



CU Coach Tad Boyle (left), New York firefighter Jimmy Duffy  
Photo Courtesy: Joel Broida



03/29/2011 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

## Bufs Tour NYC Firehouse, Get First Look At MSG

**NEW YORK** - Jimmy Duffy was among the lucky ones.

The 40-year-old New York firefighter spent several hours buried in the rubble of the collapsed North Tower of the World Trade Center before he was rescued on Sept. 11, 2001.

Duffy suffered burns over a large portion of his body, the scars on his hands visible. He was rescued; six members of his FDNY company - Hook & Ladder 24, Engine 1, Third Division - weren't.

"I just got out before the South Tower came down," Duffy, a 13-year firefighting veteran, told Colorado basketball players and coaches Tuesday afternoon on their brief tour of the NYC firehouse.

CU and the FDNY outfit - among the first responders to the 9/11 terrorist attack - have had a 10-year relationship. It started in November 2001 when then-CU football Coach Gary Barnett invited members of the firehouse to a Buffs football game in Folsom Field, where they were honored at halftime.

In return, they took a black-and-gold CU flag, autographed by members of the Buffs coaching staff, back to New York. It flies on the back of one of the company's hook-and-ladder trucks, which answers many of the approximately 4,000 calls annually.

"We appreciate you flying our flag," CU Coach Tad Boyle told the firefighters during the tour of their quarters. "We're all proud of you and what you do."

The firefighters reciprocated, telling Boyle and the Buffs they were proud of them for reaching New York for the NIT semifinals. CU plays Alabama Tuesday in the second semifinal game (7 p.m. MDT, ESPN2).

Senior guard Levi Knutson called the short tour and the narrative by Duffy "breathtaking . . . what these guys do on a regular basis is a lot more important than what we do."

Boyle and the Buffs were presented a plaque from the firefighters featuring the inscription, "Yes, We Do Believe In Miracles." CU Assistant Equipment Director Brendon Smith brought the firefighters a box of long-sleeved CU T-shirts, recently designed for the NIT trip.

From the firehouse, the Buffs went to Madison Square Garden for their game-day shootaround and to get a feel for the court and the venue where they will meet the Crimson Tide with hopes of advancing to Thursday night's NIT championship game.

Tuesday's CU-Alabama game follows the Washington State and Wichita State opener (5 p.m. MDT, ESPN2). The Buffs (24-13) and Crimson Tide (24-11) is the pair of surviving No. 1 seeds, while the Cougars (22-12) is a No. 2 seed and the Shockers (27-8) a No. 4.

Before their shootaround, while waiting for the Crimson Tide to clear the court, the Buffs wandered through hallways adjacent to the arena and saw team photos of the 1969-70 and 1972-73 New York Knicks - NBA champions in both seasons.

"Lot of history here," Boyle said of the arena where the Buffs would play in another six hours. They returned to their hotel on Times Square for the long wait.

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## Hot Corner: The NIT's best game is on Tuesday

Published: Monday, March 28, 2011, 7:00 AM



By **Don Kausler Jr./Tuscaloosa Bureau, The Birmingham News, Press-**

**Register, and The Huntsville Times**



Alabama's Chris Hines drives around Miami's Malcolm Grant during the first half of the NIT quarterfinal at Coleman Coliseum in Tuscaloosa on March 23. (The Birmingham News/Mark Almond)

Like Alabama, the Colorado basketball team, which plays the Crimson Tide in the NIT on Tuesday night, is a team on a mission to prove the NCAA Tournament selection committee wrong.

The Tide and Buffaloes are the two best teams in the NIT's Final Four. Colorado was good enough to defeat Texas. It was 3-0 against Kansas State and 1-1 against Missouri. But the Buffaloes lost to Georgia and New Mexico in addition to San Francisco and New Mexico.

If this game were in Coleman Coliseum, you'd have to favor Alabama. But this is one road trip the Tide will look forward to. Call it a tossup.

