



*This season, CU sophomore Alec Burks (10) knows the demands of success in the Big 12 Conference.  
Photo Courtesy: Tony Harman*



01/07/2011 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

## Brooks: Is CU Now A Better Match For Mizzou?

**BOULDER** - This could be interesting. About time, you say, because for most of the past three seasons Colorado-Missouri basketball games have been as captivating as watching your bumper rust.

No. 8 Missouri visits CU's Coors Events Center Saturday morning (11:30 a.m.), and if form from the six most recent games holds, the Tigers' 40-minute assault will leave the Buffs breathless and winless in a Big 12 Conference opener for the 14th consecutive season.

But there are indications - which we'll get to in a minute - of that unsightly form coming undone this time around.

In the Buffs' now-defunct Jeff Bzdelik era, Mizzou defeated CU in six consecutive regular season games, with the first - a 66-62 Tigers win at Coors - the closest of the bunch. Toss out that one and MU's average margin of victory in the remaining five games was just shy of 24 points.

### BUFFALO EXTRAS

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Game Notes #16 vs. Missouri

That four-point loss in Game 1 might have offered false hope, and it certainly belied what was to come. On the return trip to Columbia in Bzdelik's first year, Mizzou defeated CU, 63-50. In his second season in Columbia, the Buffs were clubbed, 107-62. The Buffs got no closer than another 13-point loss (66-53) for the remainder of Bzdelik's relatively brief stay in Boulder.

CU mostly running a deliberate, patient offense didn't match up well with MU's constant running and all-out pressure. When the Buffs fell behind, Bzdelik's style usually made it difficult to catch up. It was a little like expecting a run-oriented offense in football to rally from three TDs back in the fourth quarter.

The Tigers' part of the equation - the up-tempo offense and pressure defense - hasn't changed. The Buffs' part has. Bzdelik is at Wake Forest, and his Princeton offense has a new zip code. New CU Coach Tad Boyle wants his team to "get up and down" whenever possible, then use its motion offense in the half-court.

Boyle's players appear to have bought in and are finding more than a glimmer of hope in the change.

"In the Princeton (offense) everything is set," sophomore guard Alec Burks said. "Everybody knows what you are about to do, so they can trap more. In this motion (offense), you don't know where we are going to be, so it's hard for them to do that."

The contrast between Bzdelik's and Boyle's offensive styles is obvious, and there's a pretty noticeable contrast in their defensive philosophies as well. Boyle and his staff have labored through non-conference play to get the Buffs on the same page offensively and instill more man-to-man defensive principles. With the exception of Wednesday night's somnolent win against Western New Mexico, which saw CU record a paltry 12 assists on 36 baskets, the Buffs have been effectively sharing the ball for most of the past three weeks.

Offensively, that's key. Boyle likes his team's scoring abilities - four to five players regularly reach double figures - and likes the overall matchup with Mizzou.

"They are a talented team; you don't get into the top ten by accident," Boyle said. "They have good players, they're deep, they're well coached, they're a good basketball team. But with that being said I think we matchup with them very well in terms of our personnel. What it comes down to in conference play is who is executing at the higher level and who is guarding and rebounding at the higher level."

Atop CU's to-do list for Saturday is handling Mizzou's pressure. Over four seasons, MU Coach Mike Anderson has constructed his team to deliver it, but he has strongly hinted that his fifth team might be his deepest and most talented.

"I think we're going in the right direction . . . we've taken some baby steps each game," Anderson said. "Early in the year, we were trying to beat people with our offense; the last four or five games our defense has picked up."

"Guys are getting an idea of the intensity level it takes and understanding their roles . . . understanding the style we play. Sometimes all the talent doesn't mesh, but things are starting to come to pass."

That last sentence might constitute an overly modest assessment by Anderson. With one senior on the current roster, his team is 14-1, the only loss coming in overtime to now-No. 13 Georgetown (111-102). The Tigers are averaging 86.4 points a game (fifth nationally), allowing 67.3, and forcing an average of 20.1 turnovers. But they're only outrebounding their opponents by a two boards a game.

MU doesn't have a Baylor-sized front line; it's built more along the lines of CU, which allows Boyle to feel decent about matchups in personnel. The Buffs' offense - it averages 84.3 points (seventh nationally) - also provides Boyle with good vibes.

