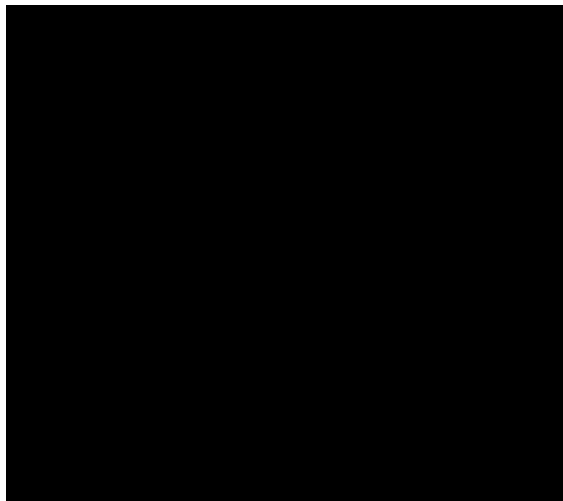


CU Buffs wrangle win from Oklahoma State

CU overcomes 12-point deficit in second half to improve to 3-0 in Big 12

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 01/15/2011 01:58:14 PM MST



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During Tad Boyle's postgame press conference a member of the media started to ask a question about Colorado's next home game against ...

Kansas.

"Who?" Boyle, a former Jayhawk player, said before pointing out that a tricky road game at Nebraska would consume the Buffs' thoughts for the next three days.

It's suddenly hard for fans and others outside the locker room to not start looking ahead to the possibilities with this team.

CU followed up back-to-back wins over ranked opponents -- a first in program history -- with an intense 75-71 victory over Oklahoma State on Saturday in front of a sellout crowd (11,096) at the Coors Events Center.

Considering the Buffs shot 37.5 percent from the field and trailed by 12 points in the second half, this was in many ways the most impressive win of the season.

"We have to learn to win sometimes unconventionally," Boyle said. "That's what league play is all about."

When it comes to surprise teams nationally, the Buffs are starting to create some buzz from the Big 12. CU is now 3-0 in the conference for the first time since the 1996-97 season when Chauncey Billups led the program to the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

"I'm really encouraged by this because it shows something else this team could do," Cory Higgins said. "This is the first time we've had to come back at home. We played with a lot of determination and grit out there."

It was obvious the Cowboys (13-4, 1-2) -- coming off a humbling 71-48 loss at Texas A&M -- were determined to leave their final conference game in Boulder with a win.

Marshall Moses scored eight points in the first three minutes of the second half to spark a 16-8 run. Oklahoma State had a 54-42 advantage with 16:09 remaining after a 3-pointer by Keiton Page.

"I thought we were getting out-hustled, I thought we were getting out-toughed," Boyle said. "If we lose a game because we miss shots that's one thing, but you can't get out-hustled on your home court."

Higgins answered the coach's challenge with a clutch 3-pointer to stop the bleeding and another basket to cut the deficit to 54-47.

"The whole key is Cory understands now what it takes to lead a team and to lead us to victory," Boyle said. "Boom. Five quick points."

A 3-pointer by Levi Knutson brought the Buffs within two points, Alec Burks tied the score (58-58) with a pair of free throws, and Austin Dufault gave his team a 60-58 lead on a layup with 5:57 to go. CU had a 20-6 run to put itself in

position to win in the final five minutes.

"I can tell usually in practice a day or two before the game if they're dialed in or not mentally," Boyle said. "They were almost too hyped before the game. ... But it's obvious when you have confidence or you don't. And we have it."

The Buffs (14-4, 3-0) stayed aggressive and made 10 of 12 free throws in the final 4:14 -- fouling out 6-8 forwards Darrell Williams and Matt Pilgrim in the process -- to remain perfect at the Coors Events Center this season (11-0).

"When you're up 12 in the second half I think any coach will say it is your game to win," Oklahoma State head coach Travis Ford said. "But that's why you have to give Colorado credit. They have come along way. They're not the team of the past. They are a very good basketball team."

Oklahoma State led 38-34 at halftime after shooting 46.7 percent from the field and holding CU to 25.9 percent (7-for-27) through 20 minutes of play.

The Buffs stayed in the game by staying aggressive and making 17 of 18 free throws. The visitors were only awarded eight free throws in the first half.

Moses picked up two fouls in the first three minutes, but the Cowboys were able to weather the early storm.

After CU took a 22-18 lead Oklahoma State went on a 9-0 run. Higgins answered with seven straight points and led all scorers with 14 points at the break.

"We didn't play good and we were only down four," Burks said. "Coach told us to calm down and play together."

Higgins led all scorers with 23 points. Burks finished with 20, and Marcus Relphorde added 14, despite a combined 8-for-23 shooting night.

Oklahoma State had a 32-16 scoring edge in the paint, but the scrappy Buffs made up for it by out-rebounding the bigger Pokes 39-24 and making 20 more free throws than Ford's team attempted to pull out the win.

