

CU's Knutson nailing 3s

Senior guard provides scoring threat off bench

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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MANHATTAN, Kan. -- Trent Beckley made a smart observation after watching Colorado basketball from afar during the fall semester.

"Levi Knutson ... how about that kid this year?" Beckley said after rejoining the program and practicing with the Buffs for the first time last week. "Give him the ball."

That's exactly what CU did with the game on the line during Wednesday's 74-66 victory over No. 21 Kansas State at Bramlage Coliseum.

Knutson scored 20 points off the bench on 7-for-10 shooting, including 6-for-8 behind the arc, as the Buffs won back-to-back games over ranked opponents for the first time in program history.

Four of the senior shooting guard's 3-pointers came in the second half. Knutson's final crowd-silencing shot gave the visitors a 66-62 lead with 4:31 left after the Wildcats had cut an 11-point deficit down to one point.

"I'm definitely confident shooting the ball this year, and my teammates continue to look for me," Knutson said. "Shots were going down, but we won this on the defensive end."

K-State shot 40.4 percent from the field and finished 7-for-21 from 3-point distance. CU shot 50 percent from the field as team and the three players who came off the bench -- Knutson, Andre Roberson and Shannon Sharpe -- were a combined 12-for-17 shooting with 33 points.

"Levi made some daggers," CU head coach Tad Boyle said. "They went zone, and he buried it. He played with unbelievable confidence."

Knutson also had six 3-pointers earlier in the season against Oregon State. He is now averaging 12.0 points per game while shooting 59 percent from the field (53.2 percent behind the arc).

"He has been doing that all year, it was no surprise to us," Cory Higgins said of Knutson's clutch performance. "It might have been a surprise to other people, but Levi is a senior and he has been playing like that all year. We expect him to step up in those situations."

The Buffs (13-4, 2-0) are now 11-0 when shooting a higher percentage than the opponent, 10-0 when winning the rebounding battle and 8-0 when their bench outscores the other team's bench.

Alec Burks and Higgins, two Big 12 stars, combined for just 21 points against the Wildcats after scoring 36 and 18, respectively, in the win over Missouri last Saturday.

But Knutson and the rest of the role players proved once again that the 2010-11 Buffs are tough to beat when they play unselfishly.

"We're a different team this year. Period," Knutson said. "We're defending better, we're rebounding better, we're together, and that's what it takes to win Big 12 games."

CU hosts Oklahoma State on Saturday at 11:30 a.m. at the Coors Events Center.

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cu basketball

CU remains focused despite big wins

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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BOULDER — After guiding the Colorado men's basketball program to back-to-back victories over nationally ranked opponents for the first time in school history, Buffaloes coach Tad Boyle said Thursday he is not about to let his team become complacent. Nor himself.

Boyle pointed at the top of his desk. There's no sign of the Big 12 Conference standings, which has CU tied atop the list with Texas A&M and Baylor, at 2-0.

However, a copy of the Buffs' schedule is prominently in the center of Boyle's desk, right where he can't miss it. A snake pit lurks around every corner, he joked.

Next up for Colorado (13-4, 2-0 Big 12) is Saturday's home game against an Oklahoma State (13-3, 1-1) team with enough talent and athleticism to beat anybody in the league.

"As a coach, you always worry about (complacency)," Boyle said. "We talked about it in our meeting today. We'll talk about it when going over our scouting report on Oklahoma State.

"I think with our seniors, guys like Cory (Higgins), Marcus (Relphorde), Levi (Knutson), hopefully they can prevent that by talking to their teammates. After two big wins like we've had, you hope they understand that we have to keep doing what we're doing to stay where we are."

Colorado followed up an 89-76 upset of then-No. 9 Missouri in Boulder last weekend with a more impressive victory. The Buffs had lost nine straight games to Kansas State and were winless in Manhattan, Kan., since 2005 but overcame an 11-point, first-half deficit Wednesday night for a 74-66 victory over the No. 21 Wildcats.

Colorado defeated a ranked opponent on the road for the first time since 1996-97 — the second of Chauncey Billups' two seasons in Boulder.

The key, Boyle said, was his team's mental and physical toughness.

"We didn't panic," Boyle said. "That shows the poise and maturity of our guys."

On its home court, Kansas State was limited to 40.4 percent shooting, compared with 50 percent from the field by Colorado. The Wildcats usually have their way with Colorado in the paint but were outrebounded 38-29. Colorado has won six straight games and 12 of 13.

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"You can sense that our team's confidence is growing," Boyle said. "I think our guys feel comfortable being in close games. And we're going to be in some."

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