



CU Coach Tad Boyle (left), Texas A&M Coach Mark Turgeon  
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



03/14/2011 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

## Brooks: Big 12 Coaches Weigh In On Buffs' Exclusion

**BOULDER** - They didn't alter the outcome or lighten the mood, but condolences continued to roll in Monday for the jilted Colorado Buffaloes, who aren't going to the dance but still have been asked out.

Not that this soothes anything or makes the decision any more palatable, but the Buffs might have gotten more national exposure in the last 24 hours for *not* making the NCAA Tournament than they would have for being included in the 68-team field.

It was exposure that Coach Tad Boyle and his team could have done without. The Buffs would have settled for quietly slipping into the Big Dance and making their noise once they got there. "I'll be honest with you, I can't get angry because I'm (still) in shock," Boyle said. "I'm sorry our players had to go through it; it was no fun at all."

The Buffs weren't alone in believing they belonged. The Big 12 Conference held its final coaches teleconference on Monday morning, and CU's cause and exclusion were among the common threads. Kansas State Coach Frank Martin, whose team lost three games to CU - two as a ranked

team, was "shocked . . . obviously they were better than us, at least they showed that on the court."

Texas A&M Coach Mark Turgeon, among Boyle's closest friends in the profession, might have been as distraught as his pal when Sunday's Selection Show ended and CU was left without an at-large bid.

"I was probably more upset for Tad than I was happy for us," said Turgeon, who spoke with Boyle at length on Sunday night. "When the Selection Show was over I talked to the team and I was down, I was down. I was just stunned that (the Buffs) weren't in.

"When I saw Texas come up as a four (seed), I knew we were all in trouble. I turned around to my wife and said, 'Tad's not going to get in.' But Tad's not a guy who sits around and cries and feels sorry for himself. He's a guy who moves on, a tough guy. I'm disappointed for his seniors and disappointed for him personally. I thought he did a tremendous job with his team this year."

Kansas Coach Bill Self was in agreement with Turgeon's last assessment, as well as his first. After Self's team defeated CU 90-83 in the Big 12 tournament semifinals, he paid tribute to the Buffs and said they would be a "dangerous" draw for any team in the NAAs.

Said Self: "I think every coach in our conference . . . without any hesitation will say those guys deserve to be in the tournament. Now, I don't have any of the other tournament teams' resumes in front of me, and to be an expert you have to study it - and I'm not (an expert). But I just can't imagine a team that finishes 8-8, really 10-9 (counting the Big 12 tournament) in the third-best league in the country and with four wins over top five seeds . . . that to me is unthinkable, that to me is unbelievable.

"Six wins against the top 50 . . . there were teams on the bubble that had two wins or three wins against the top 50 - they had six. I'm hurting for Tad and his players, because I think they really deserve to be in the field without question."

Self, whose team is one of four No. 1 NCAA seeds, pointed out that CU has a likely lottery pick (Alec Burks) and that given the Buffs' four wins against top five seeds - three wins over fifth-seeded Kansas State, one against No. 4 Texas - a case could be made "that Colorado had the best wins in our league this year. Texas beat us, but other than that, those are some of the best wins. I think it's sad they're not in."

Nebraska Coach Doc Sadler, whose team also landed in the NIT, said of CU's exclusion, "I would think the Big 12 office is shaking their head and wondering the same thing. I know all the coaches are. Tad had a great season and was probably was playing like the third- or fourth-best team in our league in the last two weeks. But I wasn't the room when they made that decision. I'm sure they've got their reasons."

Texas lost a 22-point lead in Boulder and was beaten 91-89 by CU. Longhorns Coach Rick Barnes recalled his tenure at Providence and being snubbed by the NCAA when he and his players believed they were deserving of a bid.

"Honestly, it was one of the hardest things I ever had to do, tell them that we didn't make it," Barnes said. "I know (the Buffs) are devastated and I know they'll handle it right . . . you have to give Tad and his staff great credit for what they did. They had a year where they made great strides."

Boyle and his team were back on the Coors Events Center court Monday afternoon practicing for Wednesday night's first-round NIT game against Texas Southern (7 p.m., ESPN3.com). The mood was upbeat. Boyle tried to keep the work different and competitive, but fun. He admitted many NIT games are won by the team that most wants to be there. Hangovers from NCAA snubs can be common for all but the most resilient teams, which the Buffs have been throughout their 21-win season.

A radio guy on Monday's conference call asked Boyle the "Big 12 conspiracy" question - that being, if the Buffs weren't on their way to the Pac-12, would the Big 12 and Commissioner Dan Beebe (he was on the 10-member NCAA Selection Committee) "fought a little harder" to get the Buffs into the dance.

Boyle didn't bite. "I've heard that and I don't buy into it, quite frankly. I really don't," he said. "I think the committee made their decision based on what they thought was best. But I don't think there's a conspiracy theory against Colorado. I don't buy into that."

If Boyle and the Buffs had the biggest beef, there were other Big 12 coaches who believed the entire league was slighted by getting five into the NCAAs and in the way its tournament-bound teams were seeded. KU was a No. 1, Texas a No. 4, K-State a No. 5, Texas A&M a No. 7, and Missouri - which CU defeated when the Tigers were ranked in the Top 10 - was a No. 11.

"Texas getting a four seed blows my mind," Self said. "I thought they had a two locked up . . . you go from maybe being the best team in the country three weeks ago to a four seed?"

Turgeon was more succinct: "The Big 12 didn't get good seeds, I don't think there's any question about that . . . I thought we deserved a little bit more, finishing third."

Mizzou Coach Mike Anderson argued that with his league's collective non-conference wins (141) being second only to the Big East, the Big 12 should have gotten more than five teams in the NCAAs. (The Big East got 11 teams in.)

"I thought our conference was as good as it was last year," said Anderson, referring to the record seven Big 12 teams that made last year's tournament. "I thought it was a slight . . . you've got some very good basketball teams in this conference. I didn't see it coming. I thought at least six teams would get in. From that standpoint as a coach in this conference, it's disappointing."

Boyle believes late-season losses by Texas, K-State and Mizzou dropped them in the seeding process and probably factored into CU's fate. The Big 12, said Boyle, "had teams that didn't finish as strong and I think that probably hurt us in seeding, which is never a good thing. Outside of Kansas, I don't think we got a lot of respect in the league. That's unfortunate, because our league all year long - you look at the non-conference records of all our teams and I think our league is pretty well-respected. But it sure didn't come out that way in the end."

If you buy into the theory that Beebe somehow sabotaged one of the departing teams, listening to the coaches remaining in the league leads you to believe that Beebe didn't protect their interests either - which is far-fetched, at best.

