



Alec Burks led the Buffs in scoring for the ninth time in 15 games this season.  
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



01/05/2011 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

## Slow-starting Buffs Overcome Themselves, Mustangs

**BOULDER** - If the Colorado Buffaloes were looking ahead to their Big 12 Conference opener, they opened Wednesday night as if they might allow the, gasp, Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference to spoil the view.

Maybe the best that can be said of the Buffs in their 92-70 win against Western New Mexico was that they all walked away afterwards and should be ready - physically and mentally - for No. 8 Missouri's visit on Saturday (11:30 a.m.) to the Coors Events Center.

Beyond that, first-year CU Coach Tad Boyle found, ah, a few flaws in his team's final non-conference contest. And those flaws, he said, were of his creation: "I didn't do a very good job of preparing the team; it was on me to get the team ready emotionally . . . needless to say, Pregame Speech No. 15 is going into the

### BUFFALO EXTRAS



**Watch:**  
MBB vs W New Mexico Replay  
01/06/2011



**Watch:**  
MBB vs. W New Mexico Highlights  
01/06/2011



**Listen:**  
MBB vs. W New Mexico Audio  
01/06/2011

→ **Quotes**

→ **Box Score**

→ **Notes**

**Box Score**

trash."

Oh, the Buffs ultimately exceeded their 84.3 scoring average, with five players reaching double figures. Alec Burks topped CU with 20 points, followed by Cory Higgins with 15, Levi Knutson and Marcus Relphorde with 13 each and Andre Roberson with 12. Roberson also added 12 rebounds.

There were other better-than-average CU numbers, too, such as a season-high 52 rebounds, only 11 turnovers, a 33-17 advantage in bench scoring and a 54-26 advantage in the paint.

But Boyle didn't have his eye on many stat lines when this one was done. He wanted to quickly turn the page and turn his attention to Mizzou. "We've got two days (to practice)," he said. "We'll be ready."

In addition to anticipating the Tigers' arrival, the Buffs might have had other visions of success dancing in their heads when they took the court Wednesday night. They entered their last non-conference outing on a three-game winning streak, with two of the wins on the road - a rarity for this program.

Also, they had won 20 consecutive home games against non-conference opposition, including eight this season. CU's mindset might have been: So what business did an RMAC team have coming to town and challenging that streak?

Bad thought - if that indeed was CU's thinking.

While blossoming freshman Roberson contended "everybody was looking to the Missouri game," Burks claimed Western New Mexico wasn't overlooked: "We came out flat and they took advantage . . . we weren't ready. We don't overlook anybody."

The Buffs led 44-36 at the half, but they opened poorly enough for Boyle to pull his starting five only 2:01 into the game after the Mustangs had taken an 8-2 lead.

In those opening 2 minutes, CU could plead guilty to almost everything a coach advises against - and Western New Mexico, which came to Boulder riding a two-game winning streak (Colorado Christian, School of Mines), gleefully took advantage.

When 6-foot-8 senior Chuck Kempf - the tallest player on the Mustangs roster - hit a three-pointer from the right wing, the Buffs fell behind 16-4. The Western New Mexico bench might not celebrate as it did until the Mustangs win the RMAC title in March.

Meanwhile, if a slow simmer wasn't underway on the CU bench it should have been. Boyle assumed poses he would strike for much of the night - shaking his head or burying it in both hands.

"You've got to wake them up somehow," Boyle said of yanking his starters. "I wanted to see if the guys on the bench were ready . . . but it wasn't like they came in and we came roaring back."

Mustangs Coach Mark Coleman viewed Boyle's mass substitution as a nice plus in the loss. "We don't come into these games expecting a win, obviously. (But) to make (Boyle) yell at his guys and take timeouts and pull his five starters kind of makes us feel good because we want to be competitive - and we did a good job of that," he said.

With 14:08 left in the half and his team trailing 16-6, Boyle began reinserting his starters. Relphorde returned at that point, with Higgins, Burks and Austin Dufault coming back just under 2 minutes later.