The winner of Alabama-Colorado will have to avoid a letdown two nights later when it meets the Washington State-Wichita State winner. It's a shame the Tide and Buffaloes will meet in the semifinals instead of the final.

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# Embracing new regime pays off for CU Buffs

## Boyle's Buffs set to face Alabama in NIT semifinals Tuesday

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

Posted: 03/28/2011 05:51:39 PM MDT

NEW YORK -- Win a championship.

That was the goal Cory Higgins, Levi Knutson and the rest of the senior class brought with them to the gym when practices with a new coaching staff began back in October.

The Buffs finished fifth in the Big 12, lost in the semifinals of the conference tournament and had the NCAA Tournament door slammed in their faces by the selection committee.

But after regrouping with three impressive postseason wins in Boulder, CU can still realize the preseason dream by bringing home a National Invitation Tournament championship with 80 minutes of good basketball here at Madison Square Garden.

The Buffs (24-13) -- who have already set a new program standard for victories in a season -- play an equally determined Alabama squad in the semifinals on Tuesday (7 p.m., ESPN2).

The winner advances to play the Washington State-Wichita State winner from the other semifinal.

First-year CU head coach Tad Boyle credits the seniors for embracing him and not losing focus after Jeff Bzdelik left for Wake Forest before the rebuilding project was completed.

"We always had doubts. One thing we knew though as a team is that we were talented," senior Marcus Relphorde recalled of the regime change last spring. "No matter who came in and coached us, we had the talent. I feel like if we didn't win it was going to be a disappointment.

"Coach Boyle has come in and done the necessary things to get a lot out of our talent. We've done some good things this year."

So has the Crimson Tide (24-11), winner of the SEC's West Division and 19 of its last 24 games.

Anthony Grant has racked up 41 wins in his first two seasons at Alabama. He was previously the head coach at VCU and recruited most of the players headed to the NCAA Tournament Final Four in Houston.

"I look at it as we've got to beat Alabama. I don't look like it as a tournament," Boyle said of CU's focus in the Big Apple. "We've got an opportunity to play Alabama on a neutral floor in a great, great city and on a pretty big stage. To me it's a one-game tournament and not a four-team tournament. You've got to win to advance."

Alabama beat Georgia twice. The Bulldogs -- who defeated CU 83-74 back on Nov. 16 -- were still selected for an at-large berth in the NCAA Tournament over the Crimson Tide.

"Our group is extremely humbled and excited to have the opportunity to be here in New York," Grant said. "And obviously we played some very good competition so we've earned the right to be here, as have all the teams that are represented here."

The Buffs also felt shunned after watching Kansas State and Missouri -- conference rivals CU went 4-1 against in the Big 12 -- get invited to the Big Dance.

Playing for a championship at Madison Square Garden while all those other teams, including Kansas, watch on television will help heal those wounds.

At least for the winner.

"Everybody wants to play in the Garden. You grow up wanting to play in the Garden," CU star sophomore Alec Burks said. "It's great to play there with this team against a great Alabama team. ... You have to play like it's any other gym, but you know in the back of your mind it's the best gym in the country. You've got to put that aside for the game."

The Buffs are hoping to win the NIT for the first time since 1940. CU was the runner-up in the inaugural tournament in 1938 and finished third at Madison Square Garden in 1991.

Over the decades, not many coaches or players have had an opportunity to be a part of a banner-hanging season in Boulder.

"You never know what life is going to throw at you and three weeks ago, two-and-a-half weeks ago, we were thrown a little curve ball," Boyle said during a press conference on Monday at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in Times Square. "And we hit it because our guys have responded the right way. They have not whined about it, cried about it, we're not going to do that."

"We were happy to be invited to the NIT, we're happy to be here and we want to relish this opportunity as best we can."

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# Mr. Big Shot a big fan of Boyle, Buffs

## Billups looking forward to rooting for CU

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

Posted: 03/28/2011 11:24:16 PM MDT

NEW YORK -- Carmelo Anthony entered the cramped Knicks locker room and the media horde swarmed.