Rather than dark forces plotting against CU, Boyle seemed inclined to attach blame to human error. "In the game of college basketball, players make mistakes, coaches make mistakes, officials make

mistakes . . . now we're seeing that the committee makes mistakes, too," he said. "We're all human; it's part of life."

Not the sunny side, to be sure, but not the darkest side either . . . not by a long shot.

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Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



03/13/2011 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

## Colorado Makes NIT, Hosts Texas Southern Wednesday

**BOULDER** - Over the past week, the Colorado Buffaloes believed they had played their way off of the NCAA Tournament bubble. Turns out they were on it all along - and Sunday at 4:39 p.m. MDT, the Buffs' bubble burst.

At that moment, the final pairing in the Southeast Region was announced and CU wasn't anywhere in the 68-team NCAA field. About 21/2 hours later, the Buffs learned they were one of four No. 1 seeds in the NIT, where being a top seed offers three home games and - if those games are won - the inside track to the NIT finals on March 31 at Madison Square Garden.

Nice consolation prize, but one the Buffs didn't expect when the afternoon began. Their challenge, a mountainous one, now becomes to flush Selection Sunday's heartbreak and prepare to play Texas

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Southern Wednesday at 7 p.m. in the Coors Events Center.

"It's going to be a challenge, there's no doubt . . . I just feel like the way we're playing right now, we're one of the top 68 teams in the country. I know that. But we're not in the tournament and we'll have to deal with it. And we'll have to make a statement in the NIT. Otherwise, talk's cheap," CU Coach Tad Boyle said.

Boyle felt confident enough about the Buffs reaching the NAAs for only the third time in 41 years that he threw a watch party at his Niwot home for a crowd of about 70 that included his players, coaches, various school officials and the media.

As the NCAA brackets filled and the Buffs hadn't been penciled in, angst was nearly palpable in Boyle's den. The last of the four regions to be announced was the Southeast, and when CU didn't appear on the screen, some players buried their heads in their hands while others sat in stunned silence.

"I can't describe it," said Cory Higgins, among five close-knit CU seniors with Levi Knutson, Marcus Relphorde, Javon Coney and Trent Beckley. "I hope I don't have too many more of those feelings in my life."

After several minutes, Boyle ushered his players to a meeting in his basement, later calling it the "most difficult" impromptu team meeting he's ever had and the second-most difficult team meeting of any kind. No. 1 on that dubious list was telling his University of Northern Colorado players last spring that he was taking the CU job. (Ironically, his former team made the 2011 NCAA field.)

"I wish there were words I had that would make them feel better, but there's not," Boyle said. "There's nothing I can say that will make them feel better right now . . . I thought we were in. We've said it all along - you don't get too excited until your name pops up - but yet in the back of your mind you feel like your name is going to pop up. When it doesn't you're extremely shocked and disappointed - those are the two words that come to my mind.

"There are a lot of things you don't have control over in this life, and being selected in the NCAA Tournament is one of those things . . . I feel bad for five seniors, I don't feel bad for Tad Boyle, for Colorado basketball. I feel bad for five seniors who'll never have the opportunity to play in this tournament. Our young guys will, our coaching staff will, our university will as this program moves forward. But those five young men won't."

Added Knutson: "We've got to prove that we're a team that should have made the (NCAA) tournament. It shouldn't be hard to get fired up. I was nervous (during the selection show) because I've been waiting for this day for a long time. It was obviously disappointing when we didn't see our name at the end, but we can't control it now so we have to respond."

Relphorde called CU's exclusion as one of 37 at-large teams "a surprise to everybody, a shock. We expected to get in, but I guess we didn't do enough in the committee's eyes. We just have to regroup."

Teams shunned by the NCAA that regroup quickly can live to dribble another couple of weeks in the NIT. Teams that don't are bounced just as fast. A case in point is local: the 2005-06 CU team finished 9-7 (fourth) in the Big 12 Conference and 20-9 overall. When the NCAA looked the other way, the

NIT looked at CU. The Buffs responded with a blank stare. Old Dominion visited the Events Center but the host team didn't show, losing 79-61.

"Whoever considers themselves a leader on this team - and I'm one of the people that does - really has to set the tone when we get back to work," Higgins said. "We can't afford to miss a beat and get bounced from the tourney. Then it makes (the NCAA) look like they made the right decision."

Boyle believed the Buffs had made a solid case for themselves in the final month of the regular season, winning six of nine games - two in the league tournament - and reaching the Big 12 semifinals for the first time. Included in those six wins was a pair against Kansas State that gave CU a 3-0 record against KSU - the last victory coming in the Big 12 quarterfinals.

Also included was a win against then-No. 5 Texas, and CU opened league play by defeating then-No. 8/9 Missouri. The Buffs had five wins (three vs. KSU) against teams that finished with top 50 RPI rankings. CU, finishing with an RPI of 65, finished with a 21-13 overall record (8-8 Big 12), winning the most games since 1996-97 (22-10).

K-State was among five Big 12 teams included in the NCAA field, with Kansas (one of four No. 1 seeds), Texas, Texas A&M and Missouri. "No question about it, when you look at our record against some of the teams that got in, it's extremely disappointing," CU Athletic Director Mike Bohn said.

CU lost in overtime to A&M and three times to KU, including in the conference tournament semifinals. After CU's 90-83 loss, KU Coach Bill Self said he believed the Buffs had played their way into the NCAA Tournament, even terming them a "dangerous" draw for any opponent.

"I relied on our league, our great wins, the way we played in the conference tournament," Boyle said. "It's obvious to me that what hurt us was our November and December (losses at Harvard and San Francisco occurred then) part of the schedule. More weight was put on that in terms of Colorado than the league play and the conference tournament play was."

Boyle called scheduling "a hard science," adding he will "look very closely at it going forward. It gets back to a lot of things you don't have control over in scheduling. There's a lot of good teams that didn't get in this tournament and we're one of them."

CU lost non-conference road games at Georgia, San Francisco and Harvard, with one of those opponents (Georgia) making the NCAA Tournament. Conference losses that undoubtedly returned to haunt CU included those against Nebraska, Oklahoma, Baylor and Iowa State. But Boyle was counting on his team's improvement down the stretch, and Bohn was hoping the selection committee factored in Boyle's team going through an early season adjustment period to its new coach.

Boyle also pointed out that the Buffs "went on the road more than any other Big 12 team . . . you're penalized for it but you're not rewarded for making the attempt to go on the road. We lost to a good Harvard team and a good San Francisco team that finished third in their league. But that stuff doesn't matter; what matters is that we lost those games and there's nothing you can do about that now."

Bohn said he didn't want the NCAA snub to "take away from the great wins we had and the great progress we're making as a program. It'll be important for us to come out at home and show that

(NCAA Selection Committee) made a mistake.