Less than a minute after that, Shannon Sharpe - opening at point guard in place of Nate Tomlinson, who was in street clothes resting a sore hip and will play Saturday - returned. Over the next 7:02, CU outscored the visitors 19-6 and took its first lead - 23-22 - on a Knutson layup.

The Buffs increased their advantage to double digits for the first time - 38-27 - with 3:43 remaining before intermission, but had to settle for their eight-point advantage at the break.

CU opened the second half with a 13-6 run and took a 17-point lead (57-40), although Western New Mexico continued to scrape and scrap the rest of the way. The Mustangs pulled to 60-51 on a layup by Chad Carter with 11:57 to play, but the Buffs restored their double-figure lead on two free throws by Relphorde and held it until the final buzzer. They led by as many as 25 in the last minute, when they could finally turn their full focus to Mizzou - if it wasn't there already.

Since defeating Nebraska 79-73 in Boulder in the Big 12's inaugural season (1997), the Buffs haven't fared well in conference openers. After the win against the Cornhuskers, they've dropped their next 13.

"Home court is going to be very important for us," said Boyle, "and it starts on Saturday . . . the price of poker is going up. We know that."

Contact: [BG.Brooks@Colorado.EDU](mailto:BG.Brooks@Colorado.EDU)

SHOW MENU



# CU Buffs sluggish in tune-up for Big 12 play

## CU overcomes early deficit to beat Mustangs

**By Ryan Thorburn** Camera Sports Writer  
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 01/05/2011 08:59:31 PM MST

Big 12 vs. Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference.

It was the type of mismatch Tad Boyle figured would give Colorado a chance to empty the bench.

But not two minutes into the game.

That's exactly what CU's head coach did as he made a hockey-style line change -- replacing all five starters at once -- after the Buffs fell behind Division II Western New Mexico 8-2 out of the gate.

Eventually, Alec Burks and Co. returned to the floor and CU rolled to a 92-70 victory over the Mustangs from Silver City, N.M., on Wednesday night at the Coors Events Center.

"Needless to stay, pregame speech No. 15 is going in the trash," Boyle said after the Buffs finished non-conference play with an 11-4 record. "I'm throwing that one away."

The 2,139 paying customers left happy, but there were some groans echoing through the Coors Events Center when the Mustangs were leading 18-6.

"We don't come into these games expecting to win, obviously," Western New Mexico head coach Mark Coleman said. "To make coach Boyle yell at his guys and take timeouts and pull his five starters off kind of makes us feel good because we want to be competitive and we do a good job of that."

The Mustangs made four layups on their first four possessions of the game. The CU reserves rushed into the game didn't fare much better as the visitors stayed aggressive and built a 16-4 advantage on the scoreboard.

"We just came out flat," Burks explained of the sluggish start. "And they took advantage of it."

A dunk by Chuck Kempf made the score 22-13 with 10:54 remaining, and that seemed to be the point when the Buffs' pride finally kicked in.

CU scored 10 unanswered points, capped with a basket by Levi Knutson, to take its first lead with 7:25 to go before the break.

"We weren't ready to play, obviously. And if your starters aren't ready it's hard to maintain the respect of the guys on the bench," Boyle said. "It's not like we came roaring back. I think it was a team thing. You gotta wake them up somehow. ...

"I think when we put the starters back in the intensity was better."

Back-to-back steals and dunks by Austin Dufault and Burks got the crowd into the game.

Despite extending the run to 18-2 and 25-5, the Buffs settled for a 44-36 lead at the intermission.

"I would say so, some guys yeah," freshman Andre Roberson, who had 12 points and 12 rebounds off the bench, said when asked if the Buffs looked past Western New Mexico. "You could just see it. We didn't come out like we normally do and everyone was looking forward to the Missouri game."

The Mustangs (5-10) cut the deficit to six points early in the second half, but CU had an 11-1 burst and led 57-40 after a

field goal by Marcus Relphorde with 14:24 to play.

