

Nebraska halts CU Buffs' win streak

Boyle's squad suffers first Big 12 loss

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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LINCOLN, Neb. -- It was Showtime at the Devaney Center on Tuesday night.

Nebraska, a grind-it-out team known for its smothering defense, looked more like the Lakers at times, out-scoring Colorado 10-4 on the fast break and 44-22 in the paint during a 79-67 victory over the visitors from Boulder on Tuesday night.

"I didn't think they would be that aggressive (offensively), but everybody is D-I players out here," said Alec Burks, who scored a game-high 22 points and led CU with eight rebounds. "You have to expect the best from everybody."

The loss ended a seven-game winning streak for the Buffs, who had been receiving a lot of pats on the back and even some national attention after a 3-0 start to Big 12 play.

"We scored enough points," CU head coach Tad Boyle said. "Where I'm disappointed is the defensive end. We got out-rebounded, and I thought they out-scraped us and out-toughed us."

The Cornhuskers (14-4, 2-2) -- who blew a 10-point lead at No. 2 Kansas and lost 63-60 on Saturday -- shot 56.6 percent from the field (64 percent in the second half).

CU had no answer for Toney McCray (18 points) and Jorge Brian Diaz (14 points), who finished a combined 15-for-22 from the field.

"That doesn't win Big 12 games. We know that," Levi Knutson said of the Huskers' hot shooting. "(Defense and rebounding) were the things that allowed us to win the first three games, and we didn't do either of them tonight. We have to take care of the ball better, too."

Nebraska, which had been limiting opponents to 55 points per game (third nationally), scored 15 points off 16 turnovers.

"I think they got a lot of easy transition points with us not getting back," Marcus Relphorpe said. "Our defense allowed them to get easy points."

The Huskers opened the second half with a 13-5 run and led 44-35 on a putback by Caleb Walker. Diaz gave Nebraska a 46-35 cushion with 13:27 to go, which had the crowd of 7,489 on its feet.

CU's deficit continued to grow from there and eventually reached 17 points (61-44) after a 3-pointer by 6-10 sophomore Brandon Ubel and two made technical foul shots by Drake Beranek with just under seven minutes to play.

"Our guys got a little frustrated, we lost our composure, and we over-penetrated," Boyle said. "That's why we turned the ball over 16 times, which is uncharacteristic of our team."

A 3-pointer by Knutson closed the gap to 65-57 with 3:02 remaining, but the Huskers wouldn't allow their longtime rivals to get any closer.

"Obviously, Nebraska played well. They frustrate you, they don't let you get the ball to the rim, which we usually do," Knutson said. "But really we've got to get stops. That's the most frustrating part. We've been getting stops the last three games and we didn't do it tonight. It didn't allow us to get out and run the way we like to do."

Nebraska led 31-30 at the intermission after shooting 50 percent (14-for-28) from the field and out-rebounding CU 16-13.

The Huskers made six of their first seven shots and were up 13-3 after a layup by Walker capped a 10-0 run. Burks

answered with a pair of baskets and a 3-pointer by Knutson brought the Buffs to within 17-14.

CU had trouble defending the post, which allowed Nebraska to take a 22-14 lead on 10-for-13 shooting (77 percent) midway through the half. Cory Higgins, Andre Roberson and Relphorde buried three consecutive 3-pointers to give the Buffs their first lead (23-22) with 6:45 to go before the intermission.

Diaz had his way with the Buffs in the paint, scoring 10 points on 5-for-5 shooting at the break.

CU shot 48 percent (12-for-25) during the first 20 minutes against a Nebraska team that was leading the nation in field-goal percentage (35.1 percent).

"I hate to be one of these coaches who moans about how badly we played when we've lost," Boyle said. "Nebraska played well and they deserved to win. We'll leave it at that."

The Buffs (14-5, 3-1) had won 12 of their last 13 games and were off to their best start in conference play since opening the 1996-97 campaign 6-0.

CU will travel to Norman on Saturday to play Oklahoma.

Nebraska 79, Colorado 67

COLORADO

FG FT Reb

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

Dufault 26 3-6 0-0 0-2 1 1 6

Tmlnsn 14 0-2 0-0 0-0 3 1 0

Rlphrde 33 3-6 1-2 0-2 2 2 9

Burks 32 7-17 6-6 4-8 4 3 22

Higgins 37 3-8 0-0 0-3 1 1 8

Sharpe 10 0-1 0-0 0-1 1 0 0

Rbrson 19 2-2 0-1 1-5 0 3 5

Knutson 28 6-12 0-0 1-3 1 4 17

Eckloff 1 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Totals 200 24-54 7-9 8-26 13 15 67

Percentages: FG .444, FT .778.