"Dan Beebe (Big 12 Commissioner) was on the (selection) committee. He's a guy that I know had great passion and support for not only the whole league, but for Colorado, and I know he was working very hard on our behalf . . . anytime you feel maybe it didn't go your way for whatever reason, I'm sure we'll have an opportunity to flesh that out a little and Dan (Beebe) will share some of that with us."

The NIT field is composed of 32 teams in four regions (eight teams in each). Other No. 1 seeds included Alabama, Boston College and Virginia Tech. Colorado State, beaten by the Buffs 90-83 in overtime on Dec. 8 in Boulder, also is in CU's NIT bracket and could visit the Events Center again.

Texas Southern, of the Southwestern Athletic Conference, finished 19-12 this season. CU played one SWAC team this season, defeating Alcorn State 91-51 in November. CU/Texas Southern common opponents include Oklahoma, Oregon State, Kansas State, Iowa State, Baylor and Alcorn State. Texas Southern was 2-4 against those teams, defeating Oregon State and Alcorn State.

The task of Boyle, his staff and CU's seniors now becomes to revitalize the team before Wednesday night. Responding to challenges, said Boyle, has been a normal undertaking for the Buffs this season. The NIT, he added, offers the opportunity to "play in a tournament with a great history and an opportunity to get these guys to Madison Square Garden and New York City - the mecca of college basketball and where you want to play.

"We've got that opportunity in front of us. Now the challenge is to emotionally respond to what we're going through right now as players and coaches. Our coaches will respond, and it's our job to get our players to."

Higgins seemed certain the Buffs will rebound.

"We're all grown men," he said. "There are going to be harder things in life. We don't have a choice. We have to get back on track and just continue with what we have left in the season. We have to take all our frustrations out on somebody else."

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## CU Buffs left out of NCAA Tournament

**Tad Boyle's squad does get No. 1 seed in NIT**

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

Posted: 03/13/2011 03:46:25 PM MDT



LONGMONT

-- We didn't get in?

The awkward question echoed through the back of a silent living room in Tad Boyle's home as the Colorado basketball players and coaches sat in stunned silence.

The first-year CU head coach hosted athletic department officials, boosters and even allowed television trucks to line the driveway in anticipation of the Buffs being selected for the NCAA Tournament on Sunday.

When Georgia was called in the East bracket, assistant Tom Abatemarco raised an eyebrow. When Tennessee was called in the West bracket -- as a No. 9 seed with a 19-14 record no less -- the faces became more tense.

After seeing Clemson relegated to a First Four game, Boyle started to get nervous. Even casual fans knew the Buffs were in trouble when Penn State and Missouri were given No. 11 seeds.

USC. VCU. Michigan State. Gonzaga. One by one the bubble teams were announced during the selection show, and the Buffs ended up being one of the dreaded "first four out" after all was said and done.

"There's no words to describe this feeling," senior guard Cory Higgins said after emerging from a somber impromptu team meeting in Boyle's basement. "I couldn't describe it. I've never felt that way probably ever in my life."

True freshman Andre Roberson left with tears in his eyes. Alec Burks did not want to comment on the snub.

Boyle obviously wouldn't have hosted the watch party and put his players through such misery if he thought there was a chance it would turn into such a depressing evening.

"There are no words that I have that can explain this or explain to our players how this happened," Boyle said. "We have to learn from it, we have to deal with it, and we have to move on."

The season is not over. The final chapter at CU for Higgins, Levi Knutson and Marcus Relphorde has not been written.

But, at least initially, it's going to be difficult for the Buffs to get excited about the NIT. CU will host Texas Southern in the first round on Wednesday at the Coors Events Center. The game tips at 7 p.m.

"We still need our seniors to play well in this tournament," Boyle said. "I think how Cory, Marcus and Levi respond will be critical. And I know they were very disappointed and crushed."

CU's exclusion from the expanded NCAA Tournament field of 68 was not just crushing locally, but controversial nationally. The first comment CBS analyst Seth Davis made when the bracket was completed was: "Where is Colorado?"

"They had a great year and obviously they're a good basketball team. Three good wins against Kansas State, who are in the field," selection committee chairman Gene Smith, the Ohio State athletic director, explained. "But when you look again at the beginning of their schedule until the end and compare them to everyone else, they just didn't get enough votes to get in."

And so the losses early in the season to Georgia, San Francisco and Harvard proved to be damaging, while finishing fifth in the Big 12 and racking up six wins over top-50 RPI teams weren't enough.

"I relied on our league, I relied on our great wins, I relied on the way we played in the conference tournament," said Boyle, who was confident CU had punched its ticket after losing to Kansas in the semifinals of the Big 12 Tournament. "It's obvious to me what hurt us is the November and December part of our schedule. More weight was obviously put on that in terms of Colorado than the league play was."

The NIT selection committee didn't take long to reward CU with a No. 1 seed. The Buffs will have an opportunity to host three games in the 32-team tournament if they can advance.

The Final Four will be played at Madison Square Garden in New York on March 29-31.

"We have a goal as a team to win a championship this year and we haven't done that yet," Knutson said. "Now we have that opportunity. That will be our focus."

If CU regroups and prevails on Wednesday, the winner of No. 4 Cal/No. 5 Mississippi will visit the Coors Events Center in the second round. No. 3 Colorado State is a possible third-round opponent.

The Buffs went 15-2 at the Coors Events Center this season and played in front of a record four sellout crowds.

"I think it will be important to get the type of support that helps us do something special in that tournament," CU athletic director Mike Bohn said. "It's an opportunity to let people know what's going on with Colorado basketball."

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## Thorburn: CU Buffs seniors deserved to go dancing

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

Posted: 03/13/2011 11:56:52 PM MDT



-- Cory Higgins and Levi Knutson didn't deserve such cruel and unusual punishment.

Neither did Marcus Relphorde or Alec Burks or Andre Roberson or any members of the Colorado basketball team.

But Sunday's NCAA Tournament snub, which took place in front of cameras set up to capture the celebration, was especially painful for the four-year seniors.

They've already been down the road to perdition in this program.

They're the ones who suffered through 70 losses during three painful rebuilding seasons under Jeff Bzdelik. They're the ones who kept a talented group together when the coach left them behind before the winning project was completed.

They're the ones who bought into what Tad Boyle and his staff were selling. They're the ones who believed all the blood, sweat and tears had paid off after 21 wins, a fifth-place finish in the Big 12 and the run to the conference tournament semifinals.

They're the ones who will never experience true March madness. They were the last ones to emerge from an emotional meeting at Boyle's home after Colorado was not called during the selection show.

"I don't feel bad for Tad Boyle, I don't feel bad for Colorado basketball, I feel bad for five seniors who won't have an opportunity to play in this tournament," Boyle said as the gathering of CU supporters went from giddy anticipation to shock and awkwardness. "Our young guys will, our staff will, our university will as this program moves forward. But those young men won't. I feel bad for them."