As the game was salted away in the final seconds, the crowd began chanting: "We want Kansas! We want Kansas!"

"We just have to keep doing what we're doing and not let the pats on the back get to us," Higgins warned.

Before the Jayhawks' final visit to the Coors Events Center, the Buffs have road games at Nebraska and Oklahoma.

Colorado 75, Oklahoma St. 71

OKLAHOMA ST.

FG FT Reb

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

Olukemi 33 6-15 8-10 0-4 1 3 21

Pilgrim 16 1-3 0-0 1-3 2 5 2

Moses 25 6-8 2-2 1-3 1 3 14

Page 34 7-10 0-0 0-1 0 4 19

Penn 29 2-8 0-0 1-3 2 3 6

Sidorakis 5 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 1 0

Brown 21 2-7 1-2 0-0 2 3 5

D Williams 23 2-4 0-0 2-6 0 5 4

Franklin 14 0-0 0-0 0-2 1 0 0

Totals 200 26-55 11-14 6-24 9 27 71

Percentages: FG .473, FT .786.

3-Point Goals: 8-20, .400 (Page 5-7, Penn 2-6, Olukemi 1-4, Pilgrim 0-1, Brown 0-2).

Team Rebounds: 2.

Blocked Shots: 5 (Brown 3, D. Williams, Pilgrim).

Turnovers: 11 (Penn 2, Olukemi 2, Page, D. Williams, Franklin, Brown, Sidorakis, Moses).

Steals: 10 (Page 3, Olukemi 2, Brown 2, Franklin, Moses, Penn).

Technical Fouls: Olukemi.

COLORADO

FG FT Reb

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

Dufault 22 2-5 1-2 1-5 1 4 5

Tmlnsn 20 0-1 1-2 0-1 1 1 1

Rlphrde 29 4-10 6-6 3-5 1 3 14

Burks 35 4-13 11-12 4-11 2 4 20

Higgins 33 5-9 10-10 2-2 1 1 23

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

Coney 1 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Roberson 25 1-3 5-7 3-8 0 3 7

Knutson 23 2-7 0-0 1-1 1 1 5

Totals 200 18-48 34-39 15-39 8 17 75

Percentages: FG .375, FT .872.

3-Point Goals: 5-16, .313 (Higgins 3-4, Burks 1-2, Knutson 1-5, Tomlinson 0-1, Relphorde 0-2, Roberson 0-2).

Team Rebounds: 5.

Blocked Shots: 2 (Roberson, Burks).

Turnovers: 15 (Higgins 6, Dufault 3, Burks 3, Relphorde, Roberson, Knutson).

Steals: 5 (Roberson 2, Tomlinson, Relphorde, Higgins).

Technical Fouls: None.

Oklahoma St. 38 33--71

Colorado 34 41--75

A -- 11,096.

Officials -- John Higgins, K.C. Ely, Jeff Malham.

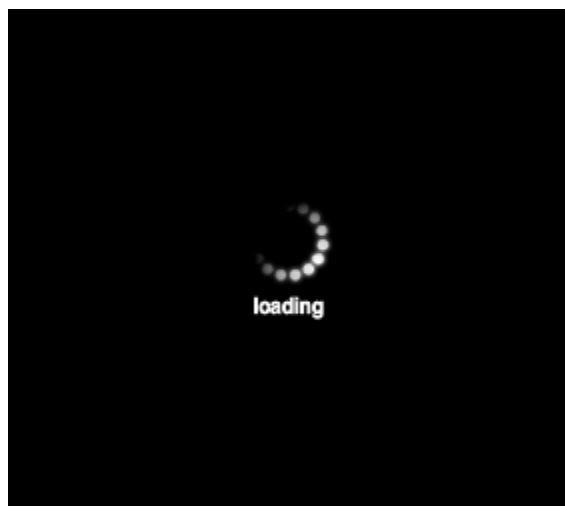
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CU Buffs' Cory Higgins leaving his mark at stripe

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 01/16/2011 12:01:44 AM MST



[Click on any photo to see full gallery.](#)

Cory Higgins is one of the best closers in Colorado history.

The senior guard has always had the ability to get into the paint and either make a big shot -- like the dagger at Kansas State -- or draw a foul and cash in at the line.

During CU's 75-71 victory over Oklahoma State on Saturday at the Coors Events Center, Higgins became the program's all-time leader in free throws made with 487 for his career.

Higgins went 10-for-10 at the stripe, and the Buffs finished the game 34-for-39 (87.2 percent), which is why they are still unbeaten in Big 12 play.

"It's just easy baskets when you get to the foul line," Higgins said. "We look to do that. We pride ourselves on getting to the line."

Alec Burks had another tough game from the field (4-for-13) but finished with 20 points after making 11 of 12 free throws, including a pair to tie the score 58-58 and two more to give CU a 73-69 lead with 10.8 seconds left.

