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cu basketball

CU sensation Alec Burks looks familiar to K-State

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 01/12/2011 01:00:00 AM MST

Updated: 01/12/2011 07:46:51 AM MST

Missouri didn't recruit Colorado sensation Alec Burks out of suburban Kansas City, Mo. Neither did Kansas.

Kansas State, however, was all over him.

Burks has said countless times that Colorado and Kansas State were his final choices. He got to know several players on the Wildcats' roster during his recruiting visit in 2008 and looks forward to CU's final trip to Kansas State as a conference foe today, a 7 p.m. battle (ESPNU) in Manhattan, Kan.

"Their guys kid me on the court a little bit about not going there, but it's nothing serious," the sophomore said. "They knew it was a close decision.

"My momma really liked Kansas State. And it was

close to home. It was a tough decision, but I made the best choice

for me."

A bouncy, 6-foot-6 guard who can be a difficult matchup for any opponent, Burks comes off a career game — 36 points Saturday in CU's victory over then-No. 9 Missouri — and is the Big 12 player of the week.

"Alec took his offensive game to another level," CU coach Tad Boyle said.

CU (12-4, 1-0 Big 12) may need another huge game from Burks to win at K-State (12-4, 0-1) for the first time in six years. Despite Kansas State's 76-62 loss Saturday at Oklahoma State, the Wildcats are No. 21 in The Associated Press poll and 20th by the coaches.

With a season average of 20.1 points, Burks ranks second among Big 12 scorers behind Baylor's LaceDarius Dunn (23.1).

Kansas State coach Frank Martin isn't surprised by Burks' accomplishments, which include being named Big 12 freshman of the year last season. Burks averaged 15.5 points in the two games against Kansas State last year.

"I thought he was a big-time player," Martin recalled of the recruiting process Monday at the Big 12 coaches' weekly teleconference. "When I watched him play, I thought he had tremendous ball skills and an unbelievable ability to put the ball in the hole in various ways.

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"At the time, he was a 6-3 kid. What I didn't know was he would grow to 6-6."

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Notebook

Colorado: Heading to the Pac-12, CU won't be sorry this trip to Manhattan, Kan., is the last for the Buffs in conference play. CU is 10-54 there, last winning at Bramlage Coliseum in 2005. . . . CU is 3-0 in January for the first time since 1996-97, when the Chauncey Billups-led Buffs reached the NCAA Tournament. . . . CU ranks sixth nationally in scoring (averaging 85.1 points).

Kansas State: The Wildcats are still without starting forward Curtis Kelly, who received a six-game suspension for accepting free clothing. . . . Regarded as one of the Big 12's deepest teams, K-State got just six points off the bench in Saturday's 76-62 loss at Oklahoma State.

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Longmont, Colorado
 Sunday, January 23, 2011

Publish Date: 1/12/2011

Buffs looking for more

By Brian Howell
 © 2011 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — If the University of Colorado men's basketball team starts feeling too good about its win last Saturday, the Buffs need to just look at the national rankings.

Yes, Saturday's 89-76 upset of then-No. 9 Missouri was a huge win for the Buffs.

But tonight CU visits No. 21 Kansas State. Saturday, Oklahoma State (13-2), which is just outside of the Top 25, comes to Boulder.

"That's what grounds you," sophomore Alec Burks said. "The Big 12 is the best league in the country. We play somebody good every game."

Colorado (12-4, 1-0 in the Big 12) will hit the floor tonight for the first time since its big upset of Missouri.

In that game, Burks notched a career-high 36 points, Cory Higgins posted a double-double and the Buffs were solid with ball-handling, defense and rebounding.

And, none of that means a thing when the Buffs visit the Wildcats (12-4, 0-1) in Manhattan, Kan.

"We're not going to get ahead of ourselves," CU head coach Tad Boyle said. "That's one win. You've just got to worry about the next task at hand. I think the fact that K-State is another top-(25) team is going to be a motivating factor."

While CU got past Missouri, Kansas State presents a different set of challenges.

Missouri is quick and beats a lot of teams with its pressure defense. The Tigers didn't have an imposing inside game.

Kansas State doesn't press like Mizzou does. The Wildcats are also tougher inside.

"They're bigger along the front line, they're deeper along the front line," Boyle said. "They're a tough team."

Although 6-foot guard Jacob Pullen leads the Wildcats in scoring (17.4 points



Colorado's Cory Higgins goes to the basket against Missouri's Ricardo Ratliffe in the first half Saturday at Coors Events and Conference Center. **Lewis Geyer/Times-Call**

Colorado men (12-4, 1-0 in Big 12) at No. 21 Kansas State (12-4, 0-1)

When/Where: 7 p.m. tonight, at Bramlage Coliseum in Manhattan, Kan.

TV/Radio: ESPNU/760AM

The series: Kansas State leads 97-44, including 54-10 in Manhattan. Kansas State has won the last nine in the series.

Leading scorers: CU — Alec Burks (20.1 points per game); Kansas State — Jacob Pullen (17.4).