CU beat Kansas State three times. Frank Martin said the Buffs have proven to be the better team. The Wildcats are a No. 5 seed in the NCAA Tournament.

Per usual, Kansas, Texas, Texas A&M and Missouri also made the field. The Buffs went 0-3 against the mighty Jayhawks but beat the Longhorns, lost to the Aggies in heartbreaking fashion and split with the Tigers.

It makes you wonder how strongly Big 12 Commissioner Dan Beebe -- a member of the NCAA Tournament selection committee --

argued for the Pac-12-bound Buffaloes.

"He is a guy I know had great passion not only for the whole league, but for Colorado," CU athletic director Mike Bohn said. "I know that he was working very hard on our behalf. But in the end he wasn't able to get it done for us as our representative, if you will."

Only four teams from the Pac-10 are invited to the Big Dance -- Arizona, Washington, UCLA and USC. The Buffs, who racked up six wins against the RPI top 50 and went 4-4 against ranked teams, should have been in the field instead of the 19-14 Trojans.

"I'm not going to disrespect any team that got in," Boyle said. "I just feel like with the way we're playing right now ... we're one of the top 68 teams in the country, I know that. But we're not in the tournament."

"And we have to make a statement in the NIT, otherwise talk is cheap."

It might as well stand for Not Invited Tournament.

The Buffs are a No. 1 seed in the "other" tournament and are clearly one of the favorites to cut the nets down at Madison Square Garden at the end of the month.

The program has already asked so much of Higgins and Knutson. Now it's asking them to turn a wrong into a memorable ride.

Of course they're going to accept the challenge.

"We have no choice but to try to win the NIT. That's our goal," Higgins said. "The leaders of this team will step up when we get back to practice and try to get everyone's head on straight."

This can still be a banner season for CU basketball. Five more wins would be a pretty cool and unusual way for Higgins and Knutson to end their careers with a national championship of sorts.

"This team has responded to adversity, so we will respond to this," Knutson said of the selection committee's slap to the face. "We've got to prove that we're a team that should have been in the NCAA Tournament."

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colorado

## CU's big wins not enough to earn NCAA tourney invite

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

Posted: 03/14/2011 01:00:00 AM MDT

Updated: 03/14/2011 03:09:54 PM MDT

LONGMONT — One by one, teams invited to the NCAA Tournament were flashed on the television screen Sunday afternoon. Tad Boyle and his Colorado basketball team sat and waited for their turn to celebrate as television cameras rolled during a watch party Boyle hosted at his home.

There was trouble for CU almost from the start of the show. Frowns and raised eyebrows were reserved when Georgia, Southern California, Alabama-Birmingham and others thought to be in more bubble trouble than Colorado were announced.

Three teams from the Colonial Athletic Conference? What's going on here? How could this be happening?

When the nightmare was over, and the reality hit that Colorado wasn't getting into the 68-team field,

Bufs players sat nearly motionless for more than 15 minutes.

Nobody knew quite how to react, because nobody saw this coming.

"I haven't felt like that ever in my life," senior guard Cory Higgins said.

"I mean, we thought we were in," senior guard Marcus Relphorde added.

Boyle shook his head. Then he called a private meeting with his players in the basement.

"I had no words to console them," Boyle said afterward. "I thought we were in. It hurts. The players were shocked. It's mind-boggling. This is a tough life's lesson. I just feel like the way we're playing we're one of the top 68 teams. I know that."

Colorado had six victories over a team ranked in the top 50 in the RPI computer power ratings. ESPN commentators were aghast at Colorado being left out and ripped the selection committee. Its experts and others who study the bracket viewed the Buffs (21-13, 8-8 Big 12 regular season) as a near lock to get a spot.

Colorado must now turn its sights toward the National Invitation Tournament and a Wednesday night home game against Texas Southern (19-

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12).

CU was given a No. 1 seed in the NIT, for what that's worth. The NIT is a consolation prize that normally does not



The Buffs' Shane Harris-Tunks, out with an injury all season, watches intently as the NCAA bids are announced. (Jeremy Papasso, The Daily Camera )

draw much excitement from teams that just miss getting into the NCAA Tournament, or their fans. In fact, the NIT historically features plenty of upsets because of disinterest from competing teams.

Boyle might have to do his best coaching job of the season to draw energy from distraught players who believe they are better than many teams receiving at-large bids to the NCAA Tournament.

"We have to play well in the NIT," Boyle said. "Otherwise, talk is cheap."

Said CU athletic director Mike Bohn: "It will be important for us to come out at home and show that (the selection committee) made a mistake."

Boyle said he is sure that the 10-member NCAA Tournament selection committee penalized Colorado for a nonconference

## CU Basketball

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schedule that lacked pizzazz. Colorado opened the season 2-3, including losses to Georgia, San Francisco and Harvard. CU's best nonconference victory was an overtime win at home against a Colorado State team that failed to make the NCAA Tournament. CU was not given credit for playing more true nonconference road games (four) than any other Big 12 team.

"It's obvious to me what hurt us is the November

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and December part of our schedule," Boyle said. "I relied on the way we played in the (Big 12) tournament."

CU defeated Iowa State and Kansas State in the Big 12 Tournament before falling to eventual champion Kansas in the semifinals.

Colorado had its supporters nationally. Said CBS college basketball analyst and Sports Illustrated writer Seth Davis: "Colorado beat Kansas State three times. I don't know what else you have to do to get into the NCAA Tournament."

ESPN college basketball analyst Jay Bilas said of the committee choosing Alabama-Birmingham and Virginia Commonwealth instead of Colorado and Virginia Tech: "These were bad decisions, indefensible."

Colorado players insisted they will be able to eventually shake off the disappointment and refocus on the NIT.

"We've faced adversity all year," senior guard Levi Knutson said. "We're used to it."

Boyle said he had no regrets about hosting the watch party at his home.

"Win or lose, you do things right," he said, as guests headed out the door, dejected and still too stunned to say much.

