



Senior Marcus Relphorde scored a game-high 19 points against the 'Huskers.  
Photo Courtesy: Tony Harman



03/05/2011 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

## Bufs Roll Past Huskers, Keep NCAA Dreamin'

**BOULDER** - It was the only scenario the amped up "White Out" crowd craved: Get the (Big) Red out for a final time, take it to Kansas City next week and see what happens. By the end of a feverish Saturday night, the Colorado Buffaloes had done their part.

CU kept its NCAA Tournament hopes flickering, defeating Nebraska 67-57 in the final Big 12 Conference game at the Coors Events Center.

The Buffs ended the regular season at 19-12 and 8-8 in the Big 12, earning a No. 5 seed in next week's conference tournament and a welcome rematch against No. 12 seed Iowa State. They play at 1 p.m. (MST) on Wednesday in the Sprint Center.

If CU defeats Iowa State, which shredded the defenseless Buffs 95-90 in their next-to-last regular-season game, No. 4 seed Kansas State awaits at 1 p.m. (MST) on Thursday. The Wildcats earned one of four first-round byes, but were swept by the Buffs this season for the first time since 2003-04.

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**Box Score**

"If we should have any kind of emotional edge on anybody, it should be Iowa State," first-year CU Coach Tad Boyle said after his team set an Events Center seasonal record with its 15th victory and sent the Cornhuskers home with a costly loss in their last trip to Boulder. CU heads to the Pac-12 next season, Nebraska to the Big Ten.

If Saturday night's victory kept the Buffs perched on the NCAA bubble, the defeat probably swept the Huskers (19-11, 7-9) off of it.

But CU's foothold is tenuous; the Buffs, whose last NCAA bid came in 2003, likely will have to win a pair of games in KC to be among the 68 teams selected for the "Big Dance."

Or, they can flush the suspense by winning the Big 12 tournament outright and earning the conference's automatic bid. Just a thought - but Boyle and his players are trying their best not to think about anything that far into the future.

"He's pretty good about keeping us focused," said Levi Knutson, one of five CU seniors honored Saturday night before and after their final regular-season home game. "Obviously it's hard to avoid all the media talk (about the NAAs). But in the locker room, in practice and on the court, our focus is always on the next game."

Boyle's approach since he's been coaching has been to separate seasons into four parts - non-conference play, conference play, the conference tournament and whatever else the postseason brings. The conference tournament portion can be as long as four days or as short as one, but Boyle said the Buffs' goal is the obvious one: "Let's try to win this championship . . . at this point it's all about surviving and advancing."

Although Boyle acknowledged his team didn't play its best Saturday night, he said it still was "a great night for Colorado basketball in a lot of different ways, on a lot of different levels. I'm proud of our team."

He might have been proudest for his quintet of seniors, who concluded their first winning regular season and seem assured of reaching postseason play. "We haven't talked about the (NCAA) bubble, but we have talked about the postseason," Boyle said. "But we have to take care of the next business at hand."

The Buffs did that from the opening tip against the Huskers, who won the first meeting 79-67 in mid-January in Lincoln. CU hit its first four shots and seven of its first eight, building a 12-point lead before allowing Nebraska to go on a 10-2 run and creep to within 33-28 at halftime. The Cornhuskers closed to within one point three times in the second half but never took the lead.

"We just wanted to come out and punch them in the mouth and really turn up the defensive intensity," said senior Cory Higgins. "We went after the ball; I think we did a good job of that."

Senior Marcus Relphorde led the Buffs with 19 points. Knutson added 13, Higgins and Alec Burks - the Big 12's leading scorer (19.8) - had 12 each. CU committed just five turnovers to Nebraska's 15 and stayed within two of the bigger Huskers on the boards (34-32). Buffs freshman Andre Roberson continued on his rebound rage, grabbing a game-best 10.

CU honored its five seniors - Higgins, Knutson, Relphorde, Javon Coney and Trent Beckley - in a pregame ceremony before a record fifth sellout crowd in a season that also saw several other attendance marks set.

"This crowd has been great for us all year," Knutson said. "We love playing here at home. Obviously, we have to take this show on the road now and play on a neutral court. But it means a lot to end with a win here."

CU finished the half at 41.9 percent from the field (13-of-31), but went to the free throw line just four times (three made). One of those foul shots was hit by Burks, who stepped to the line amid chants of "One More Year, One More Year" from the CU student section.

The chant was repeated at halftime for long-time PA announcer Alan Cass, who was recognized for his 50-year career announcing CU athletic events. Saturday night marked his final regular-season game behind the mic at the Events



Quotes



Box Score



2011 Big 12 Championship Bracket



Notes

Center.

Nebraska scored the first four points of the second half, pulling to 33-32, but missing the opportunity to take its first lead when Brian Jorge Diaz clanked a pair of free throws. The Buffs outscored the Huskers 7-2 over the next 2:30 and went up by six points (40-34).

But the final-time visitors were far from done. After Brazilian center Andre Almeida, a 6-foot-11, 310-pounder, got back-to-back baskets inside, CU's lead was down to 40-38. At the next timeout Boyle inserted Beckley (6-10, 240) to guard Almeida. On the offensive end, Beckley - who joined the team at mid-season - contributed his first two points of the season on a short jump hook to make it 42-38.

