



*It's mid-March, and Austin Dufault (33) is happy to still be playing basketball -- in any tournament.
Photo Courtesy: Tony Harman*



03/15/2011 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

Brooks: Buffs Working Up An Appetite For The NIT

BOULDER - In most cases, the NIT is all about appetite - that is, which teams can summon the hunger to stay competitive and keep playing in the aftermath of an overlook by the NCAA or being bounced out via an upset in a conference tournament.

BUFFALO EXTRAS

 [Game Notes #35: NIT 1st Round](#)

Colorado is an uncomfortable fit in the first category, having been passed over by the NCAA Selection Committee, while Texas Southern falls into the second. They could commiserate Wednesday night at the Coors Events Center (7 p.m., ESPN3.com) in the first round of the NIT, but CU Coach Tad Boyle isn't expecting that from the Buffaloes.

Boyle doesn't see his team lapsing into NIT disinterest, which usually means one and done.

"We talked about that; we want to be that team that's energized and excited to be there," he said. "If we're not, I said just let me know now and we'll play somebody else who wants to play. There's some teams that are disinterested, some teams that are still excited to be playing. We want to be the

latter."

On Monday afternoon, less than 24 hours after one of the bleaker days for Buffs basketball, Boyle detected signs of life from his team. "I was very pleased," he said. "The thing about this team - all year long we've talked about resiliency. We had a good meeting in the locker room. I was proud of a couple of our seniors who stepped up and said some things in a very positive way, showed some leadership. I think we're on the same page."

At that Monday meeting, seniors Cory Higgins and Levi Knutson delivered a heart-felt message to their teammates.

"They asked that the underclassmen have enough respect for them to go out and finish the season the right way," said junior forward Austin Dufault. "They both had the same message pretty much - keep playing hard, keep fighting and finish out the season strong."

"Don't let the fact that we're not in the NCAA Tournament change us or change what we do. Keep being ourselves. If it works out and we win, we'll have three home games. I don't think any of us wants to see our season end on our home floor."

In the 32-team NIT field, the Buffs are one of four No. 1 seeds, assuring them - provided they win, of course - of hosting three games before the tournament moves to New York's Madison Square Garden for the semifinals and finals at the end of the month.

Despite the anger and disappointment of not being in the NCAA field, Dufault sees the NIT opportunity for what it is: "It's still basketball and it's still a game I love playing," he said. "There's always going to be the disappointment of not going to the (NCAA) tournament - it's what everybody dreams about."

"But it's still pretty late into March and we're still playing. That's something to look at. We have the opportunity to go somewhere and play - Madison Square Garden, the Mecca of basketball. Everybody says it's the best place in the world to play. Going somewhere like that would be a great experience for everybody."

Once Sunday's shock finally wore off, that's the approach Boyle took. He tried to keep Monday's practice light and upbeat, then planned on focusing on Texas Southern on Tuesday. "They've been off for a while (the Tigers played last on March 11 in the Southwestern Athletic Conference tournament semifinals) and will be well rested," Boyle said. "You don't know what you're going to get from them."

Texas Southern (19-12 overall) won the SWAC regular-season championship with a 16-2 record and was "hands down the best team in the league," according to CU assistant coach Mike Rohn. Still, the Tigers lost to Alabama State twice in the final month of the season - the last time (73-66) in the semifinals of the SWAC postseason tournament, eliminating TSU from the NCAA Tournament picture.

Formulating the scouting report for Boyle, Rohn called Texas Southern "a nice team; there's a good complement of inside and perimeter guys. They can get up and down, but are comfortable playing a half-court game with their size. They're very long and athletic, which will present challenges for us, no doubt."

The Big 12 team that the Tigers most resemble, according to Rohn, is Baylor, which defeated TSU 68-60 this season in Waco and also beat CU 70-66. Defensively, the Tigers use their size much the same as the Bears, frequently employing a 2-3 zone. Said Rohn: "They might be as big overall as Baylor, but they're close."