"It's something we've done all year and we needed it today," head coach Tad Boyle said of his team's efficiency at the line. "I don't even talk about it, I just expect it. If it's not good enough, get in the gym."

The Buffs -- the best free throw shooting team in the Big 12 entering the game (76.9 percent) -- shot just 25.9 percent in the first half from the field but were within 38-34 thanks to a 94.4 percent effort at the line (17-for-18).

Meanwhile, the Cowboys finished the physical 40-minute tussle with 11 made free throws on 14 attempts.

"You are not going to win a game when one team shoots 39 free throws and the other team shoots only 14. It's just like banging your head against the wall," Oklahoma State head coach Travis Ford said. "We were playing well offensively, getting whatever we wanted, executing, but just fouling, fouling, fouling at the other end."

Donnie Boyce (480), who is No. 2 on the Buffs' all-time scoring list, had held the free throw record for 16 years.

Higgins, who finished with 23 points, also moved into sixth place on the scoring list with 1,690 career points. He passed Emmett Lewis (1,680 points from 1976-79).

Dominating the glass

For the third consecutive Big 12 game, CU -- yes, the same Buffs who were woeful on the glass under Jeff Bzdelik for three years -- won the rebounding battle by double digits.

Boyle's team grabbed 39 boards and held the athletic Cowboys to 24.

"I think we just got it stuck into our heads that if we want to win, we've got to play defense and we have to rebound," Higgins explained. "I just think it clicked with everybody across the board this time instead of just a couple people in the building."

Burks led CU with a career-high 11 rebounds, and Andre Roberson added eight. CU is 11-0 when out-rebounding the opposition.

"We want to rebound the ball and we just got annihilated on the glass," Ford said.

Crash victims honored

The sellout crowd had a moment of silence before the game to remember the 10 members of the Oklahoma State basketball program who died in a plane crash on the way home to Stillwater from Boulder on Jan. 27, 2001.

Those killed that night near Byers included players Nate Fleming and Dan Lawson, radio broadcaster Bill Teegins, television and radio engineer Kendall Durfey, media relations coordinator Will Hancock, director of basketball operations Pat Noyes, athletic trainer Brian Luinstra, student assistant Jared Weiberg, and pilots Denver Mills and Bjorn Falstrom.

Series update

Oklahoma State leads 60-47, but CU has a 32-17 advantage in Boulder.

The Cowboys had won the previous three meetings and finished the schools' Big 12 history with a 9-7 edge since the conference expanded.

Notable

The Buffs have won 14 consecutive home games dating back to last season. ... The sellout was the third at the Coors Events Center in the last two seasons (Kansas and Kansas State last season). ... CU is 2-2 this season when trailing at halftime (also beat Colorado State). ... Burks recorded his first double-double (20 points, 11 rebounds) of the season and third of his career.

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Ringo: Boyle in midst of transforming CU Buffs

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 01/15/2011 07:26:08 PM MST

Tad Boyle is a rock star.

Seriously. It took the first-year coach of the Colorado men's basketball team a bit longer than normal Saturday afternoon to move from his postgame, courtside radio interview to the small room upstairs in the Coors Events Center where he usually meets the press. His team had just won its 14th consecutive home game and its third straight in the Big 12 Conference, beating Oklahoma State in come-from-behind fashion.

Every few steps someone new wanted a piece of Boyle. Pats on the back were rampant. Handshakes, too. The man was even seen reluctantly signing autographs.

All of this is completely understandable if you've spent any time around the Colorado basketball program over the years.

Why? Because Boyle and his team are coming through with the big play and the clutch performance where so many others before them have fallen short.

Saturday's win provided a perfect example in front of a sellout crowd that, for once, was almost entirely clad in black and gold. The Buffs played the Cowboys close through the first half, but momentum turned decidedly in Oklahoma State's favor early in the second half and the Cowboys built a 12-point lead.

In the past, Colorado would have folded under the circumstances, but not these Buffs. Not this coach. Instead of leaving the building grumbling, the crowd went home smiling, high-fiving and happy. A few were even bold enough to begin chanting "We want Kansas" in reference to the next home game a week from Tuesday.

Senior Cory Higgins took over on the offensive end and the entire team turned up the defense and forced its way back into the lead. There were moments during the Buffs' rally when it felt as if the crowd might blow a hole in the roof.

"That was a big thing why we needed to get this win, too, is to get people to come back," Higgins said. "I don't want anyone to think it's a fluke."

It's safe to say the Buffs haven't played many games with that kind of support.

I was thinking it's probably been since former Buff Chauncey Billups led the program to six consecutive conference victories in the 1996-97 season since the building was rocking and filled with Buffs fans the way it was Saturday.