3-Point Goals: 12-30, .400 (Knutson 5-11, Relphorde 2-4, Higgins 2-5, Burks 2-6, Roberson 1-1, Sharpe 0-1, Tomlinson 0-1, Dufault 0-1).

Team Rebounds: 2.

Blocked Shots: 1 (Higgins).

Turnovers: 16 (Burks 7, Roberson 3, Relphorde 3, Higgins 3).

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

Technical Fouls: Relphorde.

NEBRASKA

FG FT Reb

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

Diaz 27 7-8 0-0 0-2 1 1 14

McCray 30 8-14 0-0 2-8 0 3 18

Rchrdsn 23 1-1 4-4 0-0 3 3 6

Walker 30 4-6 1-2 3-6 2 3 9

Jeter 33 3-10 4-5 1-6 9 2 10

Jones 6 0-1 0-0 0-2 1 0 0

Ubel 12 2-3 1-1 0-1 0 0 6

Gllgs 5 0-1 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Beranek 22 2-4 5-6 0-4 2 2 10

Almeida 12 3-5 0-0 1-2 0 0 6

Totals 200 30-53 15-18 7-31 18 14 79

Percentages: FG .566, FT .833.

3-Point Goals: 4-17, .235 (McCray 2-6, Ubel 1-2, Beranek 1-2, Jones 0-1, Walker 0-2, Jeter 0-4).

Team Rebounds: 0.

Blocked Shots: 3 (Diaz 2, McCray).

Turnovers: 13 (Almeida 3, McCray 2, Jeter 2, Beranek 2, Walker 2, Richardson, Diaz).

Steals: 8 (Walker 3, Jeter 2, Beranek 2, McCray).

Technical Fouls: None.

Colorado 30 37--67

Nebraska 31 48--79

A -- 8,477.

Officials -- Steve Olson, Gary Maxwell, Doug Sirmons.

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college basketball

Cornhuskers snap Colorado's win streak, win 79-67 in Nebraska

By Brent C. Wagner
Special to The Denver Post

Posted: 01/18/2011 07:06:27 PM MST

Updated: 01/18/2011 11:47:04 PM MST

LINCOLN, Neb. — Some fans wondered how motivated Colorado would be to play Nebraska after the Buffaloes started Big 12 Conference play with a perfect 3-0 record, including wins against two top-25 teams.

The Buffaloes said motivation wasn't the issue Tuesday night in their 79-67 loss to Nebraska before a crowd of 8,477 at the Devaney Sports Center that ended CU's seven-game win streak. But getting a defensive stop against a Nebraska team that's not known for scoring a lot of points was a big problem for the Buffs. Nebraska shot 56 percent from the field and also made 15-of-18 free throws.

Big runs at the start of each half carried the Cornhuskers (14-4, 2-2 Big 12) to their biggest

win in conference play after narrow

losses against Missouri and Kansas last week.

Last season, Nebraska didn't win its second Big 12 game until its 14th conference game.

Colorado coach Tad Boyle said the Buffs (14-5, 3-1) had an off night, but he gave credit to Nebraska and its frustrating defense. CU, which was averaging 84 points a game, was held under 70 for only the second time this season.

Colorado's frustration showed, with the Buffs getting two technical fouls during a five-minute stretch of the second half. The Buffs had some uncharacteristic mistakes and Nebraska scored 15 points off 16 turnovers committed by Colorado.

Nebraska led 31-30 at halftime, but Colorado was always playing catch-up after the Huskers started the second half on a 15-4 run.

Colorado had to play three minutes of the second half without leading scorer Alec Burks, who dinged his leg. Burks returned for the final 11 minutes of the game and scored a game-high 22 points.

Nebraska led by 17 points with seven minutes left. The closest Colorado got late in the game was eight points, when Burks made two free throws with 2:25 remaining to pull within 67-59.

Colorado made a season-high 12 3-pointers, including five from senior guard Levi

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Knutson, who scored 17 points. The problem was on defense, where Colorado let Nebraska score 44 points in the paint, including nine layups



Nebraska's Toney McCray, holding the ball away from Colorado's Andre Roberson, matched his career high with 18 points Tuesday night. CU left Lincoln with its first Big 12 loss of the season. (The Associated Press)

Colorado was ready for the game and battled, but didn't play well, Knutson said.

"Nebraska frustrates you," Knutson said. "They don't let you get the ball to the rim, which we do. But we've got to get stops. That was the most frustrating part. We've been getting stops the last couple games. We just didn't do it tonight.