"They're playing some pretty good basketball," Anderson observed. "They're scoring, playing a lot freer (than last season) . . . they're used to each other (and) they're putting the ball in the hole. We've got a task in front of us."

But Boyle knows it won't be much of a task if the Buffs don't conjure up enough defense to complement their offense and rush the boards en masse.

Confirmation won't come until mid-afternoon on Saturday, but Burks appears to have gotten the memo. His first season in the Big 12 was productive enough to earn him CU's first freshman-of-the-year award, but it taught him something more valuable:

"You've got to fight, you've got to grind, and you've got to be tough. You've got to rebound, and you've got to play 'D.' It's not for kids; it's a grown man's league. I learned that last year. We've got to play hard every night, every game, and don't take anybody lightly. We'll be fine if we do that."

If Burks & Co. do it Saturday . . . hey, it could be interesting.

**KEEP IT REAL, KEEP IT UGLY** - As a CU player, first-year Buffs coach Linda Lappe never lost to Texas A&M. But that was the pre-Gary Blair Era. When Blair took over in 2003, A&M took off.

Year in and out now, the Aggies reside among the elite teams in women's college basketball. They've ascended through athleticism, physical play and full-court, full-time pressure.

Said Lappe: "I love their mental approach, the way they attack the game."

Blair's teams seldom rest, and this one is no different. A&M is averaging 83 points a game, yielding 53 and forcing nearly 26 turnovers. The No. 7 Aggies are 12-1, with their only loss a three-point decision (61-58) at then-No. 5 Duke, which since has climbed to No. 3.

Size-wise, Lappe believes her Buffs (9-4) match up reasonably well with the Aggies for Saturday's Big 12 opener in College Station, Texas. But the key is matching their intensity and remaining disciplined against their pressure.

"That's what they do," Lappe said. "They're very quick, very fast. They get up and pressure you the full length of the court for a full 40 minutes - they don't care what the score or situation is. They're up and pressuring. They're hard-wing denial, they're trying to get you to speed up your offense. We've got to do a great job of taking things as they come and really executing without getting in a rush and letting them dictate how fast we move."

"We've got to stay disciplined for 40 minutes. We want it to be an ugly game; they want to get up and down and have the game in the 90s or 100s. We want it to be as low scoring as we can possibly make it."

Added sophomore CU point guard Chucky Jeffery: "They've got speed, quickness and they use full-court pressure almost the full 40 minutes of the game. They like running in transition. They're fast and like to get to the hoop. We'll have to try and slow the game down and have good transition defense."

Jeffery got her first look at Blair's team last season and came away impressed.

"Texas A&M was probably the team that gave us the most pressure, the hardest time," she said. "But we've practicing on that and trying to find a way to keep the game at our tempo and not speed it up."

"This week we've been practicing passing, looking the ball in and being strong with our passing, being tough. I think we'll be able to handle the pressure real well."

They'll have to in order to stay competitive. The Buffs are averaging just over 20 turnovers, but in their four most recent games they've committed 24, 22, 15 and 26. Those numbers must decrease Saturday.

Jeffery calls the A&M trip "a great test for us at the beginning of the conference. Having played against them, I understand pretty much how the game is going to go from their perspective. I just have to be smart as a point guard and know we want to play our game - not theirs."

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# Motion may be key for Colorado men

## Boyle's offense should work better against Tigers' frenzied scheme

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

Posted: 01/07/2011 06:09:09 PM MST

The Princeton offense at Colorado was a dumb idea.

At least against Missouri.

During Jeff Bzdelik's three seasons in Boulder, CU went 0-6 against the Tigers, losing by an average margin of 19.3 points.

Mike Anderson's "40 minutes of hell" approach added up to 240 minutes of misery for Bzdelik and the Buffs.

New CU head coach Tad Boyle believes the Buffs -- now running an up-tempo motion offense that enters Big 12 play ranked seventh nationally in scoring (84.8 ppg) -- will be able to compete better against Anderson's frenetic and proven methods. It usually didn't take the Tigers long to get Bzdelik's teams out of the methodical offense and into a lot of trouble trying to deal with an early deficit and intense full-court pressure.

CU hosts No. 9 Missouri in the conference opener today at the Coors Events Center (11:30 a.m., Altitude2).