So I thought I would check with a source who watched most of those games. Rodney Billups was just a kid back then. He came to Boulder for nearly every game his older brother played at Colorado. This is what he thought about the atmosphere Saturday:

"When I was a young boy, Kansas would come in or Missouri would come in and the building would be full of everyone else's colors," Billups said. "It felt good today to have all the support that we had. I mean, you rarely saw an orange shirt today."

Before we heap any more praise on Boyle for the tremendous coaching job he is doing, we should acknowledge former coach Jeff Bzdelik deserves a lot of credit for assembling most of the team. Seven of the eight players Boyle primarily uses in his playing rotation were recruited to CU by Bzdelik.

But Boyle is now the one pulling the strings. These players clearly believe in his approach to the game because they play hard for him and for each other on both ends of the floor. The truth is, there were times earlier in this season when they didn't feel that way and didn't play that way, but Boyle, with help from his seniors, convinced them to change their thinking in late December.

What is most impressive about what this coach is doing with these players is that he is getting these results out of, largely, the same cast of characters that struggled to win on the road and to win close games last year.

"It's all mental," forward Austin Dufault said. "This team, we've had the ability to win games for probably a year-and-a-half now, and I just think it's all mental. Just our approach to the game every day. Guys have put their thoughts about scoring and offense aside and really focused on defense. That is what wins games in the Big 12."

It certainly did Saturday.

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Bufs edge out Cowboys

Men's basketball comes out victorious in tight game

By Mark McNeillie on January 15, 2011

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Colorado men's basketball beat the Oklahoma State Cowboys 75-71 at the Coors Events Center on Saturday

afternoon.

Senior Guard Cory Higgins led the Buffs with 23 points, and sophomore guard Alec Burks scored 20.

The Buffs were down by as many as 12 points in the second half, but got important stops down, and hit key free throws down the stretch to come out on top.

Contact CU Independent Sports Editor Mark McNeillie at Mark.mcneillie@colorado.edu.

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Sophomore guard Alec Burks (#10) keeps the ball away from Cowboys as senior guard Cory Higgins (#11) waits for a pass during the first half of the mens' basketball game versus Oklahoma State University on Jan. 15, 2011. The Buffs won 75-71. (CU Independent/Kelly Kaoudis)

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THE DENVER POST

woody paige

Paige: Boyle's influence making Colorado relevant in basketball

By Woody Paige
The Denver Post

Posted: 01/16/2011 01:00:00 AM MST

Updated: 01/16/2011 10:52:19 AM MST

BOULDER — The Buffaloes' thundering heard 'round Big 12 basketball is the stentorian echo of a 3-0 start and a tie for first place in the conference, victories over two top-25 teams, an overall record of 14-4 that probably will earn Colorado its own sweet spot in the elite 25 on Monday, a rare SRO crowd at home Saturday and a mind-boggling, eye-popping, ear-splitting rally from a 12-point deficit in the second half to a 75-71 triumph over Oklahoma State.

Unlike in the history of the West and the Big 12, the Buffaloes beat the Cowboys.

"I didn't talk to the players before the game, or in that second half, about what this means in Colorado and to CU," Buffs coach Tad Boyle told me afterward. "But I sure thought about it

looking around at the full arena. We want to make college basketball relevant in Boulder and in Denver and the entire state."

An 11-4 mark in nonconference games was unremarkably nice, and the usual 3,000 suspects would show up at the Pop-Top on campus. The Big 12-opening stunner over Missouri was impressive, but could have been one of those intermittent oddities all teams have. The victory on the road against Kansas State last week was a serious development, raising eyebrows and hope for Saturday's game against 13-3 Okie State.

Parking lots overflowed Saturday morning; students got out of bed and went to a game, not to a slope or a study hall, and customers accustomed to buying a ticket at the gate and sitting in the third row were turned away by ushers yelling: "It's a sellout!" Tickets were being scalped for \$100. And, for once, almost everybody was dressed in gold and/or black.

When did CU suddenly become Duke?

In its final Big 12 season, Colorado is not a lollipop.

A Buffs home game had atmosphere and as much attitude as altitude.

But, for 24 minutes, these Buffs sort of drifted into the funk of those Buffs — shooting 25.9 percent from the field in the first half, being "out-hustled and out-toughed," Boyle said, by the Cowboys, especially their squirts — guards

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THE DENVER POST

Ray Penn and Keiton Page. The 5-foot-9ers were running arcs around CU.

With 16 minutes to go, Colorado was trailing by 12 and the momentum, the good feeling, the sellout and the game was in danger of being lost.

"I was afraid the people who came to take a look might not return if we kept playing badly," admitted Boyle, who grew up in Greeley and understands Colorado's fickle fans. He almost signed on to play at CU, but signed off when the Buffs changed coaches, and went away to Kansas.

Boyle and Jon Embree are the first CU basketball-football tandem coaches produced by a high school in Colorado.

A year ago, when a prominent booster said he was concerned about the university's football future, I asked him about the basketball program's future. "They should drop the program," he said.

