

# Cyclones next obstacle in Buffaloes' path

## Boyle isn't worried about team overlooking Iowa State

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

Posted: 03/01/2011 05:19:31 PM MST

AMES, Iowa -- Alec Burks' bright future appeared to have taken a dark turn the last time the Buffs were here.

The sleek 6-6 guard went down with what was feared to be a serious knee injury in the opening minutes of Colorado's heartbreaking 64-63 loss to Iowa State on Jan. 30, 2010. Initially, Burks even thought his leg might have been broken.

"I remember being scared out of my mind because I hurt my knee," Burks recalled after a recent practice. "I thought I was going to be out the rest of the year. That's all I remember. And then losing."

Burks' knee was sore but structurally sound. He went on to earn Big 12 Freshman of the Year honors and enters Wednesday night's game against the Cyclones at Hilton Coliseum (5:30 p.m., ESPN Full Court) as the conference's reigning player of the week.

Since Burks led CU back from a 22-point deficit with 33 points and 10 rebounds during Saturday's dramatic 91-89 win over No. 5 Texas, the Buffs have been talked about nationally as a possible NCAA Tournament team.

Those projections will disappear if Tad Boyle's team stubs its toe against last-place Iowa State.

CU's head coach says he is not worried about his team's mental approach, however, even though the Buffs are coming off a court-storming win over the Longhorns at the Coors Events Center and an emotional "Senior Night" against Nebraska is looming.

"I think it's late enough in the season and our guys know what's at stake ... no, it won't be a trap game for us," Boyle said. "We've talked about what's in front of us and what it all means. Our players aren't dummies, they know what's at stake. We're not going to look past anybody."

The Cyclones (15-14, 2-12) have struggled in Big 12 play under first-year head coach Fred Hoiberg. But the two wins were against two of the conference's other bubble teams -- Baylor and Nebraska -- inside the friendly confines of Hilton Coliseum.

"This team's focus is the best it has ever been," said CU senior guard Cory Higgins, who will set a new program record for career games played (124) Wednesday. "If we do lose it's not going to be because of a lack of effort or a lack of focus. We're going to be ready to go and we'll take it from there."

Despite a recent 10-game losing streak, Iowa State is fourth in the conference in home attendance this season, averaging 12,190 per game at Hilton Coliseum. The return of Hoiberg, the former Cyclones star and Ames High School graduate, has fans excited about the program again.

"It eats me up to think where we would have been if we would have won some of these games," said Hoiberg, whose team has lost eight games by six points or less and another game that went to overtime by nine points. "We'd be in the middle of the pack and in position for the NCAA Tournament."

The Buffs (18-11, 7-7) -- who pulled off a 71-68 road win at Texas Tech a week ago -- have climbed back to .500 in the Big 12 and are suddenly in position to punch their ticket to the Big Dance for the first time since the 2002-03 season.

"It's very exciting. We're trying to do something that hasn't been done in a long time," Burks said. "There's a lot of energy, so we should come out right against Iowa State."

The Cyclones, coming off an 83-82 overtime win over Nebraska, want to spoil the visitors' postseason party and send

seniors Diante Garrett, Jake Anderson and Jamie Vanderbeken out on a winning note in their final game at Hilton Coliseum.

CU is 5-36 in the venue, including a 1-18 record over the last 19 years of the series.

"In watching the Texas game, (CU) scored 58 points in the second half. Texas is as good defensively as anybody in the country," Hoiberg said. "I know they're coming in here with a ton of confidence, and they should be confident. Tad's got those guys playing at a very high level right now, and we know how big this game is for them."

[Close Window](#)[Send To Printer](#)

# denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

colorado basketball

## Bufs face Big Dance roadblock in Ames

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

Posted: 03/02/2011 01:00:00 AM MST

Updated: 03/02/2011 08:02:48 AM MST

Exuberant Colorado men's basketball fans already penciling in the Buffaloes for a spot in the NCAA Tournament bracket probably have not attended a game at Iowa State and do not understand how difficult it can be for a visitor to win in the raucous Hilton Coliseum, CU coach Tad Boyle said this week.