"In the Princeton (offense) everything is set," explained Alec Burks, the Buffs' leading scorer from Grandview, Mo. "Everybody knows what you are about to do, so they can trap more. In this motion (offense), you don't know where we are going to be, so it's hard for them to do that."

Starting point guard Nate Tomlinson sat out CU's tune-up game against Western New Mexico on Wednesday to nurse a sore hip. The junior is expected to be in the lineup today and his ability to handle the Tigers' pressure will be key.

Missouri is averaging 86.4 points, which ranks fifth nationally, and forcing just over 20 turnovers a game.

"We don't want to go helter-skelter and just have crazy 40 minutes of run and gun," Boyle said. "We want to run, but we want to pick our spots."

During a road victory at Cal State Bakersfield, the Buffs were running the Roadrunners to the point where one of their players threw up. Despite the altitude advantage for the home team, Missouri won't run out of oxygen. This might be Anderson's deepest team.

Four of the Tigers' starters are averaging double figures in scoring, led by Marcus Denmon's 17.2 points.

"You don't get into the top ten by accident. They have good players, they are deep, they are well coached, they are a good basketball team," Boyle said. "But with that being said, I think we match up with them very well in terms of our personnel."

"What it comes down to in conference play is who is executing at the higher level and who is guarding and rebounding at the higher level."

With the addition of Shannon Sharpe and Andre Roberson to the veteran lineup of Burks, Higgins, Tomlinson, Marcus Relphorde, Austin Dufault and Levi Knutson, the Buffs do have more athleticism and firepower than they did under Bzdelik.

And considering CU is 9-0 at the Coors Events Center and this is only Missouri's second true road game, it figures to be a competitive match-up.

"They're playing some pretty good basketball. They're scoring, they're playing a lot freer. I think Tad has done a great job," Anderson said. "The name of the game is to score and they're doing that. When you have Cory and Alec, two of the

top scorers in the league, and put the cast with them ... we have a tremendous task in front of us trying to guard so many guys."

CU has lost 13 consecutive Big 12 openers entering its final season in the conference. That dubious mark includes a 107-62 loss in Columbia two years ago.

Overall, the Tigers have won the last eight meetings in the series and have a 33-30 edge all-time in Boulder.

"You've got to fight, you've got to grind, and you've got to be tough. You've got to rebound, and you've got to play D," Burks said of what it takes to have success in the Big 12. "It's not for kids; it's a grown man's league. I learned that last year. We've got to play hard every night, every game, and don't take anybody lightly. We'll be fine if we do that."

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cu basketball

## CU's Cory Higgins breaking the silence after leading by example

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

Posted: 01/08/2011 01:00:00 AM MST

Updated: 01/08/2011 02:03:27 AM MST

BOULDER — Cory Higgins doesn't usually talk a lot, so Colorado sophomore guard Alec Burks learned much about self-discipline and composure by watching the facial expressions of his senior teammate during a prolonged shooting slump.

Higgins' poker face never changed no matter how often his shots clanged off the rim. And it got pretty bad. A preseason all-Big 12 Conference selection, Higgins couldn't have hit the ocean from a beach until recently. Through 12 games, Higgins had made just 41.2 percent of his shots.

Last season, he finished second in the league (behind Burks) at 50.5 percent.

"I know it had to frustrate Cory," Burks said of the misfires. "But you couldn't tell if anything was bothering him.

"That showed that when things weren't going his way, he's still going to do his job, he's not going to hang his head, he's going to keep fighting, he's helping the team doing other stuff. He didn't want anybody to see weakness. I respect that in him. That's a real man."

Of late, Higgins has been on a mini hot streak. Even so, the 6-foot-5 guard will enter conference play for the last time today knowing he needs to improve substantially on his current 43.3 percent clip if Colorado (11-4) is to make some noise in the Big 12 and contend for a postseason tournament. The Buffaloes have a difficult opening draw — hosting ninth-ranked Missouri (14-1).

"I'm really excited and encouraged to be heading into the Big 12 schedule," Higgins said. "These last few weeks, we've been building to become more consistent at the defensive end. That's what you need to beat Big 12 teams."

Colorado also will need a bunch of points from Burks and Higgins to match Missouri's fast break — and keep up with the rest of the Big 12, for that matter. The bouncy Burks ranks third among conference scorers (19.1) and is considered a sure first-round NBA draft choice whenever he decides to turn pro. But Higgins' understated game impacts the court in so many ways, making him the unquestioned team MVP for three years running.