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## What they're saying about CU

The NCAA selection committee faced serious criticism Sunday evening for leaving Colorado out of the field of 68. A sampling:

"It's mind-boggling. ... I'm shocked." - **Tad Boyle**, *CU coach*

"The biggest crime today was excluding Colorado." - **Fran Fraschilla**, *ESPN*

"How do you face those kids from Colorado? You beat Kansas State three times, you beat Texas, you beat Missouri. ... It makes no logic why they weren't selected. To leave Colorado out is an injustice, totally unfair. You have Colorado vs. VCU, it would be a mismatch. The kids at Colorado are getting a raw deal." - **Dick Vitale**, *ESPN*

"I feel bad for Colorado. You knock off Kansas State three times, Texas once, Missouri. ... I really feel bad for Colorado." - **Digger Phelps**, *ESPN*

"I can't make a case for UAB and VCU. If Colorado and Virginia Tech can't get in under this scenario, they'll never get in." - **Hubert Davis**, *ESPN*

"Words can't describe what we're feeling. We have no choice but to move on. We didn't think there was any chance our name wouldn't be there. But it happened. Now we have to deal with it." - **Cory Higgins**, *CU senior*

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"The committee has gone against its own principles. UAB, VCU, why are they in? They were never mentioned (as a possibility), for a reason. ...These are horrible decisions. We need more basketball people on the committee. These are bad, indefensible decisions." - **Jay Bilas**, *ESPN*

"I really feel bad for our five seniors who won't get an opportunity to experience the NCAA Tournament. The younger players in our program will, the coaches will, but the seniors won't get that chance. We have to make a statement in the NIT. Otherwise, talk is cheap." - **Tad Boyle**, *CU coach*

"It's important that the team play well (in the NIT) and prove people wrong." - **Mike Bohn**, *Colorado athletic director*

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mark kizsla

## Kiszla: CU lacks the aura to pop bubble

By Mark Kiszla  
The Denver Post

Posted: 03/14/2011 01:00:00 AM MDT

LONGMONT — The initial reaction is as angry as a clenched fist: The Buffaloes got robbed.

The truth is: CU basketball got what it deserved. Nothing more.

A little before 5 o'clock on a Sunday afternoon, it was happy hour somewhere. But not at the house of CU basketball coach Tad Boyle, where his players, family and more than 100 friends gathered to toast the Buffs' invitation to the NCAA Tournament, only to feel empty and left out when the 68-team field was announced.

Want to know why Colorado was snubbed when 14-loss teams from Michigan State and USC joined the madness of March?

Fair or not, CU athletic director Mike Bohn knows the answer.

"We don't have an aura about college basketball

in Colorado," Bohn said. "If we don't have the aura in our own state, then how can we expect anybody else in the country to look at CU basketball as something special?"

Boyle knows in his heart that Colorado is one of the 68 best basketball teams in the country.

But we all know that for at least a decade, winning basketball in Colorado hasn't been a high priority. And you wonder why the Buffs have a tough time earning the rest of the nation's respect?

By Bohn's estimate, CU has invested a healthy \$25 million during recent years to upgrade its facilities and make basketball relevant in a state where passion runs hotter for pro sports.

What stung so badly is that all Colorado players had to show for their efforts this season, which included six victories over teams rated in the top 50, were distraught heads cradled in irked hands as the Buffaloes got bitten by reality TV in a harsher way than Simon Cowell could imagine, as their agony appeared live from coast to coast on the nationally telecast selection show.

"It hurts," CU senior Marcus Relphorde said.

Do the Buffaloes have a legitimate beef? Absolutely. They beat Kansas State three times, and the Wildcats were awarded a No. 5 seed.

Colorado is blessed to have a top-drawer coach on its bench. But his name isn't Tom Izzo. That's why Michigan State has an advantage in the

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homes of blue-chip recruits or behind closed doors when tournament bids are debated.

Here's another factor to consider. With the Buffaloes now in transit from the Big 12 Conference to the Pac-12, who is really in CU's corner?

"That's a good point," said Bohn, although he firmly believes the dignified way in which CU left the Big 12 and exciting prospects in the Pac-12 will serve the Buffs well in the future.

You might argue the politics of a smoke-filled room stink. And you would be 100 percent correct. But if there are politics in who claims an Oscar or a Nobel Prize, then why should we think the process of ranking basketball teams is any more pure?

"At the end of the day, when comparing Colorado to other teams, they didn't get the votes," said tourney selection committee chairman Gene Smith, speaking the usual political gobbledygook.

That CU must settle for a berth in the NIT is a crying shame.

"There are hurt feelings and ruffled feathers, I can guarantee you that," Bohn said.

But it would be a waste of time to cry foul.

"We're not going to make excuses for anything. I'm not going to sit here and make excuses for why we didn't get in or why we should be in,"

Boyle said. "We didn't get in. That's the bottom line. And this is a bottom-line business. We have to continue to earn the respect of the college basketball world one game at a time. We have to do it on the recruiting trail. We have to do it on the floor. And, quite frankly, you better have a chip on your shoulder to get where we want to go."

If the pain of this disappointment and anger at the injustice of it all means college basketball has actually started to matter in Colorado, then the Buffaloes can turn what they regard as a bad call into a burning reason never to get snubbed again.

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## Colorado's Boyle shocked at being left out of NCAA Tournament

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

Posted: 03/13/2011 02:25:59 PM MDT

Updated: 03/13/2011 08:54:22 PM MDT

LONGMONT — It was a somber mood this afternoon during an NCAA Tournament watch party at the home of Colorado men's basketball coach Tad Boyle when the Buffaloes did not see their name flash up on the TV screen as part of the 68-team bracket.

"I thought we were in. It hurts," Boyle said. "I just feel like the way we're playing, we're one of the top 68 teams. I know that."

Instead, Colorado will be sent to the NIT. The Buffaloes will play at home Wednesday night against Texas Southern (19-12) in the first round of the NIT. Game time is 7 p.m. at Coors Events Center.

"We have to make a statement in the NIT," Boyle said. "Otherwise, talk is cheap."

"I really feel bad for our five seniors who won't get an

opportunity to experience the NCAA Tournament. The younger players in our program will, the coaches will. But the seniors won't get that chance."

Bufs senior star Cory Higgins said, "Words can't describe what we're feeling. We have no choice but to move on. We didn't think there was any chance our name wouldn't be there. But it happened. Now we have to deal with it."

Later, on ESPN, Boyle said, "It's mind boggling to me. I'm just shocked."

The Buffs (21-13, 8-8 Big 12 regular season) were denied a spot in the tournament despite getting to the Big 12 tournament semifinals, where they lost to eventual champion Kansas.

"Colorado is a good ballclub and there were many good ballclubs (that missed out)," said Gene Smith, NCAA Tournament selection chairman on CBS. He wasn't specific about the factors that kept Colorado out, other than when the committee looked at the 15 indicators its takes into consideration, the Buffs came up short.

Later, on a teleconference with the media, Smith was asked how close Colorado was to getting into the tournament.

"Colorado was really close, as were a number of teams. At the end of day, when comparing

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Colorado to other teams, they didn't get the votes at the

## CU Basketball

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[Visit the All Things Buffs blog for a behind-the-scenes look at CU athletics.](#)

end of the day."

When asked about the Buffs' 6-7 record against teams in the top 50, and three victories against Kansas State, Smith said: "Both were considered. You hit on some criteria, and those were quality wins and great performances for them."