Boyle has traveled to Ames, Iowa, for the first time as a head coach for tonight's game against the Cyclones. But Boyle knows his way around. During his playing days as a Kansas guard in the early 1980s, Boyle won just once in four trips to Ames.

All-time Kansas great Danny Manning joined the Jayhawks during Boyle's senior season (1984-85) and Manning never won in Ames, going 0-4 there. That included a 10-point loss to the

Cyclones in 1988 — the year Kansas won the national championship.

"Tough place to play," Boyle said this week.

CU (18-11, 7-7 Big 12) has momentum from impressive victories last week at Texas Tech and at home Saturday against then-No. 5 Texas. Meanwhile, Iowa State (15-14, 2-12) sits at the bottom of the Big 12 standings as it begins a rebuilding process under first-year coach and local legend Fred Hoiberg.

Despite their team's struggles, Cyclones faithful continue to show up. In fact, Iowa State ranks fourth among Big 12 schools in average home attendance (12,190) — behind only Kansas (16,444), Texas (13,669) and Kansas State (12,659).

"I can't say enough about Iowa State fans," Boyle said. "The Hilton Coliseum can get rockin'. And it's their senior night. So it's going to take a great effort on our part."

Hoiberg will be conducting his first senior night celebration as a coach and said this week that it's important to make it a memorable one for his players. Hoiberg, 38, ranks third among all-time Iowa State scorers (1,993 points from 1991-95) and went on to a successful NBA career as a player and executive. But apparently Hoiberg can't forget a 71-68 loss to Oklahoma on March 1, 1995, in Ames.

"I didn't play well on my senior day," Hoiberg recalled Monday on the Big 12 coaches

Advertisement



Send flowers for any occasion

Bouquets from \$19.99<sup>+s/h</sup>

ProFlowers

Order ONLY at  
proflowers.com/happy  
or call 1-877-888-0688

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

# denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

teleconference. "That still bothers me."

In no surprise, Hoiberg is installing an up-tempo, NBA-style system. But there have been growing pains. Iowa State committed 17 turnovers in the Buffs' 95-69 win Feb. 1.

CU expects Iowa State to try to get its crowd riled up by playing a fast-paced game.

"They like to run just like we do," Buffs senior swingman Marcus Relphorde said. "It's going to come down to which team can get back on defense and prevent a lot of the transition stuff."

*Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280 or  
tkensler@denverpost.com*

Advertisement

**Get a FREE ADT-Monitored Home Security System.\***

(With \$99 customer installation and purchase of ADT alarm monitoring services. See important terms and conditions below.)

\*\$99.00 Customer Installation Charge. 36-Month Monitoring Agreement required at \$35.98 per month (\$1,295.84). Form of payment must be by credit card or electronic charge to your checking or savings account. Offer applies to homeowners only. Local permit fees may be required. Satisfactory credit history required. Certain restrictions apply. Offer valid for new SecurityChoice - An ADT Authorized Dealer customers only and not on purchases from ADT Security Services, Inc. Other rate plans available. Cannot be combined with any other offer. \*\*\$100 VISA® Gift Card Offer: \$100 VISA Gift Card is provided by SecurityChoice and is not sponsored by ADT Security Services. Requires mail-in redemption. Call 1-888-407-2338 for complete restrictions and redemption requirements.

**Call Now!**  
**1-877-835-8373**

**SECURITY CHOICE**  
ADT Authorized Company



Print Powered By FormatDynamics™



## Buffaloes aim to join NCAA herd

**Colorado may gain first bid since 2003**

**By Vicki Michaelis  
USA TODAY**

**Today's Sections**

Page 4C

BOULDER, Colo. — On the north side of Coors Events Center, home court to the University of Colorado Buffaloes, workers are constructing a 35,000-square-foot basketball and volleyball practice facility.

It's not the only building project noticeably changing the landscape.

First-year Buffs coach Tad Boyle and his team are on the verge of reminding their fans that March, on the sports calendar, means more than just the last full month of ski season.

Coming off last week's upset of Texas at home, Colorado (18-11, 7-7 Big 12) could make its case for its first NCAA tournament berth since 2003 with victories today at Iowa State and at home Saturday against Nebraska.