CU and TSU had Baylor among six common opponents this season. The others: Oklahoma, Oregon State, Kansas State, Iowa State and Alcorn State. Counting the loss at Baylor, Texas Southern was 2-4 against those common foes.

CU defeated Texas Southern 88-77 in November 2010 in Boulder, but the Tigers' makeup has changed dramatically with one transfer from Kentucky - 6-foot-7 point guard Kevin Galloway - and the addition of freshman shooting guard Lawrence Johnson-Danner. They joined top returning scorer Travele Jones, who recorded a career-high 31 points on 10-of-14 shooting from the field and collected nine rebounds before fouling out in the final minute of the Buffs' win last season.

Texas Southern, said Rohn, "has totally changed the dynamics of their team."

The Tigers dominated the league's postseason individual awards, with third-year coach Tony Harvey named the SWAC coach-of-the-year, Johnson-Danner selected as freshman-of-the-year, Galloway chosen as newcomer-of-the-year and Travele Jones as player-of-the-year.

Johnson-Danner, a 6-4 guard from Detroit, averaged 13.2 points and 1.2 steals a game. He made 55 treys during the regular season, hitting 40 percent from behind the arc.

Galloway averaged 11.0 points and a team best 7.0 rebounds. He also led the team in assists (6.6 a game) and turnovers (5.3). Galloway, of Sacramento, Calif., sat out last season after transferring from Kentucky. TSU is his fourth school after stops at Southern California, College of Southern Idaho and Kentucky.

At 15.9 points a game, Jones, a 6-8 senior forward who came to TSU in 2009-10 from Los Angeles City JC, leads a list of four Tigers scoring in double figures.

Last season against Texas Southern, Alec Burks - playing in only his third college game - and Cory Higgins scored 23 points each, so neither player will catch the Tigers unaware. What they didn't see was Boyle's up-tempo style. Also, the game drew only 4,678, which CU officials hope will be half the size of Wednesday night's crowd.

If the Buffs win Wednesday, they will host a second-round game on either Friday or Sunday, playing the winner of Wednesday's California-Mississippi game.

SKI TEAM TO BE HONORED: The 2011 CU ski team, winners of the school's 18th national championship in skiing last weekend in Stowe, Vt., will be recognized at halftime of Wednesday night's game.

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THE DENVER POST

woody paige

Paige: No conspiracy, just stupidity on CU hoops snub

By Woody Paige
The Denver Post

Posted: 03/15/2011 01:00:00 AM MDT

The Buffs were rebuffed.

Colorado was snubbed and clubbed, jobbed and robbed.

CU rightfully belongs in the NCAA Tournament, not wrongfully stuck in some National Irrelevant Tournament.

It's the worst treatment of Buffaloes since the government sanctioned slaughter of the animal's herds in the mid-1880s.

The NCAA selection committee did not do its due diligence.

These are not the rantings of a disconsolate homer. National columnists, commentators, coaches and connoisseurs of college basketball

agree that the exclusion of Colorado was the committee's most flagrant foul in years.

The 10 committee members obviously had personal agendas.

There is no realistic reason the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Virginia Commonwealth and Clemson were chosen over Colorado.

Alabama-Birmingham's best victory was over ordinary Virginia Commonwealth. Virginia Commonwealth's most dominant victory was over awful Wake Forest.

Committee member Lynn Hickey, Texas-San Antonio athletic director and former women's basketball coach at Kansas State and Texas A&M, was charged with over- seeing UAB and Conference USA games. She recently admitted the only live games she watched were in Austin and College Station. The Buffs didn't travel to Texas or Texas A&M, so she didn't see them up close.

Could she have been biased with her Big 12 background and dislike of CU and her interest in Conference USA?

Committeeman Ron Wellman, the Wake Forest AD, was charged with overseeing VCU and the Colonial Athletic Association.