Smith would not reveal who was the first team out or the last team in.

Among the other "bubble" teams to be denied were Alabama, Virginia Tech and Boston College.

ESPN announcer Fran Fraschilla called the

exclusion of CU "the biggest crime of all" from today's selections based on its victories in Big 12 play, including three over Kansas State.

ESPN's Dick Vitale was even stronger in his comments. "How do you face those kids from Colorado? You beat Kansas State three times, you beat Texas, you beat Missouri, it makes no logic. To leave Colorado out is an injustice. It's totally unfair. The kids at Colorado are getting a raw deal."

Jay Bilas of ESPN called the decision to put in UAB and Virginia Commonwealth at the exclusion of Colorado "horrible, indefensible decisions."

CU's weak non-conference schedule hurt the Buffs' case. Their No. 64 RPI entering the weekend was among the lowest among the teams on the bubble. That low RPI was largely a result of its weak non-conference schedule.

Colorado was trying to get one of 37 at-large bids.

Boyle inherited a veteran Colorado roster, but added a key piece in rebounder deluxe Andre Roberson, a 6-foot-7 freshman from San Antonio, and a center with potential, 7-footer Ben Mills from Milwaukee.

Colorado's regular lineup includes seniors Higgins and Marcus Relphorde, with another senior, Levi Knutson, coming off the bench as the Big 12's top sixth man.

*Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280 or*

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## All Things Colorado Sports — Blogs — The Denver Post

MARCH 14, 2011, 4:37 PM

# CU's Boyle lets players have some fun in practice

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

BOULDER — A day after Colorado felt the heartbreak of getting left out of the 68-team bracket for the NCAA Tournament, Buffs coach Tad Boyle tried to get his players over any emotional hangover by changing up things for Monday's practice.

"I just wanted the guys to compete," Boyle said. "We didn't do first team against second team. We divided up the teams evenly. We did some four-on four defensive drills to compete, a cutthroat-type deal, and then we scrimmaged for 20 minutes.

"We tried to make it competitive and new and fresh," the coach added. "The guys just needed to get up and down and compete."

Boyle said spirits were good. The Buffs host Texas Southern at 7 p.m. Wednesday in the first round of the National Invitation Tournament.

"I was very pleased with practice," Boyle said. "The thing we've talked about all year was resiliency. We had a good meeting in the locker room. I was proud to see that a couple of our seniors stepped up and said some things in a very positive way. I think we're all on the same page.

"There will be no sulking with this team. We're not going to be feeling sorry for ourselves. We still have basketball to be played."

## More from All Things Colorado Sports

- [Shortened week a challenge, CU's Cabral says](#) <sup>[1]</sup>
- [Cabral impressed with 'crisp' CU practice](#) <sup>[2]</sup>
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All Things Colorado Sports — Blogs — The Denver Post

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MARCH 14, 2011, 11:14 AM

## CU's Boyle: no conspiracy theory

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

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Some Colorado basketball fans are quick to point out that Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe is a member of the NCAA Basketball Committee charged with selecting the 37 at-large teams, and that with Colorado joining the Pac-10 this summer, perhaps Beebe didn't fight for CU to be in the tournament bracket as strongly as he might have.

CU athletic director Mike Bohn said Sunday afternoon at the team's NCAA Tournament watch party that he believes Beebe was enthusiastic in promoting Colorado to the committee. After all, a sixth bid from the Big 12 to the NCAA Tournament would have meant more money for Big 12 coffers.

Speaking Monday morning on his final Big 12 coaches teleconference, Colorado coach Tad Boyle said he also does not subscribe to any conspiracy theory.

"I've heard that (from fans), and I really don't (believe that)," Boyle said. "I think the committee made their decision on what they thought was best. But I don't think there's a conspiracy theory against Colorado. I don't buy into that."

Everybody makes mistakes, Boyle added.

"In the game of college basketball, players make mistakes, coaches make mistakes, officials make mistakes and now we see the (selection) committee makes mistakes, too," he said.

"We're all human. That's just part of life. We all move on from it."

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Longmont, Colorado  
Friday, March 18, 2011

Publish Date: 3/14/2011

## Higgins in total shock

*By Brian Howell*  
© 2011 Longmont Times-Call

LONGMONT — Throughout his career at Colorado, Cory Higgins has seen more disappointing defeats than he cares to remember.

None of them hurt like Sunday.

“I couldn’t describe it,” Higgins said of his emotions after the Buffs were left out of the NCAA Tournament field of 68. “I haven’t felt that way probably ever in my life.”

For the first time in Higgins’ career, the Buffaloes were a legitimate NCAA Tournament contender.

They have proven many times they can play with — and beat — elite teams.

Receiving a bid to the NCAA Tournament was to be the ultimate cap to Higgins’ brilliant career.

Instead, CU got left out. The NCAA selection committee ultimately determined that at least 68 teams are better than Colorado.

Higgins, coach Tad Boyle and the rest of the players sat in stunned silence for several minutes after the final Tournament spot went to Gonzaga.

“I hope I don’t have too many more of those feelings in my life,” Higgins said.

Total shock. It’s the only way to describe the mood that swept through Boyle’s home on Sunday afternoon.

CU hasn’t played in the NCAA Tournament since 2002-03, and the Buffs have been there just twice in the past 42 years.

The Buffs figured to get in this year.

Boyle opened his home to about 150 CU supporters and media members, hoping to celebrate an NCAA bid. It was a party atmosphere for the hour prior to the start of CBS’ selection show.

The atmosphere grew a little more tense with each tournament spot that was filled.

“The longer it went, the more uneasy I got,” Boyle said.

That uneasy feeling only got worse. And, when the bracket was filled, the mood in the Boyle home soured quickly.



“Everybody is just shocked,” senior Marcus Relphorde said.

“I just really couldn’t believe it,” freshman Ben Mills said.

“Shock, disappointment,” athletic director Mike Bohn said.

“I’m shocked and I’m disappointed,” Boyle said.

All around the country, there are teams feeling just like the Buffs today.

“There’s a lot of good teams that didn’t get in this tournament, and we’re one of them,” Boyle said.

Considering CU’s recent history, that’s a good step for the Buffs. This is the first time in at least five years that the Buffs have had any reason to watch the selection show with anticipation.

“Yeah, but that doesn’t really satisfy us at the same level that we believe we had earned,” Bohn said.

That says a lot about how far this program has come. In one year under Boyle, and led on the court by Higgins, Burks and others, the Buffs have restored some pride in the CU hoops program.

That’s why Sunday hurt so much.

The ultimate goal is the NCAA Tournament. The Buffs have to settle for a bid into the National Invitation Tournament.