Burks finished with 20 points and eight rebounds. Five Buffs scored in double figures, and Dufault finished with nine points.

Shannon Sharpe started at point guard for Nate Tomlinson, who is nursing a sore hip and is expected to be ready for the Big 12 opener. Higgins led the Buffs with four assists and finished with 15 points after a quiet first half.

After allowing the Mustangs to shoot 44.8 percent in the first half, CU held the visitors to 12-for-33 (36.4 percent) from the field in the second half.

"It helped us a lot," Burks said of the benching. "It showed us we weren't playing the right way."

Western New Mexico was coming off road wins over Colorado Christian (80-79) and the Colorado School of Mines (97-93).

"It's quite a road trip," said Coleman, whose team was playing its third game in the Centennial State in five days. "It's not like we're the Lakers on an East Coast swing or anything. But we'd just be home doing nothing. There's no one on campus, so it's nice to get these guys out and away from sitting around doing nothing. We're playing games."

CU opens Big 12 play on Saturday against No. 9 Missouri at the Coors Events Center (11:30 a.m., Altitude).

"The price of poker is going up starting Saturday," Boyle said. "We know this league is no joke."

#### **Notable**

CU extended its non-conference home winning streak to 21. ... The Buffs, now 70-26 against RMAC teams, had never played Western New Mexico before. ... CU had a 54-26 scoring edge in the paint, a 29-8 advantage in second-chance scoring, and outscored Western New Mexico 33-17 in bench points. ... The Buffs also grabbed a season-high 52 rebounds and limited the Mustangs to 30 boards.

#### **Colorado 92,**

#### **Western New Mexico 70**

#### **W. NEW MEXICO (70)**

#### **FG FT Reb**

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

Carter 30 7-11 4-6 4-7 1 3 18

Kempf 27 3-7 0-0 0-4 0 5 8

Riley 37 7-18 5-5 0-5 2 2 20

McIntosh 22 1-2 0-0 0-3 2 3 2

Crane 22 1-3 2-2 0-0 1 1 5

Suarez 10 0-1 0-0 0-0 3 1 0

Murdock 9 0-3 2-2 0-0 1 2 2

Sohlich 14 3-6 0-0 0-1 2 1 7

Luttrell 10 1-3 0-0 1-3 0 1 3

Berry 15 2-8 1-2 3-4 0 2 5

Littleton 4 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Totals 200 25-62 14-17 10-30 12 21 70

**Percentages:** FG .403, FT .824.

**3-Point Goals:** 6-19, .316 (Kempf 2-4, Crane 1-2, Luttrell 1-3, Sohlich 1-4, Riley 1-5, Murdock 0-1).

**Team Rebounds:** 3.

**Blocked Shots:** 4 (Berry 2, Carter, Sohlich).

**Turnovers:** 16 (Crane 4, Murdock 3, Riley 3, Carter 3, Suarez, Sohlich, Luttrell).

**Steals:** 7 (Riley 3, Littleton, Kempf, McIntosh, Carter).

**Technical Fouls:** None.

#### **COLORADO (92) FG FT Reb**

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

Dufault 16 3-4 3-6 2-4 1 5 9

Sharpe 27 1-4 0-0 1-1 1 0 2

Rlphrde 28 4-12 5-6 5-7 1 2 13

Burks 24 8-19 4-4 4-8 2 1 20

Higgins 22 6-12 3-4 2-4 4 3 15

Coney 11 0-2 0-0 1-3 1 0 0

Robrsn 27 6-7 0-1 3-12 0 2 12

Knutsn 24 4-6 2-2 0-3 1 3 13

Mills 8 1-3 0-0 2-3 0 0 2

Eckloff 13 3-7 0-0 1-4 1 0 6

Totals 200 36-76 17-23 23-52 12 16 92

**Percentages:** FG .474, FT .739.

**3-Point Goals:** 3-15, .200 (Knutson 3-4, Sharpe 0-1, Coney 0-1, Roberson 0-1, Eckloff 0-1, Burks 0-1, Relphorde 0-3, Higgins 0-3).