Wellman must have been impressed by that 21-point triumph over Wake Forest, the worst team in ACC history. The Wake coach is Jeff Bzdelik, Wellman's hire.

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Could Wellman have been prejudiced with his disdain for CU and his jaundiced view of Virginia Commonwealth?

Committee member Dan Beebe, commissioner of the Big 12, was charged with overseeing the Atlantic Coast Conference. Could Beebe have anti-Colorado sentiments because of the university's move out of the Big 12 to the new Pac-12? Could he have influenced the other committee members to invite a team that was the league's preseason ninth pick, but finished tied for fifth overall and reached the semifinals of the conference tournament, beat No. 5 seed Kansas State three times, defeated Texas and Missouri, lost to eventual No. 1 seed Kansas by only four points at home and was 5-5 overall against the five Big 12 teams in the NCAA Tournament?

Committee member Stan Morrison, Cal-Riverside AD, was charged with overseeing the Big 12. Morrison is retiring from the school and the committee this year. Maybe he'll finally visit Colorado. Could Morrison have been narrow-minded since he never saw the Buffs play live this season?

Could Doug Fullerton, Big Sky commissioner, have been more concerned with Northern Colorado getting in than pushing for another Colorado team? Would the same be true of Utah State AD Scott Barnes, whose NCAA Tournament team lost to the only two quality teams it played on the road?

Could Mike Bobinski of Xavier, Jeff Hathaway of

Connecticut, chairman Gene Smith of Ohio State and Hickey all have been too occupied making sure their own schools were taken care of in the NCAA Tournament than carefully examining CU?

Smith acknowledged he had seen only four or five games not played in Columbus, Ohio, and, of course, he's dealing with Ohio State's

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football cheating and lying problems, but didn't recuse himself from the selections.

Hathaway has his own troubles with the UConn basketball program. Who knows what SMU athletic director Steve Orsini was doing?

And the Xavier AD wouldn't recognize a buffalo if it bit him in the Bobinski. Before the selections were announced, Bobinski said he focused on the Big East (11 bids). He said at-large teams had to receive all but two of the votes. Obviously, CU had three or more committee members in opposition.

When interrogated about the omission of CU,

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Smith hemmed, then hawed: "Just not enough votes." Why vote for the Buffs if the Big 12 commissioner — who refused to attend CU's last Big 12 football game with Nebraska because he claimed he had gotten death threats — won't even lobby for them?

The soon-to-be Pac-12 didn't have a representative on the committee.

Kansas coach Bill Self said an argument could be made that CU "had the best wins in our league this year."

I don't believe in conspiracies. But I do believe in mass stupidity.

Only a roomful of fools would decide the fourth-place team in the little CAA was more deserving than a fifth-place team in the Big 12.

Colorado was Buffaloed.

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college basketball

CU: Going on the road reaps risks

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 03/15/2011 01:00:00 AM MDT

BOULDER — While acknowledging that Colorado's nonconference schedule likely was a deciding factor in keeping his team out of the 68-team NCAA Tournament field, Buffaloes coach Tad Boyle said Monday that he miscalculated the value of playing on the road in nonleague games, especially against weaker opponents.

Colorado (21-13, 8-8 Big 12 regular season) played four true "road" games during the nonleague portion of its schedule, more than any other team in the Big 12 Conference. However, Colorado went 1-3 in those games, losing at Georgia, Harvard and San Francisco, and winning at Cal StateBakersfield. "True" road games do not include those at neutral sites.

Many teams, including marquee programs, make sure that most, if not all, of their nonconference games away from home are played in neutral venues. In the case of Colorado, having 13 losses might have been hard for the selection committee to ignore, no matter where those games were played.

"I don't think our nonconference schedule was as weak as some people think," Boyle said Monday after a 90-minute practice in preparation for a first-round home National Invitation Tournament game at 7 p.m. Wednesday against Texas Southern.

"What I take from this, what I learn as a coach is, there was no reward for going on the road unless you win. But the risk is there. If there is no reward for your risk, you shouldn't take the risk. That's the way we have to go."