CU's irrelevance wasn't a trend, but a tradition.

Yet, the turnaround of the team persisted Saturday afternoon. Just when it seemed that a 13-game win streak at home stretching back to last season was in danger, the Buffs showed extreme anger.

They scored five consecutive points to make it 54-47, then pulled to within two points with 7:30 remaining. Instead of getting up to go, the

audience got up to shout. Less than a half minute later, the score was tied. The Cowboys' Marshall Moses, who had parted the Buffs with ease, was shut off completely, and Buffsters Cory Higgins, Alec Burks, Marcus Relphorde and Andre Roberson went all bison on the Cowboys.

The Buffs were ahead by two, tied, ahead by two again and again and again. Boyle clinched his fists and urged his players to get a defensive stop. They did. They also would make free throws.

The Buffs, one of the premier free throw-shooting teams in the country, sank 34-of-39 (87.2 percent). Meditation, medication, dedication?

"It's a free point, and you got to stand there alone and do it," said Burks, who made four free throws in the last 10.8 seconds, and 11-of-12 for the day. Higgins was 10-of-10 and Relphorde 6-of-6.

Boyle's teaching technique? "I never mention free throws. They know if they're not making them, they need to go back to the gym and shoot 200 a day."

The Buffs made, not missed, in the stretch — and kept the dream alive of Big Dancing with the Stars.

"Maybe we showed something else we can do. This was our first comeback," Higgins said. "We're not a fluke. We're going to be like this all year."

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At the conclusion, the chant from the stands was: "We want Kansas." The Jayhawks will be here for the next home game Jan. 25.

No discouraging words for the stampeding Buffaloes with their recovery Saturday, respect in the Big 12 in January, relevance in basketball this season.

Thunder occurs in the Rockies.

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colorado basketball

Bufs stay unbeaten in Big 12 with 75-71 win over Cowboys

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 01/16/2011 01:00:00 AM MST

BOULDER — Nobody said Colorado's quest for its first men's NCAA Tournament bid in eight years would come easy.

Down by 12 points early in the second half and never able to find its shooting touch from the field, Colorado rode the emotion of a crazed first sellout crowd this season of 11,096, along with terrific free-throw shooting, to pull out a 75-71 victory Saturday over Oklahoma State at the Coors Events Center.

Sophomore guard Alec Burks bagged two free throws with 10.8 seconds remaining to put the Buffaloes up 73-69 and clinch CU's first 3-0 start to Big 12 Conference play since the Chauncey Billups-led 1996-97 team won six straight to open league play.

Don't look now, but the Buffs (14-4, 3-0 Big 12)

continue to sit atop the conference standings, with victory notches over ranked opponents Missouri and Kansas State, and now this. They're certainly gaining respect nationwide.

"I don't really care," CU senior guard Cory Higgins said. "We haven't gotten respect since I got here. I don't think Kansas State gave us respect after we beat them. It doesn't matter to us because we all have each other's backs."

Higgins contributed a game-high 23 points in extending the Buffs' overall winning streak to seven games. The 6-foot-6 Burks recorded a double-double of 20 points and 11 rebounds. But the Buffs had to overcome 37.5 percent shooting to turn back the Cowboys (13-4, 1-2).

Colorado was coming off two headline-grabbing victories. This might have been tougher.

"(Oklahoma State) came in with a great game plan," CU coach Tad Boyle said, referring to the Cowboys pounding the ball inside against his undersized post players. "But to get out of here with a win is a testament to our players."

"When you shoot 37 percent and you win a basketball game in this league, you're doing some things right."

CU remained unbeaten in 11 home games this season, thanks to a ridiculous 34-for-39 (.872) on free throws, a 39-24 rebounding advantage against a bigger, stronger Cowboys frontcourt

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and several late defensive stops.

"You are not going to win a game when one team shoots 39 free throws and one shoots 14," said Oklahoma State coach Travis Ford. "It's just like banging your head against the wall.

"We were playing well offensively, getting whatever we wanted offensively and executing, but just fouling, fouling on the other end."

CU trailed only 38-34 at the break despite 25.9 shooting in the half, then found a way to rally after falling behind 54-42 on a 3-pointer by junior Keiton Page, Oklahoma State's 5-9 gym rat.

Colorado kept its composure, however. Higgins started driving the lane and sparked a 16-4 run with nine points, and Burks tied the game at 58-58 with two free throws.

Colorado never trailed after two Marcus Relphorde free throws put the Buffs up 62-61 with 4:14 to play. The Buffs converted 9-of-10 free throws in the final three minutes.

"We showed something else this team can do," Higgins said of grinding for an ugly win that felt pretty wonderful. "We're encouraged by it."