Melo -- whose face will adorn a 128-foot tall billboard being unveiled at a press conference today as part of his first New York endorsement deal -- scored 39 points to lead the home team to a much-needed 113-106 victory over Orlando on Monday night.

The attention on Anthony allowed Chauncey Billups to take a deep breath and finish dressing in relative peace.

"It was good to get a win, man. Stopped the bleeding," the former Colorado star said during a postgame chat with the Camera after New York stopped a six-game skid. "It has been a struggle here lately, but that's over."

Billups plans to be just another face in the Madison Square Garden crowd tonight watching CU take on Alabama in the semifinals of the National Invitation Tournament.

"Mr. Big Shot" is a huge fan of head coach Tad Boyle and has closely monitored the careers of Alec Burks, Cory Higgins and Marcus Relphorde from the Big Apple.

"I'll be there cheering my Buffs on," Billups said. "It's been awesome. I think Tad, this being his first year, has been as good as you can possibly be as a coach taking over other players."

"He's lucky to have guys like Alec and Cory and Marcus, guys that just want to win and play hard. He's done an awesome job. I'm proud of the whole team."

The Buffs (24-13) have set a new program record for wins in a season previously held by Billups' 1996-97 team.

Like most CU diehards, Billups was upset when the team did not receive an at-large berth into the NCAA Tournament.

But CU's run to the NIT Final Four could not have worked out better for the Billups family. Chauncey's parents, wife and three girls have all traveled to New York from Denver for spring break, and his younger brother Rodney is a member of Boyle's staff.

"I was so mad, man. I still feel like they deserved (an NCAA Tournament berth), but it's over now and they proved it," Billups said. "I was just disgusted, but my second thought, I called my brother and said, 'When is the Final Four?'"

"I checked my schedule and said I'd be there. I'm just excited to go see 'em."

Billups left CU after leading the program to the second round of the NCAA Tournament as a sophomore. His 14-year NBA career began when he was selected by Boston with the No. 3 pick in the draft, peaked when he won a championship in Detroit, and has included two bittersweet stints in Denver.

On Feb. 22, the Nuggets shipped Billups to New York in the Anthony deal. The Knicks are 8-12 since the trade and were reeling before pulling out the overtime win over the Magic on Monday.

Meanwhile, the Nuggets are 12-4 since the blockbuster. George Karl is smiling and receiving standing ovations at the Pepsi Center again.

"Of course, but I'll be there in the summer and stuff," Billups said when asked if he missed Colorado. "It's not like I'm never coming back."

A New York newspaper speculated Monday morning that the team's recent slide could lead to Knicks general manager Donnie Walsh cutting ties with Billups after the season instead of picking up the team option on his contract for 2011-12 at a cost of \$14.3 million.

CU's current sophomore sensation, Burks, a unanimous first-team All-Big 12 performer who is projected to be a first-round NBA pick, will be able to get some sound advice from a true professional this spring.

"I've spoke to Alec a couple times. We'll talk some more here soon," Billups said. "I basically told him just to focus on this season right now and don't worry about the NBA and leaving. The time will come."

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## Alabama mirrors CU Buffs after NCAA snub

By **Natalie Meisler**  
*The Denver Post*

Posted: 03/29/2011 01:00:00 AM MDT

NEW YORK — No one wore name tags at Monday's NIT news conference. Maybe that's why Alabama coach Anthony Grant finally protested the reason for attracting the most TV cameras.

"I'm the Alabama coach," he said out of clear frustration.

All anyone at the NIT luncheon wanted to talk about was Grant's previous stop. All anyone in the country wants to talk about right now is Grant's last school. That would be Virginia Commonwealth.

When most casual observers filled out their NCAA Tournament bracket two weeks ago, they didn't know VCU from a VCR. Now VCU is Butler and George Mason wrapped into one Final Four entry.

Grant is in his second year at Alabama, which he joined after three successful seasons at VCU. Alabama plays Colorado tonight in the NIT semifinals, and the winner plays Thursday in the title game against the Wichita State-Washington State winner.