Boyle said he intends to cobble together nonconference schedules that always include one marquee home game (Georgia comes to Boulder next season), one marquee road game and two or three marquee games at neutral sites (CU plays in a good tournament field in Puerto Rico next season).

And, in addition to continuing the annual series with Colorado State, Boyle would like to schedule two other area Division I programs each year, one at home, one on the road.

That formula, Boyle said, should more than balance

the RPIs of the "cupcakes" that are inevitably scheduled.

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RPI can mean RIP

A look at the final Ratings Percentage Index of Colorado's 2010-11 nonconference opponents:

RPI	Opponent	CU result
302	Idaho State	(W, 88-80)
47	at Georgia	(L, 83-74)
120	at San Francisco	(L, 83-81 OT)
337	Alcorn State	(W, 91-51)
35	at Harvard	(L, 82-66)
343	Texas-Pan Am.	(W, 83-64)
219	Oregon State	(W, 83-57)
50	Colorado State	(W, 90-83 OT)
294	The Citadel	(W, 89-61)
319	Longwood	(W, 104-59)
66	*New Mexico	(L, 89-76)
192	*Indiana	(W, 78-69)
323	Md.-Eastern Shore	(W, 92-65)
310	at Cal St. B'field	(W, 85-73)
N/A	**W. New Mexico	(W, 92-70)

Colorado's final RPI: 65

* At Las Vegas tournament

** Division II opponent, does not count toward RPI

Boyle inherited the recently completed schedule from former Colorado coach Jeff Bzdelik. It was all but set when Boyle was hired as coach last year. Only three openings remained, and Boyle filled those with the road games against Georgia and Cal State Bakersfield, and a home game against Division II Western New Mexico that would serve as a no-risk tune-up before the start of conference play.

Games against non-Division I teams do not impact RPI, but also do not count as a victory in those computer power rankings.

Although it might ultimately have blown up in Colorado's face on Selection Sunday, the schedule may have helped CU gain confidence to begin conference play with three victories, Boyle said.

What harmed Colorado, though, was a schedule that included five games against teams that finished with RPIs in the 300s and another, The Citadel, at 294.

"The way it works, I guess you're better off playing against Duke than some of those teams, to help your strength of schedule," Boyle said, shaking his head.

CU athletic director Mike Bohn had no qualms with the Buffs' 2010-11 nonconference schedule.

"You have to remember we had a brand-new head coach who was putting a team together," Bohn said. "I would think (the selection committee) would take that into account."

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college basketball

Big 12 coaches feel for CU in wake of snub

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 03/14/2011 02:40:19 PM MDT

Updated: 03/14/2011 07:56:37 PM MDT

As hard as everybody connected with the Colorado men's basketball team took the snub of CU by the NCAA Tournament selection committee, Texas A&M coach Mark Turgeon said he felt just about as much pain.

Turgeon played alongside CU coach Tad Boyle in the Kansas backcourt under Larry Brown in the 1980s and later hired Boyle to his staffs at Jacksonville (Ala.) State and Wichita State.

Turgeon called Boyle on Sunday night to lend support as a friend. Texas A&M is a No. 7 seed in the Southwest Regional and Turgeon said he still can't believe Colorado isn't also among the 37 at-large teams among the 68-team field.

"I was probably more upset for Tad than I was happy for us," Turgeon said Monday on the Big 12 coaches teleconference. "When the selection

show was done, I got up and talked to the team. I was down. I was just stunned that Colorado wasn't in."

Turgeon said he got a sinking feeling that Colorado might be in trouble when, earlier in the selection show, Texas came up as only a No. 4 seed. The Longhorns had been projected earlier in the year as a potential No. 1 seed, and had been slotted no worse than a No. 2 by some "bracketologists."

"When I saw Texas was a 4, I knew we were all in trouble," Turgeon said. "I turned around to my wife and I said, 'Tad's not going to get in.'"

