

Boyle's CU Buffs still shooting for first true road win

CU travels to California to face Roadrunners

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BAKERSFIELD, Calif. -- Playing here at Rabobank Arena in a non-conference game won't have the same atmosphere as playing at Pauley Pavilion.

Historically, Cal State Bakersfield -- in its first season as an unrestricted Division I member after completing the five-year transition from Division II -- is on the opposite end of the college basketball spectrum from UCLA.

But first-year Colorado head coach Tad Boyle wanted to play a game in the greater Los Angeles area so the Buffs would be visible in Southern California ahead of next season's arrival in the Pac-12.

CU will seek its first true road win of the season against the Roadrunners at 6 p.m. tonight (no television, AM 760).

"One of the reasons we scheduled it was obviously so recruits and their families could see the Colorado brand out in California," Boyle said. "And also for our alumni in the area to come out and see the Buffaloes. So it's big for us. Southern California is a big recruiting base for us and it will continue to be as time goes on.

"It's critical for us to go out and play well."

Boyle signed three high school seniors to letters-of-intent in November. All of the future Buffs -- Askia Booker, Damienne Cain and Spencer Dinwiddie -- are from Los Angeles.

"That was not by design, although this was a focus area for recruiting," Boyle said. "Everything kind of fell into place and we're fortunate and happy to have all three of them."

The Buffs (9-4) have won seven of their last eight games -- including a victory over Indiana in Las Vegas -- but are 0-3 in true road games this season.

CU lost in overtime at San Francisco, another future Pac-12 destination city, in November. Cal State Bakersfield beat the Dons 77-69 at home on Dec. 4.

"That will get our guys' attention," Boyle said. "They're very athletic, they're good in transition, and they're better than maybe their name indicates. They're better than a lot of teams that have come to the Coors Events Center, the quote-unquote 'bye' teams that we've brought in."

The Roadrunners (8-5), an independent, have won five of their last six games, including wins over Pepperdine, San Jose State and Portland State.

CU's last out-of-state non-conference road victory in the continental United States was a 60-59 victory over Utah on Nov. 21, 2006.

"That's our main goal and focus is to go out there and try and get us a road win," said freshman point guard Shannon Sharpe, who is from Corona, Calif.

Boyle's team ratcheted up its defensive effort and rebounding to quiet the pro-Indiana crowd at Orleans Arena. But the Buffs took a step back against Maryland Eastern Shore -- one of the unofficial 'byes' on the home schedule -- in those key areas, despite winning by a lopsided margin (92-65).

CU will have to take Cal State Bakersfield as seriously as it would UCLA in order to fly home with an elusive true road triumph.

"Vegas was more of an Indiana crowd than a Colorado crowd, there's no question about that. But this is somebody who will be playing on their home floor in their hometown and getting dressed in their home locker room," Boyle said. "It's an opportunity for us to check another box in terms of our development as a program."

TODAY: The Buffs (9-4) will travel to greater Los Angeles to play Cal State Bakersfield at 6 p.m. at Rabobank Arena.

BROADCAST: No television. Radio on KKZN (760 AM) with Mark Johnson (play-by-play) and Chris Lewis (analyst).

STORY LINES: The Buffs have won seven of their last eight games, including a 92-65 victory over Maryland Eastern Shore last Wednesday. ... CU beat Indiana in Las Vegas last month but is 0-3 in true road games this season with losses at Georgia, San Francisco and Harvard. ... The Roadrunners (8-5), an independent program, have won five of their last six games and bring a three-game win streak to the court. ... Cal State Bakersfield beat San Francisco at home this season. The Buffs lost to the Dons in overtime.

COACHES: Tad Boyle is 9-4 in his first season at CU after going 56-66 in four seasons at Northern Colorado. Keith Brown, a former head coach at the Colorado School of Mines, is 67-91 in his sixth season at Cal State Bakersfield.

PROBABLE STARTERS: Colorado -- G Nate Tomlinson, 6-2, Jr., 3.5 ppg, 2.1 rpg; G Marcus Relphorde, 6-7, Sr., 12.2 ppg, 4.0 rpg; G Alec Burks, 6-6, SO., 19.0 ppg, 4.2 rpg; G Cory Higgins, 6-5, Sr., 16.8 ppg, 3.4 rpg; F Austin Dufault, 6-9, Jr., 8.9 ppg, 4.8 rpg. **Cal State Bakersfield** -- G Alec Johnson, 5-10, Jr., 14.2 ppg, 2.6 rpg; G Donovan Bragg, 6-3, Sr., 14.2 ppg, 2.5 rpg; G Stephon Carter, 6-3, So., 18.5 ppg, 3.8 rpg; F Rashad Savage, 6-6, Jr., 9.2 ppg, 10.5 rpg; C Cory Brown, 6-10, Sr., 3.3 ppg, 2.1 rpg.

KEY STAT: The Buffs' last out-of-state non-conference road victory in the continental United States was a 60-59 victory over Utah on Nov. 21, 2006.

SERIES: This is the first meeting between the programs. CU is 8-0 all-time against independents.

UP NEXT: The Buffs will host Western New Mexico on Wednesday at the Coors Events Center (7 p.m., no television) in the final non-conference game of the season.

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