CU-Ku tickets cost big bucks

Tickets for Colorado's next men's basketball home game — Jan. 25 against Kansas — are believed to be the highest-priced in CU history: \$40 for general admission, \$50 for midcourt

seats, with no discounts for kids. The prices were set by CU before the season. CU home games against Kansas have carried a premium pricing structure for many years. In the past, though, the KU game was included in a required three-game pack. By comparison, general admission tickets for Saturday's home game against Oklahoma State were \$10 for general admission, \$20 for midcourt seats and \$5 for kids.

CU's 3-0 conference starts since 1950

Season Start Coach
 2010-11* 3-0 Tad Boyle
 1996-97 6-0 Ricardo Patton
 1968-69 4-0 Sox Walseth
 1962-63 5-0 Sox Walseth
 1961-62 11-0 Sox Walseth
 1955-56 3-0 H.B. Lee
 1954-55 5-0 H.B. Lee
 *ongoing

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Longmont, Colorado
 Sunday, January 23, 2011

Publish Date: 1/16/2011

True Grit

By Brian Howell
 © 2011 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — The University of Colorado men's basketball team had to make a choice.

Either continue getting beat up by Oklahoma State, or fight back and give the 11,096 fans at Coors Events Center something to cheer about.

The Buffs chose to fight back, and the sellout crowd helped them celebrate a 75-71 win on Saturday.

"If we lose a game because we can't make shots and they play better than us, that is one thing," CU head coach Tad Boyle said. "But when you're getting out-hustled and out-toughed on your home floor, that is not acceptable. Our guys, to their credit, we turned it around and we got those hustle plays; we got those long rebounds; we got those box outs and rebounds when we needed to."

Down 12 points with 16 minutes to play, the Buffs turned the game around with a 25-9 run during a 13-minute stretch. From there, the Buffs hung on in the final two minutes to improve to 3-0 in Big 12 play (14-4 overall).

"We're really encouraged by it because it just shows something else this team can do," Buffs senior Cory Higgins said. "It's the first time we had to come back at home. We showed a lot of determination and grit out there. I think this was big for our team to show we can do that."

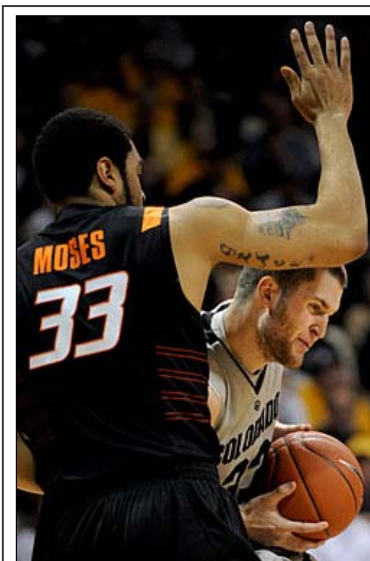
Higgins scored a game-high 23 points, while Alec Burks (20 points, 11 rebounds) posted the third double-double of his career.

CU is 3-0 in Big 12 play for the first time since the 1996-97 season — the inaugural season for the Big 12 — when it started 6-0.

Getting to this point hasn't been easy. The Buffs beat then-No. 9 Missouri on Jan. 8, followed by an upset of No. 21 Kansas State on the road on Tuesday. That set up Saturday's showdown with the Cowboys (13-4, 1-2), who aren't ranked but were seventh in the "others receiving votes" category in the latest Associated Press poll.

With 16 minutes left, there was some doubt as to whether the Buffs could continue their momentum.

It was a close game throughout the first half and early in the second. But Oklahoma State gained some separation when Ray Penn and Keiton Page hit back-to-back 3-pointers to give the Cowboys a 54-42 lead.



Colorado's Austin Dufault, right, drives towards the basket against Oklahoma State's Marshall Moses during the first half Saturday at the Coors Events Center. **Lewis Geyer/Times-Call**

Colorado 75, Oklahoma St.
 71

OKLAHOMA ST.

Olukemi 6-15 8-10 21, Pilgrim 1-3 0-0 2, Moses 6-8 2-2 14, Page 7-10 0-0 19, Penn 2-8 0-0 6, Sidorakis 0-0 0-0 0, Brown 2-7 1-2 5, D. Williams 2-4 0-0 4, Franklin 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 26-55 11-14 71.

COLORADO

Dufault 2-5 1-2 5, Tomlinson 0-1 1-2 1, Relphorde 4-10 6-6 14, Burks 4-13 11-12 20, Higgins 5-9 10-10 23, Sharpe 0-0 0-0 0, Coney 0-0 0-0 0, Roberson 1-3 5-7 7, Knutson 2-7 0-0 5. Totals 18-48 34-39 75.

Halftime—Oklahoma St. 38-34. 3-Point Goals—Oklahoma St. 8-20

"We needed to start defending," Higgins said.

Higgins turned the tide with a 3-pointer that sparked the 25-9 run, but he said that wasn't the key to final stretch.

"I think (the 3-pointer) was big just to keep the fans in it," Higgins said. "But that wasn't the issue. The issue was that we weren't getting stops. We just had to lock up on the defensive end."