"And then we couldn't get out and run like this team likes to."

Nebraska had four players in double-figure scoring, led by junior guard Toney McCray's 18 points.

during the first half.

"We scored enough. Where I'm disappointed is the defensive end and we got outrebounded," Boyle said. "I thought they outscraped us and out-toughed us. They got a tip dunk in the first half, which should never happen, and a couple of second-chance points. Those are the things you have to eliminate."

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Huskers offer CU Buffs little charity

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 01/19/2011 12:02:17 AM MST

LINCOLN, Neb. -- Cory Higgins was on the court for 37 minutes.

Colorado's all-time leader in free throws made did not go to the line.

In fact, the Buffs were only 7-for-9 from the stripe during Tuesday night's 79-67 loss to Nebraska at the Devaney Center.

And no one in the visiting locker room was complaining about the whistles, or lack thereof. Credit Doc Sadler's version of the Blackshirts for this one.

"Against these guys it's hard to get to the rim. We knew we were going to have a little more of an outside game," said CU shooting guard Levi Knutson, who was 5-for-11 from 3-point distance and 0-for-0 at the line in 28 minutes. "We didn't want to shoot too many 3s, we wanted to get the ball moved and get into the mid-range area, which we needed more of. But we knew they were going to pack it in."

CU finished the game 12-for-30 (40 percent) from behind the arc. The visitors used six 3-pointers in the first half to turn a 10-point deficit into a 26-23 lead.

But the Buffs' bread and butter -- driving into the paint and either scoring or getting fouled -- was taken away by the Cornhuskers. Obviously, Sadler watched the film of CU's 75-71 win over Oklahoma State. The Buffs were 34-for-39 at the line against the Cowboys (Higgins was 10-for-10).

"I can't even imagine it," Sadler said of his team limiting CU to nine free-throw attempts. "They probably shouldn't have shot nine because we had a couple bad fouls late. That's the difference."

The nine free throws were a season-low for CU and the 12 made 3-pointers were a season-high.

"I thought we shot it well enough," CU head coach Tad Boyle said. "When you rely on the three-ball it worries you as a coach, and we don't want to rely on it as much as we did tonight."

Boyle honored

Boyle was named National Coach of the Week by The Hoops Report in its weekly awards for the week of January 10-16.

The Buffs opened Big 12 play with back-to-back wins over ranked opponents (Missouri and Kansas State) for the first time ever and a 75-71 victory over Oklahoma State in front of a sellout crowd at the Coors Events Center.

Boyle became the first CU head coach since Henry Iba (1933-34) to win his first three conference games.

Bracketology snub

Despite nearly cracking the Associated Press top-25 poll this week (30th in voting), CU did not make the projected NCAA Tournament at espn.com.

Joe Lunardi, the "Bracketology" guru, has the Buffs as one of the "first four out" of the field. Remember, the NCAA Tournament has expanded to 68 teams.

Bracketology projected Kansas as a No. 1 seed facing No. 16 Northern Colorado -- Boyle's old team -- in the Southwest.

Burks watch

[NBADraft.net](#) had a little more love for Alec Burks on Tuesday, projecting the CU sophomore as the No. 7 pick to Detroit in the 2011 draft.

A scout from the Pistons made his way to snowy Lincoln for the game to see Burks play live. The 6-6 sophomore guard finished with 22 points and eight rebounds.

Series update

Nebraska leads the all-time series 76-71, including a 52-14 edge in Lincoln.

The Buffs snapped a 36-game Big 12 road losing streak with an 81-68 win at the Devaney Center on March 2. Casey Crawford scored 20 points in that game with six 3-pointers.

The Huskers have a 17-13 edge in Big 12 games.

CU and Nebraska will meet for the final time as conference rivals in the regular-season finale on March 5 at the Coors Events Center.

Notable

Higgins moved into second place on the CU all-time list in career minutes passing Richard Roby (3,805, 2004-08). Higgins has logged 3,840 career minutes. ... The Buffs are 3-7 all-time on ESPN2. They last appeared on the Deuce during the Maui Invitational last season (2-1). ... A snowstorm in Lincoln spoiled any chance Nebraska had of drawing a sellout crowd. A total of 8,477 tickets were distributed and 7,489 made it through the turnstiles at the Devaney Center.