Some believe VCU's No. 11 seed in the NCAA Tournament should have gone to Colorado, if not Alabama. Alabama and CU held team watch parties on Selection Sunday, while VCU, according to reports, had other distractions.

"Everyone in our program was disappointed," Grant said Monday. "I think our guys did a pretty good job of turning the page and moving on."

Yet, he said there were no mixed emotions when VCU popped on the TV screen and there was no Alabama.

"I was just happy for VCU," Grant said of the VCU team he helped recruit and develop as underclassmen. "I don't think anyone achieves any level of success by wishing something bad on someone else."

CU and Alabama played in respected power conferences. CU (24-13) knocked off Texas, Kansas State (three times) and Missouri, all long gone from the NCAA. Alabama (24-11) posted a decent resume, winning the SEC West and beating another Final Four team, Kentucky, when it was ranked No. 12 in mid-January.

Both schools were criticized for mixed results in nonleague play.

"Everyone was mad initially," Alabama forward JaMychal Green said. "Coach Grant called us later on and told us about (the NIT) and that it was a blessing for us that we could keep on playing."

Grant hopes to do at Alabama what he got

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started at VCU. He said a stint on the Florida staff taught him that a football power also could be successful on the hardcourt.

"Obviously, I want to build our program to where it can compete for championships as well," Grant said. "I look at it as a win-win for everybody involved."

For now, Alabama is all about defense and second shots, while CU fills up the nets.

Grant's first impression of Colorado: "They are very well-coached and have outstanding talent, a balanced team and very deserving to be here in New York."

While CU coach Tad Boyle has compared the Tide to Kansas State in terms of athleticism and defensive emphasis, Grant would not compare the Buffs to any SEC team.

"Colorado is Colorado," Grant said. "I think their team has been outstanding over the last couple of months. . . . For us to have a chance in this game, we're going to have to be outstanding on the defensive end."

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## NIT semifinal: Alabama vs. Colorado

Posted: 03/29/2011 01:00:00 AM MDT

**7 p.m. tonight, ESPN2; Alabama by 2**

### Key matchup.

CU forward Marcus Relphorde is going to need some help, mainly from the Buffs' top rebounder, Andre Roberson, off the bench. JaMychal Green, Alabama's 6-foot-8 junior forward, is a first-team all-SEC selection who averages 15.4 points and 7.7 rebounds. Green is the leader in career double-doubles among current SEC players with 20.

### Up high.

CU plays a three- and sometimes four-guard lineup while Alabama goes with a more traditional two-guard, three-forward set. Alabama's SEC all-freshman Trevor Releford averages 3.4 assists and 11.0 points. He grew up in the Kansas City area playing with CU sophomore guard Alec Burks, who Monday was named honorable mention AP All-American. Releford plays the role of a pure point guard, and the Buffs must hope that Nate Tomlinson can get in some quality minutes coming off a shoulder injury.

### Down low.

This is Alabama's strength with Green and another 6-8 forward, Chris Hines. CU coach Tad Boyle said: "We have to limit their transition baskets. I'm not sure we can take them away; we

have to limit their second shots. Their offensive rebounding is as good as any team we've played all year."

### Quote.

"Seeing it in the arena would be great." — Burks, on bringing the NIT championship banner back to Boulder

*Natalie Meisler, The Denver Post*

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## Bufs enjoying first day in New York for NIT

By Natalie Meisler  
The Denver Post

Posted: 03/28/2011 01:04:01 PM MDT

Updated: 03/28/2011 02:01:27 PM MDT



Coaches Anthony Grant, of Alabama, Tad Boyle, of Colorado, Ken Bone, of Washington State, and Gregg Marshall, of Wichita State, left to right, pose for a photo with the NIT Championship Trophy in New York, Monday, March 28, 2011. (Richard Drew, Associated Press)

NEW YORK — Colorado men's basketball team has such a packed itinerary for its trip to the NIT, it's a wonder if the Buffs find time to actually play a game Tuesday night against Alabama.

The today started with a trip to the New York Stock Exchange, courtesy of a CU alum. There was a noon news conference, then practice at the New York Athletic Club. The NIT planned a dinner at a Central Park landmark for all four

teams.