Notes: CU has won five in a row, it's longest streak since 2005-06. ... CU's Cory Higgins leads the Big 12 in free throw shooting (89.7 percent). The Buffs, who rank sixth nationally in scoring (85.1 per game), are 11-1 when scoring at least 80 points. ... Kansas State coach Frank Martin is 84-36 in his fourth season as a head coach of the Wildcats. ... K-State lost

per game), they are also very good in the paint.

The Wildcats rank second in the Big 12 with 42.2 rebounds per game. They are led in that department by 6-foot-4 guard Rodney McGruder, but 6-foot-7 Jamar Samuels, 6-foot-8 Curtis Kelly, 6-foot-9 Wally Judge, 6-foot-10 Freddy Asprilla and 7-foot Jordan Henriquez-Roberts all play significant minutes and add to K-State's depth.

CU will need 6-7 freshman Andre Roberson (who leads the team with 7.4 rebounds per game), 6-9 Austin Dufault and 6-7 Marcus Relphorde — among others — to be strong on the boards.

"We have to go in there, box them out and start snagging on the boards," Roberson said.

With nine wins in their last 10 games — including the big one against Missouri — CU will certainly come into tonight with confidence.

"There's a lot of excitement about the next game, excitement that we can play with anybody," Burks said. "It's a great feeling right now around the program."

Don't worry about the Buffs being too confident, though.

"We know we ain't there yet," Burks said. "Coach Boyle told us after the game we need to know we're not there yet. Coach Boyle keeps us humble. He doesn't let that hype get in our heads."

One thing the Buffs have proven this year, is that they can rise to the occasion.

When they faced Oregon State on Dec. 4, it was viewed as one of CU's first true tests. The Buffs won, 83-57.

Four days later, they faced a good Colorado State game in a rivalry game and won that one, 90-83 in overtime.

On Dec. 23, CU faced tradition-rich Indiana and beat the Hoosiers 78-69.

Then came the win against Missouri.

"I think everybody is just ready to go when we play against the big teams," Roberson said.

Burks agreed, saying, "It's a collective feeling; we all want to play good in a big game."

With another big one tonight, the Buffs expect another great effort.

"It's another opportunity to go in and get a big win," Roberson said.

TIP-INS: Burks nearly went to Kansas State before choosing CU. "I know they've got a great coach and lots of great players, a great atmosphere," he said. ... Higgins needs seven successful free throws to break Donnie Boyce's school record for a career (480). ... CU's last road win against a ranked opponent came on Jan. 11, 1997, when it defeated No. 20 Texas Tech. The Buffs have lost 37 straight outside of Boulder against ranked teams.

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76-62 at Oklahoma State in its Big 12 opener on Saturday.

Kansas (13-2, 0-1) at Colorado women (9-5, 0-1)

When/Where: 7 p.m. tonight, at Coors Events Center in Boulder.

TV/Radio: FSN/1190AM

The series: CU holds a 33-32 edge in the series, including 18-10 in Boulder. Kansas won both meetings last season and has won four of the last five.

Leading scorers: KU — Carolyn Davis (19.1 points per game); CU — Brittany Spears (17.6).

Notes: CU is 9-1 at home this season. ... The Buffs lost their Big 12 opener on Saturday, 85-57 at Texas A&M. ... CU's opponents are shooting just 36 percent from the floor. ... Freshman Brittany Wilson has started the last two games for CU, averaging 13.5 points in those games. ... In addition to her 19.1 points per game, the 6-foot-3 Davis averages 8.4 rebounds and has blocked 23 shots for the Jayhawks. ... 6-foot-2 Aishah Sutherland averages 11.5 points and 9.5 rebounds for KU.

Brian Howell



Posted on Tue, Jan. 11, 2011

K-State braces for Buffs' Burks show

By KELLIS ROBINETT
The Kansas City Star

MANHATTAN, Kan. | Kansas State basketball coach Frank Martin used to look forward to the day Alec Burks might play for the Wildcats. Now Martin dreads going up against Burks.

Ask Martin for his thoughts on Burks as a high school junior at Grandview, and he will speak of fond memories.

"I thought he was a big-time player," Martin said. "When I watched him play I thought he was real good. I thought he had tremendous ball skills and an unbelievable ability to put the ball in the hole in various ways."

But in this case, such news was made worse by the way Burks drastically improved after spurning K-State for Colorado in November 2008.

At Grandview, Burks was seen as a talented 6-foot-2 guard who could help a Division I program with marginal modifications to his game.

Then he grew four inches, averaged 23 points per game as a senior and led Grandview to the Missouri Class 4 championship game. His rise has continued at Colorado, first under former coach Jeff Bzdelik and now with Tad Boyle.

Burks, a 6-foot-6 combo guard, is averaging 20.1 points and 4.9 rebounds as a sophomore, and is coming off the best game of his college career — an 89-76 thumping of 15th-ranked Missouri in which he scored 36 points and grabbed eight rebounds.

He was chosen Big 12 player of the week and comes into tonight's game at K-State as one of the hottest players in the nation.

Instead of Colorado players being asked how they plan to guard preseason Big 12 player of the year Jacob Pullen, as was the case last season, the Wildcats are being asked how they plan on containing Burks.