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McCray leads Husker men past Colorado

- Story

By BRIAN ROSENTHAL / Lincoln Journal Star | Posted: Tuesday, January 18, 2011 10:30 pm

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Nebraska's Toney McCray grabs a defensive rebound in the first half against Colorado on Tuesday, Jan. 11, 2011. McCray tied his career high with 18 points in NU's win. (GWYNETH ROBERTS / Lincoln Journal Star)

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Toney McCray's emphatic, put-back dunk ignited Nebraska early.

When he skied to block Alec Burks' shot on the baseline, forcing the ball to the court and securing it for the rebound, the Devaney Center crowd roared.

His heads-up steal under the Colorado basket and easy layup atoned for his turnover only a second earlier.

But McCray's biggest play in Nebraska's 79-67 victory Tuesday night over Colorado?

The junior guard chose his over-the-shoulder pass to Brandon Richardson in the final minute.

McCray, running in transition, flipped the ball from near midcourt to Richardson, who drew a foul on his layup attempt and made two free throws.

"I just got the ball and I threw it over the top of my head, man," said McCray, who tied his career high with 18 points to lead Nebraska.

"Coach (Doc) Sadler hates that. He hates it when I throw it over the top of my head. When I did, I was like, 'Oh my God, please make this play,' because Coach is going to be on my head."

But McCray, who contributed with crowd-igniting, momentum-shifting plays throughout the game, showed some aggression on his pass, textbook or no. And that's something Nebraska needed to hold off a Colorado rally.

The Huskers had a 17-point lead dwindle to eight with 3 minutes remaining, and Nebraska, which had shot so well all game long, began looking stagnant on offense.

"Coach Sadler called that timeout and said, 'Hey, we gotta keep putting that ball in the basket. We still gotta put the heat on them,' " McCray said. "We can't just sit out here and just pass the ball around and just hope for a prayer at the end."

The Huskers heeded that advice, and in doing so, handed Colorado its first conference loss. Nebraska (14-4, 2-2 Big 12 Conference) improved to 13-0 at home, and Colorado (14-5, 3-1) was held to fewer than 70 points for only the second time this season.

Brian Diaz scored 14 points, and Lance Jeter and Drake Beranek added 10 apiece for the Huskers, who shot 56.6 percent after shooting 38 percent over their first three Big 12 games. Jeter had nine assists, most of them to Diaz, who was 7-of-8 from the field.

"If we shoot it like this, we're going to have a chance," Sadler said. "Our defense is going to be there. I think it's been consistent enough."

The Huskers have faced four of the Big 12's top five scoring teams, holding Iowa State, Missouri, Kansas and Colorado to an average of 67.2 points. Combined, those teams are averaging 82.2 points on the season.

Against Colorado, the Huskers accomplished their goal of keeping the Buffaloes' talented guards from penetrating the lane. Burks had 22 points to pace CU, but the Buffaloes went to the free-throw line only nine times, all in the second half, against Nebraska's sagging defense.

Colorado had been averaging 22-of-27 shooting on free throws in Big 12 play.

"They're so well drilled. They don't break down. That's the thing I think makes their defense so good," said Colorado coach Tad Boyle, whose team shot 12-of-30 on three-pointers.

"At times we executed and got some shots, but we didn't do it consistently enough. Our guys got a little frustrated and lost our composure."

Nebraska jumped to leads of 13-3 and 19-7, then saw Colorado rally for a leads of 23-22 and 26-23. The lead changed hands five times from there until NU settled for a 31-30 halftime advantage, extending that to 40-33 early in the second half, and holding it the rest of the game.

"We felt it was a must-win. We felt like we've got to protect home court," McCray said. "Any time we're at home, it's a must-win."

Nebraska, coming off two single-digit road losses to Top 15 teams, now returns to the road Saturday against a Texas Tech team that's winless in Big 12 play.

"I've told you all this team can be something, and I believe in them," Sadler said. "I really do."

Briefly

Christian Standhardinger didn't last long at La Salle.

On the same day La Salle issued a news release confirming the former Husker's transfer there, coach John Giannini on Tuesday released this statement:

"Christian has recently been made aware of a personal situation that demands his full attention. We believe it is in the best interest of all parties that Christian Standhardinger does not attend La Salle University."