That’s not exactly what Higgins and the Buffs had in mind. Yet, before he walked out of Boyle’s home on Sunday, Higgins saw through the dark cloud of disappointment and recognized an opportunity in front of himself and the Buffs.

No, they won’t be going to the big dance. But, they still have something to play for, and Higgins still has a chance to finish his career on a winning note.

“We’re all grown men, so there’s going to be harder things in life,” Higgins said. “We don’t have a choice. We have to get back on track and continue with what we have left in the season.

“Whoever considers themselves a leader on this team, and I’m one of the people that does, really has to set the tone and we have to get back to work. We can’t afford ourselves to miss a beat and just get bounced from the tourney. Everybody will look like they made the right decision.”

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



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Monday, March 14, 2011

## Colorado, Big 12 in a state of shock

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By Diamond Leung

Colorado coach Tad Boyle hosted an NCAA tournament selection show watch party at his home and ended up holding a team meeting in the basement to address his disappointed players after the school's name never appeared on the television.

"Shock and disbelief, and I'm sorry our players had to go through it," Boyle said. "Going into the day, going into the show, it didn't even enter my mind we weren't in. It was disbelief and shock -- not fun at all."

Boyle spoke of his disappointment for how his seniors wouldn't get to play in the NCAA tournament even after compiling a résumé that included a win against Texas and three wins against Kansas State.

Texas A&M coach Mark Turgeon, a close friend and former teammate, said Colorado getting snubbed made for a bittersweet day even as his own team learned of its tournament fate.

"I was probably more upset for Tad than I was happy for us," said Turgeon, whose team got a No. 7 seed. "I was down. I was stunned they weren't in. When Texas was a 4 (seed), I knew we were all in trouble."

Said Kansas coach Bill Self: "I'm hurting for Tad and his players."

Said Kansas State coach Frank Martin: "Obviously, they were better than us. They proved it on the court. I feel bad for those seniors."

Said Nebraska coach Doc Sadler: "All of us in the Big 12 are probably shocked, disappointed. I would think the Big 12 office is shaking their head."

Boyle, whose team will play in the NIT, said he couldn't even be angry because he was still in shock.

"There's no question in my mind we're one of the best at-large team playing right now," Boyle said.

"Player make mistakes, coaches make mistakes, officials make mistakes, and now we see the committee can make mistakes, too. That's life. We're all human."

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Posted on Sun, Mar. 13, 2011

## Big 12 has that left-out feeling today

By BLAIR KERKHOFF  
The Kansas City Star

Today, the Big 12 coaches whose teams made the NCAA Tournament or NIT will speak on a conference call, and for the last few years the morning after Selection Sunday has been a back-slapping occasion.

Last year, the league crowed about getting in a record seven teams. Two years ago, there were positive vibes about the seeding.

Today, a delay button might be in order.

Big 12 coaches won't be at all pleased about how their league was defined by the NCAA Tournament selection committee with Sunday's announcement of the 68-team field.

Kansas got the deserved No. 1 seed, and Kansas State did well to grab a fifth seed.

But after that, Big 12 schools all dropped lower than projected, and the issue that surely will bring unanimity from the group: Colorado's omission from the field was a flat-out whiff.

The disrespect tone was set Sunday night.

"I think our league continues to get slighted nationally, and it's unfair," Kansas State Frank Martin said. "Our league doesn't take a backseat to anybody."

Nobody was a bigger supporter of Colorado than Martin, whose team fell three times to the Buffaloes this season. In all, the Buffaloes went 6-7 against teams in the RPI top 50.

That compares with records of 1-4 for Alabama-Birmingham, 3-6 for Virginia Commonwealth, 0-5 for Clemson and 5-5 for Southern California.

Those four teams were the final at-large teams selected and are part of the new First Four games in expanded 68-team field.

"I'm absolutely shocked," Colorado coach Tad Boyle said. "It's mind-blowing."

The Buffaloes didn't get much of an answer from selection committee chairman Gene Smith, the Ohio State athletic director. Not that specifics are ever revealed during the postselection news conference.

"Colorado was really close, as were a number of teams," Smith said. "At the end of the day when we analyzed all the information, put them up against other teams, they didn't get enough votes to get in the field."

Those votes come from the 10 committee members, and in this case nine voted. Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe is a member of the group and can't be in the room when his league's teams are being discussed.

Just as Beebe wasn't there when Texas A&M got stuck with a No. 7 seed, Missouri a No. 11, and in the bracket's biggest seeding error, Texas a No. 4.

All were one or two seeds worse than every credible bracket projection.

Beebe undoubtedly will catch grief, a guilt-by-association argument, but the ire will be misplaced. Every commissioner wants as many teams in as possible. A Colorado invitation would have meant another \$235,000 for league coffers.

And Beebe has been part of the committee in the good years, too.

No, the slights toward the Big 12 can be largely attributed to nonconference scheduling.

The Big 12 simply doesn't get it done in November and December. Smith and previous committee chairman say it in so many words every year: Take risks and play good teams.

Colorado, the committee deemed, didn't play enough of them. Games at Georgia and Harvard weren't enough to offset seven nonconference opponents with an RPI of No. 294 or higher.

Five teams in the field are the fewest for the Big 12 in four years. Big 12 coaches had reached a point where they believed a break-even in league play was a pass into the NCAA field.



They'll be particularly perturbed today that the Big Ten, which landed seven teams, went 0-6 against the Big 12 this season.

Big 12 coaches will say the league needs better publicity and promotion. But that's not true. There's only one way to reach this point of the season and not feel disrespected. It has nothing to do with promotion.

Toughen the nonconference schedule and then win a few of those games. Quit loading up on the walk-over, statistics-padding opponents.

Make it impossible to be snubbed.

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Published Mar 13, 2011

Published Monday March 14, 2011

## Chatelain: Colorado's NCAA snub is a real puzzler

By [Dirk Chatelain](#)

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Colorado guards Alec Burks, left, and Cory Higgins walk off the floor after a college basketball game against Kansas in the semifinals of the Big 12 men's basketball tournament in Kansas City, Mo., Friday, March 11, 2011. Kansas defeated Colorado 90-83.

Oh, Dan Beebe.

We know it's been a stressful year. We know the Big 12 lost two reputable members — both former national champions in football. We know it's not easy keeping Mack Brown happy while selling fairness to Iowa State, especially with (402) popping up on your caller ID all the time.

But Dan, what the heck happened this weekend in Indianapolis? On whose Rolex did you spill a cocktail?

Beebe, the Big 12 commissioner, is one of 10 distinguished administrators on the NCAA selection committee. Over the weekend, he and his colleagues holed up in an Indy hotel compiling the 68-team bracket we call March Madness.

The committee threw chocolate sprinkles on the Big Ten and Big East.

But the Big 12? Gipped.

