebounds. "When a shot went up in the air, everyone was getting on a body. Nobody was standing around spectating."

Perhaps rebounding is contagious. Winning certainly is.

"It's the biggest win we've had since I've been here," senior Cory Higgins said after recording his third career double-double with 18 points and 10 rebounds. "It's a top-10 team. I don't know the last time that was done, but it's my best memory so far."

The last time the Buffs defeated a top-10 opponent was during Big 12 play in 2003 when they upset No. 6 Kansas and No. 3 Texas at the Coors Events Center. That March was also CU's last appearance in the NCAA Tournament.

"I think belief is something right now with our program and with our players that we have to cultivate right now because I don't know if it is there, or if it is not there" Boyle said. "As a coach you try and instill that in them. I know they believed coming into this game that we could beat Missouri."

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Dempsey: NCAA basketball dreams not idle ideas on Front Range

By **Chris Dempsey**
The Denver Post

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Ultimately, success starts with a mind-set, and the most formidable teams are the ones in which the coach has convinced the athletes to go forth confidently.

At the basketball programs at Colorado and Colorado State, this is how confidently and how far they want to go forth: all the way to the NCAA Tournament.

That's right — the NCAA Tournament.

Colorado's resume-building win over No. 9 Missouri on Saturday officially opened the case for those who had not yet tuned in to what is happening in Boulder this season, though the Buffs (12-4, 1-0) will have to navigate a minefield in the Big 12 to have a shot.

After chatting with Colorado State players, and coach Tim Miles as well, it's clear there is a tournament state of mind there too.

"Since I've been here, we haven't been able to legitimately say that we're playing for an NCAA Tournament. I think this year we are. We have a really good chance," CSU senior Andy Ogide said. "We want to play for an at-large bid. It just feels a lot better going into games knowing you have a chance to win, knowing that you're going to win."

Bold words from a bold player on a team playing bold basketball. The Rams (11-4, 1-0 Mountain West) opened their conference schedule with a win against Wyoming on Tuesday and face a tough test Wednesday at New Mexico.

"Our goal is to go to the NCAA Tournament and win when we get there," Miles said. "And I know those guys are committed to that goal. As a coach, you're pleased that your guys are single-minded that way. It's going to take an exceptional year."

Denver is a wild card. The Pioneers (8-9, 4-0 Sun Belt Conference) limped out of the gate to start the season, but are in the midst of a six-game winning streak, which includes four straight wins to start conference play. That's significant. DU must establish the fact that there isn't a team it can't beat in the conference because it'll have to win the Sun Belt Tournament to go dancing.

These are encouraging times in local college basketball. Collectively, the players and coaches

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are the best they've been in a while and the basketball is reflecting the uptick in talent and knowledge. And there is every reason to believe the improvement we're seeing can finally be sustained.

Are any of these teams NCAA Tournament-worthy? Yes. Whether they make it in the newly expanded field of 68 remains to be seen. Neither Colorado nor Colorado State has been to the tournament since 2003. DU has never been.

But one thing's for sure: It'll be a lot of fun watching these teams fight to get there.

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