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This much is certain: The son of former NBA player and current Charlotte Bobcats general manager Rod Higgins never becomes intimidated by an opponent or a situation. Why would he? Cory Higgins has played pickup basketball against almost every member of the Bobcats. Michael Jordan is his godfather.

"Cory has had an opportunity to see how NBA guys work and prepare, and that's been a great benefit to him," Rod Higgins said in a phone interview. "When you put in the hard work, you're not afraid to fail. Cory wants to take the shot to win the game. He's not afraid to fail."

Now, if Higgins would only become more vocal. Leading by example has always been his thing. And with the classy way in which Higgins conducts himself on and off the court, nobody does that better. But first-year Colorado coach Tad Boyle wants Higgins to speak up.

"I want to hear his voice more," Boyle said. "I'm asking Cory to play a little bit out of character so he can take the next step."

That means making his teammates better by directing traffic on the court, pointing out things, offering encouragement when a teammate makes a mistake, the coach explained.

"What I've tried to hammer home is, it's one thing to believe in yourself, and it's another to believe in your teammates," Boyle said. "Cory has done a great job of making himself better, by working out in the summer, improving his game. The next challenge for a player is making your teammates

better.

"Good players make themselves better. Great players also make their teammates better."

Boyle doesn't mean to insinuate that Higgins is a ball hog. But it's not necessary for Higgins to believe that he has to win the game by himself. Especially with Burks, senior wing forward Marcus Relphorde (12.1) and senior super-sub Levi Knutson (11.4), Colorado has more go-to options than in years past.

Higgins needs to realize, Boyle said, that he no longer has to carry the weight of the team — as he did as a sophomore when he averaged 17.4 points with only one other player (Dwight Thorne with 12.0) averaging in double figures.

"It has always come easy to me leading by example," Higgins said. "My parents instilled being a disciplined person in me early. But one of the things I've had to do over the years is be more vocal. I've had to work at that."

Missouri coach Mike Anderson said he has always been impressed by Higgins' toughness. But even on game films, Anderson said he can see a change in the senior guard.

"This year, I see he's trusting the other guys," Anderson said this week on the Big 12 coaches teleconference. "In other years, he put the burden on himself. Now, he trusts the other guys, and that's making them a better basketball team."

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With less than three months remaining in his college career, Higgins continues to climb CU's statistical charts. With 1,640 career points, he ranks seventh in all-time scoring. Higgins also is second in career starts, second in free-throws made, third in career minutes, sixth in steals and eighth in field goals made.

"Cory is so important to this basketball team, on a lot of different levels," Boyle said. "He's earned the respect of our team and on campus. He has earned respect throughout the league, which is not easy to do.

"What I appreciate about him is that he holds himself accountable, and he doesn't make excuses when things don't go his way. He knows the game and has a feel for the game in ways that you can't necessarily coach."

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## The 411 on opponents

*CU guard Cory Higgins talks about the top-five Big 12 opponents he has faced since joining the Buffaloes in 2007:*

### Michael Beasley, 6-feet-10, Kansas State

"He's a just a freak. Nobody could guard him because he's a big guy with the skill and athleticism of a guard."

### Blake Griffin, 6-10, Oklahoma

"He was just a monster. He made it tough because he was always around the basket. You couldn't drive in the paint against him."

### D.J. Augustin, 5-11, Texas

"He was as clever as anybody. He basically introduced me to playing in the Big 12 because he showed me I had a long way to go defensively."

### Sherron Collins, 5-11, Kansas

"He really helped me because I got to play against him for three years. He's physical, but he's a good guy. He showed me how to be a leader."

**LaceDarius Dunn 6-4, Baylor (current)** "He has the reputation of being just a shooter, but he can drive, he can take you off the dribble. He's really deceptive, which makes him hard to guard."

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Longmont, Colorado  
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## Buff's kick off Big 12 play today

CU men to host No. 9 Missouri; women are at No. 7 Texas A&M

*By Brian Howell*  
© 2011 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Ready or not, the Big 12 Conference schedule is here.

Despite some rocky performances throughout the preseason, the University of Colorado men's basketball team insists it will be prepared.