They did that, and momentum swung completely to CU's side of the court.

(Page 5-7, Penn 2-6, Olukemi 1-4, Pilgrim 0-1, Brown 0-2), Colorado 5-16 (Higgins 3-4, Burks 1-2, Knutson 1-5, Tomlinson 0-1, Relphorde 0-2, Roberson 0-2). Fouled Out—Pilgrim, D. Williams. Rebounds—Oklahoma St. 24 (D. Williams 6), Colorado 39 (Burks 11). Assists—Oklahoma St. 9 (Brown, Penn, Pilgrim 2), Colorado 8 (Burks 2). Total Fouls—Oklahoma St. 27, Colorado 17. Technical—Olukemi. A—11,096.

"We all just tried to really step our defense up first because I know we were slipping a lot on defense," said Marcus Relphorde, who had 14 points and five rebounds for CU. "We tried to pick our defensive intensity up and get more stops so we could start running (on offense). Then our offense kind of fell into place."

In particular, the Buffs got stops against Oklahoma State's top scorer, Marshall Moses.

Moses scored eight of his 14 points in the first 2:41 of the second half, helping the Cowboys to build their lead. CU's defense shut him down after that, double-teaming Moses and holding him scoreless during the final 17 minutes of the game.

"That was the game plan from the get-go," Boyle said. "It was a matter of our guys now figuring out, 'OK, yeah, the game plan might make some sense; this guy can score down here.' Midway through the second half when they extended their lead, he was the difference."

For CU, the difference between a loss and a win was its ability to adjust.

CU is one of the nation's highest-scoring teams, and the Buffs love to run and play a fast-paced game.

However, Oklahoma State slowed the pace, and CU's shots didn't fall like normal. The Buffs made just 25.9 percent of their first-half shots. Burks was just 2-for-10 in the first half.

"Coach told us, 'Calm down; don't rush things,'" Burks said. "I was forcing it a little. He said, 'Calm down; let it come to everybody and play together,' and that's what we did."

CU made 52.4 percent of its second-half shots, doing most of that damage inside. The Buffs attempted just four 3-pointers after halftime, compared to 12 before the break.

"Oklahoma State did a great job in the first half of taking our transition baskets away from us," Boyle said. "I think that is what a lot of teams are going to do because we are so good in transition. With that, our half-court offense is going to have to become more efficient. In league play, it gets harder to score. Today was a perfect example of that."

Where the Buffs don't struggle is at the free-throw line. They are one of the nation's best teams at the line and made 87.2 percent of their free throws (34-of-39) Saturday.

"We just work on them," said Burks, who made 11-of-12 from the line. "When we get to the line, there's nobody there but you. You have to block everything out, and we just make them. It's easy points to help our team out."

The Buffs needed those free throws to get past the Cowboys, who gave CU all it could handle. This win wasn't like the wins against Missouri and Kansas State. But it was just as satisfying for the Buffs.

"It might be ugly, you might have to do it a different way each night, but that's what you have to do in league play," Boyle said. "You have to figure out how to play differently. We have to learn to win sometimes unconventionally. That's what league play is all about."

NOTES: Dating back to last season, the Buffs have won six straight regular season Big 12 games. They haven't done that since the 6-0 start in 1996-97. ... The last time the Buffs won seven straight league games was in 1961-62 (last

two) and 1962-63 (first five). ... Boyle was worried about rebounding this season. So far in Big 12 play, the Buffs have outrebounded Missouri (by 14), Kansas State (by nine) and Oklahoma State (by 15). ... Higgins was 10-for-10 from the free-throw line.

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CU bandwagon is filling up fast

By Brian Howell
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BOULDER — It has been 14 years since the University of Colorado men's basketball team was ranked in the top 25 nationally.

The Buffs have been to the NCAA Tournament just once since then (in 2003) and just twice since 1969.

Plenty of ranked teams have come to Boulder in recent years. Plenty of fans have come to Boulder to watch those ranked teams — and not the Buffs.

On Saturday, CU's Coors Events Center was sold out. For the first time in years, those fans actually packed the arena to watch the Buffaloes.

"Our fans are getting behind this team now," CU coach Tad Boyle said after the Buffs' latest big win, 75-71 against Oklahoma State. "It's our team's responsibility to reward them with the effort that they deserve. One thing about Colorado fans, if you put out maximum effort and play your tails off ... they like winning, and this state is hungry for college basketball. You can sense it."

Having Oklahoma State in town isn't what led to a sellout crowd of 11,096 on a sunny Saturday afternoon.

On Jan. 8, the Buffs upset then-No. 9 Missouri in front of 8,694 fans at the Coors Events Center. Then on Tuesday, they upset No. 21 Kansas State — in Manhattan, Kan.

On Saturday, the fans came to Boulder in a bandwagon.