NEBRASKA 79, COLORADO 67

Colorado	30	37	--	67
Nebraska	31	48	--	79

Colorado	FG	FT	Rb	Min	Pts
Austin Dufault	3-6	0-0	2	26	6

Nate Tomlinson	0-2	0-0	0	14	0
Marcus Relphorde	3-6	1-2	2	33	9
Alec Burks	7-17	6-6	8	32	22
Cory Higgins	3-8	0-0	3	37	8
Shannon Sharpe	0-1	0-0	1	10	0
Andre Roberson	2-2	0-1	5	19	5
Levi Knutson	6-12	0-0	3	28	17
Trey Eckloff	0-0	0-0	0	1	0
team			2		

Totals **24-54** **7-9** **26** **200** **67**

Three-pointers--12-30 (Dufault 0-1, Tomlinson 0-1, Relphorde 2-4, Burks 2-6, Higgins 2-5, Sharpe 0-1, Roberson 1-1, Knutson 5-11). **Field-goal percentage**--44.4. **Team fouls**--15. **Assists**--13 (Burks 4, Tomlinson 3). **Turnovers**--16. **Steals**--5 (Tomlinson, Relphorde, Higgins, Sharpe, Roberson, 1). **Blocked shots**--1.

Nebraska	FG	FT	Rb	Min	Pts
Brian Diaz	7-8	0-0	2	27	14
Toney McCray	8-14	0-0	8	30	18
Brandon Richardson	1-1	4-4	0	23	6
Caleb Walker	4-6	1-2	6	30	9
Lance Jeter	3-10	4-5	6	33	10
Eshaunte Jones	0-1	0-0	2	6	0
Brandon Ubel	2-3	1-1	1	12	6
Ray Gallegos	0-1	0-0	0	5	0
Drake Beranke	2-4	5-6	4	22	10
Andre Almeida	3-5	0-0	2	12	6
team			0		

Colorado, picked ninth in the preseason poll, has been getting most of the recent publicity after a rare 3-0 league start, 12 wins in 13 games and votes in this week's Top 25.

But Nebraska, picked 10th in preseason, drilled the Buffaloes 79-67 on Tuesday night. That victory, in conjunction with close losses last week at No. 15 Missouri and No. 3 Kansas, are at least a conversation-starter.

The Huskers, last in the Big 12 a year ago at 2-14, are 2-2 now and 14-4 overall.

"Nebraska is a good team, now," CU coach Tad Boyle said. "I've got a lot of respect for their program and their coaches."

The respect comes from playing junkyard dog defense.

Three days after holding Kansas to a season-low 63 points (21 under its average), NU held Colorado to its second-lowest point total and 17 under its average.

The defensive activity helped Nebraska bolt to leads of 10 points in the first half and, after being up only 31-30 at halftime, 17 in the second half.

CU wings Alec Burks and Corey Higgins, both legitimate NBA prospects, were a combined 10 of 25 (40 percent) from the field. Burks, a likely lottery pick, had 22 points but missed 10 of 17 shots and committed seven turnovers.

"Nebraska takes away your easy baskets," Boyle said. "They take away you getting to the rim on them. They are sagging and taking charges."

That's hardly highlight-reel duty, but senior point guard Lance Jeter said the Huskers thrive on it.

"You aren't going to play good defense unless you believe in it," said Jeter, who had 10 points, nine assists and six rebounds. "And we believe in this defense."

Nebraska entered the game second nationally in field-goal defense (35.1 percent) and third in scoring defense (55.5 points).

"Statistics-wise, we are doing good so far," Jeter said. "But you've got to keep going, and you've got to want to play defense. We want to stop high-scoring teams. We take pride in our defense."

Colorado, with its athletic wings slashing to the basket, had averaged 29 free throws a game. But Nebraska's switching and sagging defensive web allowed little penetration and permitted CU only nine free throws.

"I can't even imagine it," NU coach Doc Sadler said in delight. "They probably shouldn't even have shot nine, because we had a couple of bad fouls late."

"That's the difference. They were making 22 a game in league play. If they had made 22 tonight, it would have been a different game."

Offensively for Nebraska, junior forward Toney McCray and sophomore center Jorge Brian Diaz got revved up.

McCray produced 18 points, tying his career high. He hit a game-opening 3, had a tip dunk that fired up the Devaney Center crowd of 7,489 on a snowy night and added a handful of other high-impact plays.

"The plays he made were energy plays," Sadler said. "The kind that got people into it."

Diaz added 14 points on 7 of 8 shooting. He had been in a 9-for-32 slump (28.1 percent) in league play.

"It feels gr-r-r-eat," Diaz said with a huge smile. "I'm really happy. I have to give credit to my teammates. They tell me to keep confident and stay aggressive and don't stop shooting."

Sadler left the court with a fist pump and a big smile after what most observers were touting as a must win for Nebraska to harbor postseason hopes.

"You realize how long it took us to get two wins last year?" Sadler said with an arched eyebrow. "There's something to be excited about."

"Guys, it's exciting to be the coach here. I've told y'all this team could be something, and I believe in them. I really do."

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