Colorado, with five wins over top-40 teams, got snubbed for an at-large bid in favor of Alabama-Birmingham.

Yes, Colorado lost to San Francisco, Oklahoma and Iowa State. Yes, the Buffs' nonconference schedule ranked 325th nationally out of 345 teams. (That's almost as bad as Nebraska at No. 341)

But CU did beat Texas and Missouri. Three times it toppled Kansas State. UAB, on the other hand, beat nobody.

Every year, the pundits find controversy on the bubble. This year, the furor focused on UAB and Virginia Commonwealth's inclusion over Colorado and Virginia Tech. ESPN's Fran Fraschilla called the Buffs' snub a "crime".

But colleague Jay Bilas, the smartest hoops analyst in the business, put it best.

"You know who's shocked beyond belief at this development? UAB and VCU. ... When I look at VCU and UAB at the expense of some of these other teams ... I wonder if some people on the committee know whether the ball is round."

Surely, he isn't talking about you, Mr. Beebe.

Unfortunately, that wasn't the only bad news for the Big 12.

Texas, with more quality road wins than just about anybody in college basketball, got a No. 4 seed. A four? Seriously?

Had Texas beaten Kansas in the Big 12 final, I could've made a strong argument that the Longhorns deserved a No. 1 seed.

Now they'll see Duke in the Sweet 16, assuming they get out of the first round. The 'Horns drew one of the best mid-majors — Oakland — in the entire tournament.

Texas A&M didn't get much love as a No. 7 seed.

Neither did Missouri as an 11. Nobody who follows the game ever considered the Tigers in danger of missing the tournament. But they wound up behind bubble teams like Georgia and Illinois, who Mizzou handled in December.

The committee threw the Big 12 a bone with Kansas State, which landed a No. 5 seed in the easy Southeast region. If you're looking for a darkhorse, Jacob Pullen is a good place to start.

But odds are, it's up to Kansas to wave the Big 12 flag. The Jayhawks drew the toughest No. 2 seed in Notre Dame.

The good news for KU: The tournament's Missouri Valley Conference representative (Indiana State) is nowhere near the Jayhawks in the bracket.

Who knows, that may have been Bill Self's top request.

As for the Big Ten, the committee — chaired by Ohio State Athletic Director Gene Smith — not only satisfied every Big Ten bubble team, it also placed Michigan, Illinois, Penn State and Michigan State on favorable seed lines 8-10.

According to the bracket, the committee considered the Big Ten (seven bids) a much better league than the Big 12 (five). We'll see what happens the next few weeks, but that's not necessarily good news for a basketball program leaving Beebe's league for Jim Delany's.

Speaking of the Huskers, conventional wisdom said that Doc Sadler fell two or three wins short of a bid this season.

But the committee's shin kick to Beebe and the Big 12 indicates that NU probably needed 9-7 in the league, plus a berth in the conference semifinals.

The Huskers weren't that close after all.

## **No. 4 seeds almost as good as No. 2s**

Bubble teams always get the attention Selection Sunday, but don't forget the seeding blunders that create an unbalanced bracket.

Usually, the missteps produce imbalance between the regions. This year, they create imbalance *within* the regions.

The No. 4 seeds (Kentucky, Texas, Louisville and Wisconsin) are superior to the No. 3 seeds (Syracuse, Connecticut, Purdue and BYU) and basically equal to the No. 2 seeds (North Carolina, San Diego State, Notre Dame and Florida). Statistical guru Ken Pomeroy's team rankings support that argument.

Kentucky, for example, hammered Florida in the SEC final and ranks ahead of the Gators in the RPI. Yet UK is a four, while Florida is a two.

As a result of the quirks, the West, Southwest and Southeast brackets have a noticeably stronger top half (with the ones and fours) than bottom half (with the twos and threes).

What's it mean? Teams like Duke and Pittsburgh may face stiffer competition in the Sweet 16 than in the regional final.

## **Bracket breakdown**

**Best region:** The East. Ohio State, North Carolina, Syracuse and Kentucky are all viable Final Four contenders.

**Worst region:** The Southeast — and it's not even close. Pittsburgh is the No. 1, followed by the weakest No. 2 (Florida), the weakest No. 3 (BYU) and the weakest No. 4 (Wisconsin).

**Upset watch:** The Big East tournament is the most intense of its kind. The last two times a Big East underdog won four games in four days to earn a conference championship, it lost the first week of the NCAAs. It's just too hard to summon the intensity a week later in the Big Dance.

So beware of Connecticut, which exhausted itself with five wins in five days last week. The Huskies drew Bucknell in round one, then Cincinnati or Missouri in round two. I don't see UConn surviving the first week.

Also, look out, BYU. The Cougars are vulnerable as a No. 3 seed and haven't looked good since Brandon Davies' suspension. St. John's or Gonzaga should knock out Jimmer Fredette in round two.

**Who ends up in Houston?**

Syracuse will upset Ohio State in the East, Duke will take the West.

Kansas wins the Southwest, and Florida reigns in the Southeast.

Like all bold predictions, they're subject to change by Tuesday night's tournament opener.

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Mar 14, 2011

## Colorado changes approach after NCAA tournament snub

07:55 PM

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By [Jack Carey](#), USA TODAY

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Still dealing Monday with what he considered to be an unfair and unexpected snub from the NCAA committee, Colorado coach Tad Boyle said he will change the way he schedules non-conference games in the future.

"We were penalized for the November-December part of our schedule," Boyle said. "We went on the road for four non-conference games and lost three of them."

The Buffaloes, who are leaving the Big 12 and joining the new-look Pacific 12 starting next season, played non-conference road games this season at Georgia, San Francisco, Harvard and Cal State-Bakersfield, winning only the last one. The Ratings Percentage Index, used by the NCAA to help select and seed the teams, gives more weight to a road victory than a home win.

But the Buffs (21-13) found losses in those games can be damaging and were left out of the field, despite three victories against Big 12 opponent Kansas State and one each against Missouri and Texas.

"There's no reward for going on the road unless you win, but the risk is there," said Boyle. "When there's no reward for the risk, you shouldn't take the risk."

"Why leave home?"

Boyle said in the future he will try to schedule as many home games as possible and have the Buffs go up against quality non-conference foes in tournaments at neutral sites. Boyle, who became Colorado's coach after last season, said the Harvard and San Francisco games were already on the schedule when he got the job, and he added the other two contests after he arrived.

"But there's no reward for those games," he said.

Kansas coach Bill Self, whose team beat Colorado 90-83 in the Big 12 tournament semifinals, pointed out that the Buffaloes won 10 of their 19 games (counting the tournament) against Big 12 opposition and won six games against teams that finished in the RPI's top 50. "I didn't even think they were on the bubble," Self said.

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