"Yeah, definitely," CU senior Cory Higgins said when asked if he could sense the growing support. "That was a big thing why we had to get this win, to get people to come back. I don't want anybody to think it's a fluke."

CU is now 14-4, 3-0 in Big 12 play. The Buffs have won seven in a row and 12 of their last 13 games. Oklahoma State coach Travis Ford doesn't think this is a fluke.

"They have come a long way," Oklahoma State coach Travis Ford said. "They are not the team of the past; they are a very good basketball team. We talked a lot in the offseason; I thought they were going to be a good team. They are an impressive basketball team."

The Buffs' early success in the Big 12 has turned heads nationally. Don't be surprised if the Buffs squeeze into the top 25 on Monday. Most importantly, the success has turned heads locally.

"We want to win regardless, but seeing all these fans come out here and support us so quickly, it definitely is motivation to keep winning," senior Marcus Relphorde said.

Between office pools and high attendance whenever the NCAA Tournament has made stops in Denver, fans around here have proven they love college hoops. Rarely have Colorado teams, and the Buffs in particular, been involved.

Boyle and the Buffs would love nothing more than to change that. At the very least, the Buffs want to be relevant in March.

“That is something that we have a responsibility to provide,” said Boyle, in his first year with the Buffs. “I think being the head coach at the University of Colorado carries some responsibility to it. Our players have to understand that they have responsibility to our fans.”

They do, but while national and local recognition is nice, the Buffs also understand that a couple of upset wins and a 3-0 start in league play isn’t the peak. It’s a start.

“We haven’t (had this success), but coach is always telling us, ‘Don’t get too high; don’t get too low,’” Higgins said. “We just have to keep doing what we’re doing. Don’t let all the pats on your back get to you. He also says when you get criticized, don’t let it get to you. You’ve just got to stay even keel and keep doing what you’re doing.”

So far, what the Buffs are doing is getting them noticed. How they handle the attention and hype will determine whether the Buffs can take another step forward.

“We are getting people’s best shot now because I think we’ve opened up some eyes,” Boyle said. “That is different for our players because they haven’t been through it before. It’s something that we have to talk about every single day.

“What you have to have is great seniors who can keep themselves hungry, humbled, focused.”

Considering CU’s history in men’s basketball, worrying about how to handle success is a problem the Buffs are happy to have.

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Oklahoma State Sports News and Articles

Colorado beats OSU men 75-71

From Staff Reports  4

Published: January 15, 2011

Oklahoma State blew a big lead, saw its offense go absent and still owned an opportunity to steal a road win Saturday at Colorado.

Opportunity missed.

And regretted.

Once up by 12 in the second half, the Cowboys went cold for an extended period and never fully recovered, falling 75-71 for their second road loss this week.

“We let this one slip,” said Cowboys coach Travis Ford. “We let this one get by. This is all about us not making plays.”

With the loss, OSU falls to 1-2 in the Big 12 and 13-4 overall. Colorado, playing before a sellout crowd of 11,096 at the Coors Events Center, improved to 11-0 at home, 3-0 in the conference and 14-4 on the season.

Jéan-Paul Olukemi, making his first career start, scored a team-high 21 points for the Cowboys, and Keiton Page added 19. But OSU was out-rebounded 39-24, and the Buffaloes shot 39 free throws — making 34 — to the Cowboys' 14 attempts from the line.

For the second straight game, the Cowboys suffered an offensive slowdown in the second half.

After making just five second-half shots and missing their final nine field-goal attempts at A&M, OSU blew a 12-point lead by going quiet at Colorado. The Cowboys owned their biggest lead, 54-42, at the 16:05 mark, but managed just seven points over the next 13 minutes as the Buffs rallied ahead 64-61.

“I think we just got a little bit too comfortable,” Page said. “We started relaxing on the offensive end and the defensive end, which we hadn't done to that point. And they made a comeback on us, and we didn't respond.

“I think we had it if we would have executed more of the scouting report after we went on that run. If we hadn't relaxed a little bit too much, I think we could have come up with a win.”

Marshall Moses, who struck for eight points in the opening 2:42 of the second half, didn't score again, frozen out despite making six of eight shots. Again, it was similar to the scene at A&M, when Moses got off but seven shot attempts with the offense veering off course.

Olukemi and Page were the only Cowboys to score over the final 11:54.

And yet, thanks to Olukemi, the Cowboys had their chances late.

Olukemi scored eight straight points down the stretch to keep the Cowboys close. His jumper from the foul line at the 1:00 mark made it 71-69 before he drew a charge on Colorado star Alec Burks at the other end moments later, giving OSU the ball with :30.1 to play.

But Olukemi missed on a 3-pointer with :11.7 remaining, and Colorado closed out the win at the foul line.

"I thought our guys played a lot harder today and competed a lot harder than the other night (at A&M)," Ford said. "We've still got to finish these games out."



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