"They'll be ready. There is no question," CU head coach Tad Boyle said.

It's no easy start to the conference slate for CU (11-4). The Buffs host ninth-ranked Missouri (14-1) today at Coors Events Center.

"I think we are (ready)," sophomore Alec Burks. "I feel like we show that in practice, and I feel like this whole preseason has prepared us for the Big 12. I feel like we are all ready."

CU has won nine of its past 10 games and possesses one of the top scoring offenses in the country. The Buffs' 84.3 points per game rank seventh in the country out of 335 Division I teams.

"The name of the game is to score and they're doing that," Missouri coach Mike Anderson said. "They're putting the ball in the hole, so we've got a tremendous task in front of us in terms of trying to guard so many guys. They've got a lot of weapons."

That starts with Burks, who is averaging 19.1 points per game. Cory Higgins is posting 16.6 per game, while Marcus Relphorde (12.1), Levi Knutson (11.4) and Austin Dufault (9.0) have also provided significant contributions offensively.

But, while the object of the game is to score the most points, CU also knows that it has to get better at preventing the opposition from scoring.

CU ranks 11th in the Big 12 in scoring defense (allowing 71.3 points per game) and 11th in field-goal percentage defense (opponents make 43.6 percent of their shots).

"I think we have gotten better defensively, but that is something that we have to continue to get better at," Boyle said. "There are eight teams in our league that over the whole preseason held their opponents to under a 40 percent field goal percentage. So there are eight pretty good defensive teams, and we are not one of those eight, so we have a ways to go to improve in that area."

Following a win over Division II Western New Mexico on Wednesday, Boyle pointed out that there are a lot of players around the country that are talented offensively. Western New Mexico even had a couple of talented scorers.



Colorado's Alec Burks puts up a shot against Colorado State at Coors Events Center in Boulder on Dec. 8. Burks, CU's leading scorer, will be a threat to opposing defenses during the Big 12 season, which starts today. **Joshua**

**Buck/Times-Call**

“What separates the men from the boys is who wants to get down defensively and get stops,” he said. “That is what it comes down to. I don’t care what league you are in. It doesn’t matter. I sound like a broken record, but it is just what I believe in, and if you look around college basketball, those are the successful teams.”

CU’s defense will get a tough test today. Missouri ranks fifth nationally in scoring (85.6) and features five players averaging at least 10.9 points per game. Marcus Denmon leads the way with 17.2 per game.

Boyle gave the Tigers high praise for their talent and pressure. Then, he added, “I think we match up with them very well in terms of our personnel.”

Matching up — and playing well against — Missouri is just one fraction of Big 12 play, however.

After today’s game, the Buffs play at No. 17 Kansas State (12-3) and will host Oklahoma State (12-2) next week.

Dates with No. 3 Kansas (14-0), No. 12 Texas (12-2) and No. 16 Texas A&M (13-1) also loom. The rest of the league isn’t bad, either. In fact, every team in the Big 12 has a winning record.

“You’ve got to fight, you’ve got to grind, and you’ve got to be tough,” Burks said of playing in the Big 12. “You’ve got to rebound, and you’ve got to play (defense).”

“It’s not for kids; it’s a grown man’s league. I learned that last year. We’ve got to play hard every night, every game, and don’t take anybody lightly. We’ll be fine if we do that.”

The Buffs will find out real quick if they’re ready to compete in the Big 12. For Boyle, it’ll be his first go-round as a Big 12 head coach — and he’s eager to get started.

“I really like the improvement we’ve made over the last four or five weeks,” he said. “I think we’ve gotten better. I think we understand that we are a heck of a lot better collectively when we play together on both ends of the floor.”

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



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Posted on Sat, Jan. 08, 2011

## Colorado can't key in on any one Tiger

By MIKE DeARMOND  
The Kansas City Star

BOULDER, Colo. | Playing basketball against Missouri is like fighting an octopus.

Colorado will throw an effective one-two punch of Grandview's Alec Burks (19.1 points a game) and Cory Higgins (16.6) at the Tigers in this Big 12 Conference opener today. But Mizzou comes at you from everywhere, a beast of many tentacles.

Four starters carry double-figure scoring averages: Marcus Denmon (17.2), Laurence Bowers (12.0), Ricardo Ratliffe (11.4) and Kim English (11.0). Michael Dixon — coming off the bench since serving a two-game suspension — averages 10.9 points a game.