"It's very exciting," says sophomore star Alec Burks, who finished with 33 points and 10 rebounds against then-No. 5 Texas in the Buffs' come-from-way-behind win (they trailed by 22 points in the first half). "We're trying to do something that hasn't been done in a long time. There's a lot of energy."

The energy extends from the fans — Colorado has had four home sellouts for the first time — to the court, where Boyle has the Buffs pushing the pace to tire foes not used to Boulder's altitude (5,430 feet).

"The combination of the style of play and the altitude can break teams," Boyle says.

The Buffs first broke into the national consciousness in early January with their first-ever back-to-back wins against ranked teams, at home against Missouri and at Kansas State. That headiness was quickly deflated, however, by a four-game skid.

"Our guys are a confident group and they like challenges. Unfortunately, sometimes they wait until their backs are against the wall or they wait for a big game," Boyle says.

At halftime of the Texas game, Boyle told his players they had "20 minutes to fight for the rest of our season," says Burks, who scored 24 points in the second half.

In April, when Boyle was hired to replace Jeff Bzdelik, who left for Wake Forest, it was difficult to predict what this season would hold.

"I wouldn't say I thought it was definitely going to be blown up, but it was in the back of my head as a chance," says senior guard Cory Higgins, the school recordholder in starts and minutes played.

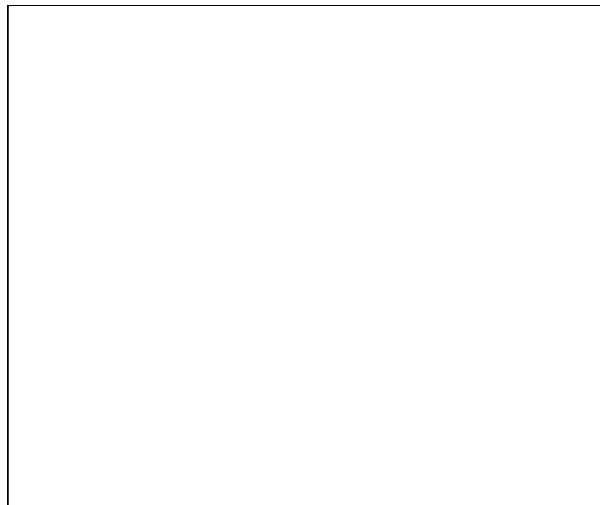
Says sharpshooter Levi Knutson, a senior reserve, "We knew we had to adjust to the new coach's system right away and everybody needed to buy in for us to have a shot."

Boyle, a Colorado native and former Kansas team captain, coached Northern Colorado to unprecedented success as it transitioned to Division I. His first challenge as Buffs coach was to persuade Burks, the Big 12 freshman of the year, to stay.

"He flew out to Grandview, Mo., saw my mom," Burks says. "That meant he cared a lot about me and my decision. I feel like that was the deciding factor."

Even if they don't get the chance to dance, the team's veterans are gratified knowing they're finally a trending topic on campus.

Advertisement



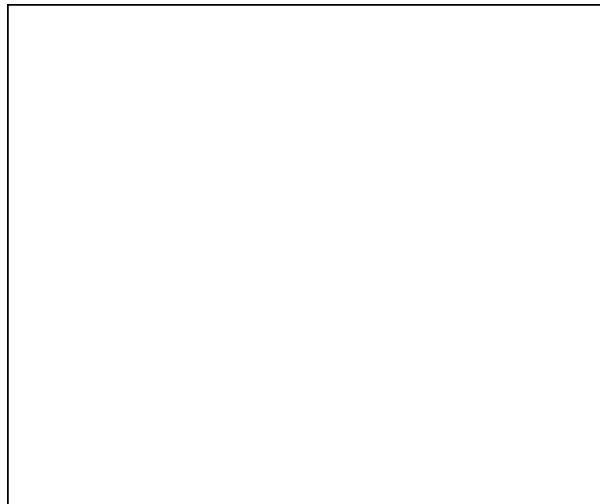
Print Powered By FormatDynamics™



Says Higgins, "This year pretty much made it all worth it, going through the real lows of my first two years, having a limited amount of success last year."

Page 4C

Advertisement



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™