**Team Rebounds:** 3.

**Blocked Shots:** 7 (Relphorde 3, Roberson 2, Burks, Dufault).

**Turnovers:** 11 (Higgins 3, Dufault 2, Sharpe 2, Burks 2, Mills, Relphorde).

**Steals:** 8 (Roberson 3, Relphorde 2, Sharpe, Dufault, Burks).

**Technical Fouls:**

None. **W. New Mexico 36 34--70**

**Colorado 44 48--92**

**A --** 2,139.

**Officials --** Rick Hartzell, Duke Edsall, Brad Ferrie.

Close Window

Send To Printer



# denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

cu basketball

## Bufs overcome slow start against New Mexico to triumph 92-70

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

Posted: 01/06/2011 01:00:00 AM MST

Updated: 01/06/2011 01:47:23 AM MST

BOULDER — Colorado's 92-70 victory Wednesday night over Division II Western New Mexico was bound to be a ho-hum tune-up for the Big 12 Conference men's basketball opener here this weekend, and obviously was scheduled by CU with that in mind.

But did it have to take more than 12 1/2 minutes before a Colorado player showed some spunk?

That's how long it took for the Buffs (11-4) to finally take the lead over a try-hard but unimposing Mustangs team from Silver City, N. M., that isn't even considered top-tier in the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference.

"We just came out flat and (Western New Mexico) took advantage," CU sophomore Alec Burks said.

No, there is no truth to the rumor that Colorado coach Tad Boyle had this planned all along — to make ninth-ranked Missouri (14-1) feel even more confident when it arrives Saturday at the Coors Events Center for an 11:45 a.m. league opener.

Western New Mexico (5-10) must have gained some confidence earlier this week on its Front Range tour with victories over Colorado Christian and Colorado School of Mines because the Mustangs came out firing — and seemingly couldn't miss. WNMU scored the game's first three baskets and raced to a 10-2 lead, but not before Boyle had benched his starting lineup in disgust.

"Well, pregame speech No. 15 is going into the trash," Boyle said in postgame interviews. "I'm looking forward to Saturday. Our guys will be ready."

Boyle let his regulars stew on the bench until most returned to the court with 12:23 remaining in the first half and the Buffs still down 18-9. CU took its first lead, 23-22, on a drive by senior guard Levi Knutson with 7:20 left.

Burks finished with 20 points and senior Cory Higgins reached 15 after the slow start. Still, Colorado led just 60-51 with 11:40 remaining in the second half.

"I didn't do a very good job of getting the team ready tonight," Boyle said.

CU junior point guard Nate Tomlinson (sore hip)

Advertisement



**SAVE** up to **64%**  
Plus, get  
**3 FREE Gifts**



Special Code: 45069ZWN

To Order: [www.OmahaSteaks.com/print71](http://www.OmahaSteaks.com/print71) or call 1-877-605-0496

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™



# denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

sat out the game but will return to practice today and be ready for Missouri, Boyle said.

Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280 or  
[tkensler@denverpost.com](mailto:tkensler@denverpost.com)

Advertisement



**SAVE** up to **64%**  
Plus, get  
**3 FREE Gifts**



Special Code: 45069ZWN

To Order: [www.OmahaSteaks.com/print71](http://www.OmahaSteaks.com/print71) or call 1-877-605-0496

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

JANUARY 5, 2011, 4:37 PM

## NBA scout takes on Colorado's Alec Burks

By **CHRIS DEMPSEY** |  No Comments

Here's one NBA scout's evaluation of Colorado guard Alex Burks:

"First time I watched Burks in person what struck me was his tremendous length for the position. I didn't necessarily notice this as much on film. He's a solid athlete with a good handle, and combined with his length, this allows him to get his shot off pretty much anywhere and at anytime. He can go wherever he wants to against most college teams thanks to his dribbling ability. He has an uncanny ability to make off balance shots off the bounce. I usually don't like guys shooting when they aren't balanced, but he has the ability to make these shots consistently. This is something that really can't be taught. His scoring ability is legit and should translate to the next level...