Seven Tigers scored in double figures Wednesday in a win over North Alabama, the second time that has happened in No. 9-ranked Missouri's 14-1 season. And coach Mike Anderson says opponents cannot go to sleep on Justin Safford, who has scored in double figures in four of his last five games, or on Matt Pressey, who has hit double figures in three straight games.

"On any given night it could be any of those guys," Anderson said. "We've got a lot of options. They're sharing the basketball."

English, the leading returning scorer from a year ago, is coming off his top scoring game of the year. He scored 20 points against North Alabama, all in the first half.

But Denmon has scored in double figures in all except two games this season. Dixon has topped 17 points three times and Bowers that mark five times. Nine Tigers have scored in double figures at least once, and another, Steve Moore, had nine points in Missouri's season opener.

"That's what makes us so dangerous," English said.

Colorado, 11-4, has won four straight but has lost 13 consecutive Big 12 openers and eight in a row against Missouri. The Tigers have won their last five games against Colorado by an average score of 81-60.

Even so, MU's players seem to be giving the Buffaloes plenty of respect as one of the potential haves in a Big 12 short on have-nots with five teams ranked in the Associated Press top 25.

"It's the best league in the nation," English said. "Everybody is looking good. Even the teams at the so-called bottom I think are really good teams."

Under new coach Tad Boyle, Colorado has made huge strides.

The Buffaloes are seventh nationally in scoring (84.3), eighth in field-goal percentage (.502), ninth in free-throw percentage (.779), 10th in fewest turnovers a game (10.9).

"We've just got to come out with our hard hats and play every game like it's our last," said Bowers, coming off just his second double-double (16 points, 11 rebounds) of the season.

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## COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

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# Missouri men's basketball team set for Big 12 opener at Colorado

By [Ben Frederickson](#)

January 7, 2011 | 8:56 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — Junior forward Laurence Bowers stuck his nose into the middle of his palm, his fingers stretching upward toward his hairline. His words were muffled as they escaped around the sides of his hand.

“It’s a machine, like a tube. You put it over the face, strap it on, and it simulates the air in Colorado,” Bowers said.

At 5,430 feet, Boulder, Colo. is a tricky place to play compared to Columbia (elevation: 889 feet). But, one machine in the training room of the Missouri men's basketball team has been making the elevation adjustment easier on the Tigers since 2007. No. 9 Missouri is set to begin Big 12 Conference play against the Colorado Buffaloes on Saturday at the Coors Event Center.

On the court, Missouri does nothing different during practices to prepare for the altitude change.

“The way Coach (Mike Anderson) keeps our guys in shape, we feel like we’re prepared to go to different places like that,” assistant coach Matt Zimmerman said.

But, in the training room, Missouri players use a Hypoxico Altitude Training System to prepare themselves for the lower oxygen levels they will encounter in the mountains. A tube connects a mask to the machine's generator, which exposes players to different stages, each with less

oxygen than the previous. After a series of exposures over the course of weeks, the players' bodies begin to adapt. David Deets, Missouri's associate director of strength and conditioning, monitors the sessions.

In a 2007 interview with the Missourian, he [described how the machine works](#):

"It builds up your VO2 (maximum oxygen uptake) max, and your red blood cells go up," Deets said.

"In turn, your body gets used to going off less oxygen so your endurance levels start to go up. You recover faster. That's the reason we got it. Going to Colorado, you're going to have to play in a different altitude."

While Bowers said doesn't think the altitude difference has much effect on his play, he won't argue against the benefit of the machine.

"I think it's mental, but I'm quite sure it does work. He (Deets) wouldn't have us doing it if it doesn't work," Bowers said.

### **Strong bench important in Boulder**

Zimmerman said he thinks strong bench play is a big factor when Missouri goes on the road to play the Buffaloes.

"At Colorado we've always had to play a lot of guys, because of the depth, and because of the elevation. We always seem like we play our bench a lot," Zimmerman said.

Missouri likes to run, and the ability to substitute a fresh player is key when someone on the



court needs a break.

"It's never really real noticeable. You'll hear them talk about it after the game or something. It's usually one or two guys. They'll talk about how 'I couldn't get my wind' or how it took them a second to catch their breath," Zimmerman said.