"It's great," CU sophomore guard Alec Burks said today. "There are a lot of big buildings. I'm just happy to be here. I've come a long way from Grandview, Mo. (on the outskirts of Kansas City.)"

The best news for CU was that point guard Nate Tomlinson was able to practice Sunday before the

team left for New York. He separated his left shoulder in the first NIT game and missed the past two.

CU coach Tad Boyle said Tomlinson won't start against the Crimson Tide but will probably play.

"He said it felt good but he's still sore," Boyle said.

When time permits, the Buffs will have a guided tour of the fire house that was one of the first responders on Sept. 11, 2001. Several 9/11 heroes from that station spent time that fall in Boulder as guests of then-football coach Gary Barnett.

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Posted on Tue, Mar. 29, 2011

## Alabama and Colorado do battle in NIT semifinals

By Sports Network  
The Sports Network

A pair of top-seeded squads face off in the 2011 NIT semifinals tonight, as the Alabama Crimson Tide and the Colorado Buffaloes meet at Madison Square Garden.

The victor will advance to face the Wichita State/Washington State winner in Thursday's title game.

Alabama, which hails from the SEC, earned its spot in the semifinals with victories over eight-seeded Coastal Carolina (68-44), fourth-seeded New Mexico (74-67), and, most recently, second-seeded Miami-Florida (79-64). The Crimson Tide is making its sixth trip to the NIT Final Four. The program is 20-13 all-time in NIT play, and has compiled a 24-11 record thus far this season.

Big 12 Conference competitor Colorado is playing in the NIT for the 10th time and has compiled a 10-7 tourney record over that span. In this year's event, the Buffaloes dispatched with eight-seeded Texas Southern (88-74), fourth-seeded California (89-72) and seventh-seeded Kent State (81-74) to advance to the semis. They are 24-13 on the season.

Tonight's game marks the first-ever meeting between Alabama and Colorado in men's basketball.

Freshman guard Trevor Releford led Alabama to victory over Miami with a career-high 22 points. The Crimson Tide held a decisive 36-26 advantage at the break, before allowing the Hurricanes to open the second half on an 8-0 run. Alabama regrouped, however, reeling off a 14-4 run midway through the period to earn the double-digit victory. Senario Hillman added 17 points in 23 minutes of play for the victors, while Tony Mitchell finished with 16 points and nine boards and JaMychal Green had 14 points. In all, the Crimson Tide shot 54.5 percent from the field. Mitchell and Green represent an imposing inside presence for Alabama, with the former ranking first on the team in scoring (15.5 ppg) and second in rebounding (7 rpg), and the latter ranking second in scoring (15.4 ppg) and first in rebounding (7.7 rpg). Releford adds 11 ppg, as the Tide scores 67.3 ppg. Mitchell and Green lead the squad to a plus-3.1 rebounding margin. Alabama's true strength comes at the defensive end of the floor, where it holds opponents to 59.2 ppg.

Colorado's recent victory over Kent State did not come easily, as the game featured 12 ties and 19 lead changes. In the end, the Buffaloes prevailed due to their efficient offense, as they shot 49.2 percent from the field and committed just eight turnovers. Despite battling flu-like symptoms, Alec Burks and Cory Higgins each competed valiantly. Burks finished with a game-high 25 points, while Higgins tallied 13 points and a team-high five assists. Marcus Relphorde was also effective for the Buffs, as he netted 17 points, while freshman Andre Roberson turned in his fifth double-double of the season with 13 points and 12 boards. Colorado established itself in the paint, posting a 38-28 advantage on the glass. Still, make no mistake; it is Colorado's potent offense which drives the team to success. The Buffaloes average a healthy 80.1 ppg. Burks leads the way at 20.5 ppg and 108 assists, while Higgins contributes 16.1 ppg and Levi Knutson and Relphorde add 11.6 and 11.4 ppg, respectively. Defensively, Colorado allows an average of 73.6 ppg.

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