One idiosyncrasy I noticed is that he shoots a true jumper from mid-range but more of a set-shot from beyond the arc. I would like his shot to be the same every time. He doesn't yet have NBA three-point range. He has a tendency to dribble in to charges or turnovers and has to improve in this area. He can be a very good passer when he wants to be, but he sometimes gets tunnel vision and looks only at the rim. He must improve and get more active when the ball isn't in his hands. He has a tendency to just stand or drift to the perimeter until he receives the ball again. His biggest weakness is his lack of defensive intensity. He often has a "too cool for school" look. When he's defending on the weak-side away from the ball he often loses sight of the ball or his man and is susceptible to giving up back door lay-ups. This is frustrating to watch because his length and athleticism could make him a great on the ball defender and also a menace in the passing lanes.

As it stands now, I could see him going as high as the late teens or as far back as late first round. Definitely think he's a first round talent, though."

**SHARP CUTS:** It's been a dismal start for [Jeff Bzdelik](#) <sup>[1]</sup>, who left the University of Colorado for Wake Forest after last season. His team is 6-8 with four straight losses going into today's game against High Point and turns the ball over 16.2 times per game. ... Xavier Silas, who started his career at CU is third in the nation in scoring so far this season, averaging 24.5 points per game for Ricardo Patton's Northern Illinois Huskies, who are out to a 4-8 start this season.

Chris Dempsey: [twitter.com/dempseypost](https://twitter.com/dempseypost) <sup>[2]</sup> or [cdempsey@denverpost.com](mailto:cdempsey@denverpost.com)

### More from All Things Colorado Sports

- [Dan Hawkins on list of Texas State coaching candidates](#) <sup>[3]</sup>
- [Basketball Matters: Colorado State Duo leading Rams Resurgence](#) <sup>[4]</sup>
- [CU's Burks might 'explore other options'](#) <sup>[5]</sup>

### All Things Colorado Sports Recommends

- [DU's Nate Rohnert soaks up a rare NBA opportunity](#) <sup>[6]</sup> (All Things Nuggets)

[Print page](#)[Close window](#)

Longmont, Colorado  
Thursday, January 06,  
2011

Publish Date: 1/6/2011

## Buffs win with one eye on Tigers

By Brian Howell  
© 2011 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Western New Mexico was in town Wednesday night to play the University of Colorado in men's basketball team.

The Buffs, however, had their thoughts on the Missouri Tigers.

"I would say so," freshman Andre Roberson said. "Some guys, yeah. You could just see it, especially when we came out. We didn't come out like we usually do. I guess everybody was just looking for the Missouri game."

CU opens Big 12 play on Saturday against the ninth-ranked Tigers, but first had to overcome a miserable start before routing Western New Mexico 92-70 at Coors Events Center.

Some of the final stats were impressive for CU (11-4), which closed its non-conference schedule by winning nine of its last 10 games.

Alec Burks scored 20 points, Cory Higgins had 15 and Roberson had his third double-double of the season with 12 points and 12 rebounds. In all, five Buffs scored at least 10 points and another had nine.

CU also out-rebounded the Mustangs 52-30 and shot 47.4 percent for the game.

Two minutes into the game, though, CU trailed 8-2 and head coach Tad Boyle was so disgusted by what he was watching, he benched his entire starting lineup.

"We're all doing bad. That's what it means," Burks said of Boyle's move. "We just came out flat and they took advantage of it. That's what happens when you come out flat like that."

Benching the starters didn't immediately cure the Buffs, as Western New Mexico (5-10) extended its lead to 18-6 at one point. But, Boyle said his early move was "something that obviously needed to be done. You have to wake them up somehow."