Currently, the Tigers' bench is somewhat depleted — according Missouri's standards.

"Right now our bench is a hair short, because Phillip (Pressey) is out. We've been playing nine guys," Zimmerman said.

Pressey, recovering from a broken bone in his right hand, had his cast removed earlier this week. Anderson has not yet said if Pressey will play against Colorado.

Still, Missouri's available reserve players have gotten valuable playing time during the nonconference season, something that will help on Saturday as well as throughout the rest of the season.

"That's going to be important. Not just in Colorado, but for the Big 12," Bowers said.

### **Former Grandview player leads Colorado**

During his time in high school in Grandview, Mo., Alec Burks remained under the recruiting radar of Missouri and Kansas, but chose to play for the Buffaloes when he graduated.

Last year, Burks became the first Colorado freshman to score more than 500 points in a season (a 17.1 points per game average), earning him the award for Big 12 Conference freshman of the year.

This season, Burks is putting up even better numbers, leading Colorado in scoring with 19.1 points per game.

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## MU, Colorado figure to play up-tempo

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MU, Colorado figure to play up-tempo

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L.G. Patterson Colorado's Marcus Relphorde, left, and Missouri's Zaire Taylor, right, battle for a loose ball during the first half of an NCAA college basketball game Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2010, in Columbia, Mo. (AP Photo/L.G. Patterson)

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When he was introduced at Big 12 preseason media day on Oct. 21 in Kansas City, first-year Colorado coach Tad Boyle instantly displayed a certain feel for an audience as the Buffaloes prepared for their last season in the conference.

"I have always wanted to be a 'one-and-done' guy, and I think this year we're going to be," he said to laughter, adding, "I thought I would bring it up before you guys did."

More seriously, the former Kansas captain has mixed and "bittersweet" feelings about leaving the conference for the soon-to-be Pac 12.

But he has no doubt about wanting to leave the Big 12 "with a bang," as he put it. And at least entering conference play with today's 12:30 p.m. Big 12 opener with No. 9 Mizzou (14-1) at the Coors Events Center, his Buffs (11-4) have flashed some potential to hoist themselves up a notch from last season's 6-10 conference finish — which was itself a move up from three straight basement baselines.

Paralleling the sense of place he had with the media, Boyle has brought a fresh attitude about the altitude in Boulder since arriving from Northern Colorado of the Big Sky Conference, where his last team went 25-8.

In contrast to the methodical style employed by predecessor Jeff Bzdelik, Boyle has gone up-tempo in part to take advantage of Boulder's 5,400-foot elevation.

Not surprisingly, there have been transitional pains as CU lost three of its first five, including an 82-66 loss at Harvard. But Colorado has won nine of its last 10 as it found its pace and improved at "picking our spots" rather than fall into "helter-skelter, 40 minutes of just crazy run-and-gun," as Boyle said Thursday.

In the process, CU stands seventh in the nation in scoring with 84.8 points a game, nearly half of which are provided by guards Alec Burks (19.1 ppg) and Cory Higgins (16.6). Guard Levi Knutson is third in the conference in 3-point percentage, hitting 26 of 52 for 50 percent.

"The name of the game is to score," MU coach Mike Anderson said, "and they're doing that."

Then again, the name of Anderson's game is to defend, which the Tigers have done increasingly well, albeit against relatively tame competition. Since beating current No. 22 Vanderbilt 85-82 in overtime on Dec. 8, MU hasn't allowed more than 64 points in seven games.

Meanwhile, the Tigers have been scoring plenty themselves. Their 86.4 average is fifth in the nation, and Colorado has been somewhat porous on the other end, giving up 71.4 a game, 11th in the conference.

Something has to give not only in those numbers but also in terms of streaks entering the game. Mizzou will be seeking its first 10-game winning string in 19 years and has beaten Colorado eight times in a row since Anderson took over. Colorado has lost 13 straight Big 12 openers.

MU, though, is lugging a losing streak of its own. Since the inception of the Big 12 in 1996, the Tigers are 0-4 when they open the conference season on the road. That figures to end if Mizzou plays to its apparent potential as a conference championship contender. But short of their full

attention against a program they're accustomed to trampling, the Tigers could be challenged and become a bright spot in Boyle's one-and-done tour.

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