"But Tad is not a guy that sits around and cries and feels sorry for himself. He's a guy that moves on. He's a tough guy. He's disappointed for his seniors. And I'm disappointed for him, personally. I thought he did a tremendous job with his team."

Several other coaches expressed empathy to Boyle on the teleconference.

"I'm hurting for Tad," Kansas coach Bill Self said. "When you're talking about Colorado ... you could make a case that they had the best wins in our league this year. Texas beat us, but other than that (including beating Kansas State three times and Texas once), those were some of the best wins in our league."

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All Things Buffs blog



The Denver Post's college football reporters give analysis, notes and minutiae on this blog devoted to CU athletics.

Said Texas coach Rick Barnes: "My thoughts were for (Colorado's players). I don't think anybody would want to play them in the NCAA Tournament, or anywhere, really.

"You have to give Tad and his staff credit for a year when they've really made great strides. I've been there, when (when his team at Providence wasn't selected). It's even worse today, with all the stuff leading to the NCAA Tournament this week.

"I'm sure they thought they were in (the NCAA Tournament). I think everyone in our league thought they were in. When it doesn't happen, honestly one of the toughest things I had to tell my team that we didn't make it. So I know they're devastated. But they'll handle it right, and they'll prepare for the NIT."

Nebraska coach Doc Sadler on the Buffs missing out: "I would think the Big 12 office is shaking its

head. I know the coaches are."

Footnote.

CU guard Alec Burks has been named one of 20 finalists for the Wooden Award, given annually to college basketball's top player.

The sophomore is one of four Big 12 players on the list. He averaged 25.3 points, 8.7 rebounds, 5.7 assists and 2.0 steals per game during the Big 12 tournament.

The winner will be announced April 8.

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MARCH 15, 2011, 6:42 PM

Louisville AD says CU should be in NCAA bracket

By **NATALIE MEISLER** |  No Comments

Add Louisville athletic director Tom Jurich's voice to the nation-wide chorus condemning the omission of Colorado by the NCAA Selection Committee omitting Colorado.

"I thought for sure they'd get in," Jurich said Tuesday soon after the Louisville party landed. Jurich is in Denver where his Cardinals are a No. 4 seed at the Pepsi Center.

He has deep ties to this state. Jurich was Colorado State's athletic director from 1994-97 and mentored current CU athletic director Mike Bohn. He had nothing but praise for the job Bohn has done in Boulder.

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[2] CU 2011 recruiting class analysis: Alex Kelley: http://blogs.denverpost.com/sports/2011/02/09/cu-2011-recruiting-class-analysis-alex-kelley/15744/?source=ARK_sports

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[6] Melo hurt knee, but should play vs. Jazz : http://blogs.denverpost.com/nuggets/2008/03/08/melo-hurt-knee-but-should-play-vs-jazz/?source=ARK_sports

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MARCH 15, 2011, 10:43 AM

Did CU's Boyle predict NCAA tourney bid for Buffs in near future?

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

Hmmm. It sure sounds so.

Regarding missing out on the [NCAA Tournament](#) ^[1], CU coach [Tad Boyle](#) ^[2] said:

"I feel bad for the seniors who won't get to experience the [NCAA Tournament](#) ^[1]. Our coaches will, the young players in our program will. But those five guys won't, and I feel bad for them."

One current CU freshman, 7-foot center Ben Mills, could be a candidate to red-shirt next season, with the return of 6-11 Shane Harris-Tunks. But CU freshman forward [Andre Roberson](#) ^[3] has three more years.

Boyle, obviously, is not expecting a long rebuilding process as the Buffs look to replace current senior starters Cory Higgins and Marcus Relphorde, top sixth man Levi Knutson and sophomore Alec Burks, who likely will make himself available for the 2011 NBA draft.

Boyle is counting on immediate contributions from three November signees, two guards and a forward from the Los Angeles area. And one or two additional recruits could be signed next month.

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