Boyle put blame on himself for not getting the team ready, and even joked about an ineffective pregame speech.

"Needless to say, pregame speech No. 15 is going in the trash," he said. "I'm never using that one again."

### Colorado 92, W. New Mexico 70

Coors Events Center

W. NEW MEXICO (5-10)

Carter 7-11 4-6 18, Kempf 3-7 0-0 8, Riley 7-18 5-5 20, McIntosh 1-2 0-0 2, Crane 1-3 2-2 5, Suarez 0-1 0-0 0, Murdock 0-3 2-2 2, Sohlich 3-6 0-0 7, Luttrell 1-3 0-0 3, Berry 2-8 1-2 5, Littleton 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 25-62 14-17 70.

COLORADO (11-4)

Dufault 3-4 3-6 9, Sharpe 1-4 0-0 2, Relphorde 4-12 5-6 13, Burks 8-19 4-4 20, Higgins 6-12 3-4 15, Coney 0-2 0-0 0, Roberson 6-7 0-1 12, Knutson 4-6 2-2 13, Mills 1-3 0-0 2, Eckloff 3-7 0-0 6. Totals 36-76 17-23 92.

W. New Mexico

3634—70

Colorado

4448—92

Halftime — Colorado 44-36. -Point Goals — New Mexico 6-19 (Kempf 2-4, Crane 1-2, Luttrell 1-3, Sohlich 1-4, Riley 1-5, Murdock 0-1), Colorado 3-15 (Knutson 3-4, Sharpe 0-1, Coney 0-1, Roberson 0-1, Eckloff 0-1, Burks 0-1, Relphorde 0-3, Higgins 0-3). Fouled Out — Dufault, Kempf. Rebounds — W. New Mexico 30 (Carter 7), Colorado 52 (Roberson 12). Assists — W. New Mexico 12 (Suarez 3), Colorado 12 (Higgins 4). Total Fouls — W. New Mexico 21, Colorado 16. A — 2,139.

The Mustangs led 18-9 before CU's top scorers, Burks and Higgins, returned to the court after more than 51/2 minutes on the bench.

Eventually the starters helped CU get its act together. Burks sparked a 25-5 run, scoring eight of his 12 first-half points in that spurt, which put CU ahead 38-27. CU's big run included a steal, dunk and free throw by Austin Dufault, a steal and dunk by Burks, a dunk by Roberson and a three-point play by Higgins.

"I do think that when we put the starters back in, you saw a little different level of intensity and we got stops, narrowed the gap and took the lead," Boyle said.

Still, CU's lead was just eight at halftime, and it was cut to six early in the second half.

It took another big run to put the Mustangs away. Levi Knutson started an 11-0 run with a 3-pointer, while Roberson and Marcus Relphorde had four each in that burst. CU led 57-40 after that and coasted to the finish from there.

When it was over, it didn't take Boyle long to put Western New Mexico in the rear-view mirror and look ahead.

"I'm looking forward to Saturday, let's put it that way," he said. "I'm glad this is behind us. We're turning our attention to Missouri."

Whether or not the Buffs are ready for Big 12 play — and the 14-1 Tigers — is up for debate. But, Boyle has no question his team will put Wednesday's sub-par performance behind it and give the Tigers a game.

"They'll be ready. There's no question," Boyle said. "I do like the way we're playing right now as we head in, this game aside. I like where we are mentally, I like where we are physically. All hands on deck, I like where we're at."

NOTES: Point guard Nate Tomlinson did not play because of a hip injury. Boyle said Tomlinson will be ready for the Missouri game. ... CU took its first lead 12:37 into the game, at 23-22. ... Relphorde and Knutson each had 13 points. ... The Buffs had just 12 assists on 36 baskets. Boyle said he wants that number to be around 22 or 23 assists. ... TJ Riley led the Mustangs with 20 points, while Chad Carter had 18.

Brian Howell can be reached at [bhowell@times-call.com](mailto:bhowell@times-call.com).

••