"Anybody who saw that game on Saturday, or just saw the highlights, knows that Alec Burks is a special, special player," Boyle said. "If you're preparing for us, I think you're obviously preparing for Alec Burks."

It is not an easy task. Ask a smaller guard to defend Burks on the perimeter, and he has no trouble getting shots off. Tell a taller forward to match up with him, and he knows how to create shots off the dribble and use speed to his advantage. He is also an 83 percent shooter from the free-throw line.

"He's a handful," Martin said. "He's good."

Last season, K-State found success defending similar opponents, such as BYU's Jimmer Fredette and Xavier's Jordan Crawford, but neither of those dynamic scorers were taller than 6-4. And the Wildcats had Dominique Sutton to help Pullen guard them.

Can Pullen, who gives up six inches to Burks, neutralize him this time around with the help of unproven defenders Rodney McGruder, Nick Russell and Will Spradling?

"Players like that, you've got to make them take tough shots," Pullen said. "You've got to contest everything and make sure they work for everything. Nothing can be easy."

Pullen has been known to save his best defensive efforts for the strongest competition. But he will likely need the help of others for K-State to be successful today.

"It's going to be a collective effort," Martin said. "We better have one guy that makes him catch the ball at a certain area of the floor, and we better have four guys off the ball in the right spots to prevent dribble penetration and make his shots difficult."

Even then, there is always senior guard Cory Higgins, who is averaging 16.7 points, to worry about.

And unlike some marquee scorers, Burks enjoys passing the ball.

If not properly defended, his final 15 conference games could be like his first.

"What makes Alec so special is that he can make plays for others as well as himself," Boyle said. "That's the part that makes him scary good. You saw a piece of it on Saturday. Hopefully there's more of that to come."

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Wildcats prepare to slow Burks, Buffaloes

By Arne Green - Special to The News

MANHATTAN - Frank Martin saw enough from Alec Burks as a skinny 6-foot-3 high school guard two years ago in Grandview, Mo., to offer him a scholarship.

After losing the recruiting battle to Colorado, Martin's opinion didn't change last season when Burks averaged 15.5 points in two games against his Kansas State Wildcats.

"I thought he was a big-time player when I watched him play," said Martin, whose No. 21-ranked Wildcats entertain Colorado at 8 tonight at Bramlage Coliseum on ESPNU. "I thought he was really good.

"I thought he had tremendous ball skills and an unbelievable ability to put the ball in the hole in various ways. At the time he was a 6-3 kid; I didn't know he was going to grow to 6-6 or 6-7."

Burks, who in his short college career has grown into one of the Big 12's premier guards, took it to another level Saturday with a career-best 36-point performance in Colorado's 89-76 upset of No. 9-ranked Missouri. The victory snapped a streak of 13 straight losses in Big 12 openers for the Buffaloes, who improved to 12-4 overall.

"He's 6-6, 6-7, makes every free throw," Martin said of Burks, who has supplanted senior guard Cory Higgins as the Buffs' leading scorer with an average of 20.1 points a game. "He scores off the dribble, scores off the catch. He can go left, can go right, can play at the rim."

All the more reason for K-State (12-4, 0-1) to pay particular attention to Burks, though the 6-5 Higgins (16.7 ppg) was the Buffalo guard who had his way with the Wildcats last year, averaging 25.5 points in two meetings.

"It's going to be a team effort," Martin said when asked who would draw the defensive assignment on Burks. "We're not in (New York's legendary) Rucker Park here.

"It's not me and him, it's us and them. It's going to be a collective effort. We better have one guy that makes him catch the ball out of a certain area of the floor and we better have four guys off the ball in the right spots to prevent dribble penetration and make his shots difficult."

K-State senior guard Jacob Pullen often took turns on the top perimeter scorers last year despite giving away several inches at 6-1. He expects to see plenty of Burks tonight.

"You try to get them away from the basket," Pullen said. "I feel like I'm quicker, so me guarding the ball, it's to my advantage making him take a lot of dribbles.

"If he catches anywhere around the paint area, he has the size and is athletic enough to score over me. My advantage is to keep him on the perimeter."

The fact that Burks is surrounded by scoring threats - Higgins had 18 points against Missouri and 6-7

wing Marcus Relphorde averages 11.9 points - makes stopping Colorado even more of a challenge. The Buffs also space the floor, often playing four perimeter players with 6-9 forward Austin Dufault (9.2 ppg, 5.1 rpg).

The Buffs rank sixth nationally in scoring at 85.1 points per game, sixth in field goal percentage (49.8), seventh in free throw percentage (78.0) and seventh in fewest turnovers with 10.9 a game.

While Colorado is riding high with a five-game winning streak, K-State is coming off a second-half meltdown that resulted in a 76-62 loss Saturday at Oklahoma State.

The Wildcats have gotten uneven play from their frontcourt - four post players fouled out against Oklahoma State - and face two more games while senior Curtis Kelly completes his six-game NCAA suspension for accepting improper benefits.

"We've got to be prepared and excited to go because it's the next opportunity at hand," Martin said. "We understand that every game is going to be just like the Oklahoma State game was the other day."