The Cornhuskers countered with a free throw by Almeida and a jumper by Brandon Ubel. With 12:16 to play, the Buffs' lead had slipped to 42-41 - and Nebraska Coach Doc Sadler said that's where the night turned.

"Bottom line is we got the ball game back to 42-41, took three quick shots and turned it over three times," he said. "I thought our guys played hard, did all the things to get to that point, then kind of lost our poise a little bit."

CU answered quickly, outscoring Nebraska 8-2 over the next 3 minutes and going ahead 50-43 with 9:17 to play. The Huskers closed to 52-48 on a three-pointer by Brandon Richardson at the 6:28 mark. But after Knutson matched that trey and Roberson followed a missed tip by Coney, CU was in front 57-48.

When Higgins hit a layup and two free throws, the Buffs were up 61-50 with 1:34 left and within a point of matching their biggest lead of the night. They closed it out by making six of eight free throws in the final 1:12.

The Big Red, with Athletic Director Tom Osborne watching courtside near his team's bench, was out for a final time.

Relphorde, whose 40 points in the past two outings is his best two-game stretch of the season, said the Buffs "definitely gained some momentum" for their trip to Kansas City. Being the fifth seed "is good," he said. "Of course, the higher the seed, the better . . . I think we all would like to play (Iowa State) again, considering what happened last game. We're going to be ready."

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SHOW MENU



## Colorado ends regular season with win over Nebraska

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

Posted: 03/05/2011 09:09:44 PM MST



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Colorado beats Nebraska.

Those are three words Buffs loyalists never get tired of hearing.

They might not be written again.

For the final time, at least as Big 12 rivals, fans in Boulder have bragging rights over those who love Lincoln.

CU said goodbye to five seniors, Nebraska and Big 12 basketball on Saturday night with a 67-57 victory over the Cornhuskers in front of a capacity crowd of 11,112 at the Coors Events Center.

Fittingly, the Buffs were led by seniors Marcus Relphorde (19 points), Levi Knutson (13 points) and Cory Higgins (12 points). Even seldom-used classmates Trent Beckley and Javon Coney were on the court with the game in doubt in the second half.

"It was awesome," Knutson said of the team's single-season record 15th home win. "This crowd has been great for us all year. We need to take this show on the road and win on a neutral court."

The Buffs (19-12, 8-8) will be the No. 5 seed at the Big 12 Tournament and will face No. 12 Iowa State on Wednesday at the Sprint Center in Kansas City, Mo. (1 p.m., Altitude).

"This has been a great year," CU head coach Tad Boyle said. "And the reason it has been a great year is because we have five tremendous seniors who have represented the program well. ...

"We're not done yet."

The inconsistent but resilient Buffs -- who followed up an upset win over then-No. 5 Texas with a deflating 95-90 loss at Iowa State on Wednesday -- are back on the NCAA Tournament bubble.

"We don't talk about it too much," Higgins said of being so close to experiencing March madness for the first time. "You can't lose sight of the next game, that's the most important thing."

The Buffs were focused and ready for Nebraska, opening the game with a 9-0 run and seizing a 14-3 lead after a 3-pointer by Knutson with 15:48 to go in the first half.

CU made its first six shots while Nebraska missed four of its first five attempts from the field. After Relphorde's second 3-pointer the home team had a 19-7 cushion.

"We just wanted to come out and punch them in the mouth," Higgins said. "And crank up the defensive intensity."

The Huskers, the best defensive team in the Big 12, clawed their way back into the game and were within five points after a basket by 6-11 center Jorge Brian Diaz with 29 seconds remaining in the half.

CU led 33-28 at the intermission after shooting 41 percent (13-for-31) from the field. Alec Burks had just three points at the break on 1-for-5 shooting.



Nebraska scored the first two baskets of the second half to pull within 33-32. With a chance to tie the score or give the visitors their first lead, Diaz missed two free throws.

The Huskers' other 6-11 center, Andre Almeida, made two point-blank shots. Boyle countered by inserting the 6-9 Beckley into the game and he responded with a hoop on his first touch to give the Buffs a 42-38 lead.

Coney also grabbed a key rebound in crunch time, which led to a putback by Andre Roberson that gave CU a 57-48 advantage with just under five minutes to play.

"I thought Doc (Sadler) did a great job of using his bench, and I had to make sure I used my bench," Boyle said. "I haven't done a great job of that this year, just because there are guys I have so much confidence in."

The usual suspects - including Burks, who finished with 12 points -- closed the game out at the foul line for the Buffs. CU was 15-for-18 in that department while Nebraska went 7-for-15 at the stripe.

The Huskers (19-11, 7-9) will be the No. 8 seed at the conference tournament and will face No. 9 Oklahoma State.

CU will join the Pac-12 next season and Nebraska is headed to the Big Ten.

"We've come a long way these four years and it's special to me to go out like this," Higgins said.

## **Colorado 67, Nebraska 57**

### **NEBRASKA**

#### **FG FT Reb**

#### **Min M-A M-A O-T A PF PTS**

Diaz 27 4-7 0-2 2-3 0 0 8

McCray 24 4-7 0-1 0-7 2 5 10

Walker 17 2-3 2-4 1-3 0 0 7

Beranek 15 0-3 0-0 0-2 0 1 0

Jeter 32 4-7 1-1 0-6 7 1 10

Jones 11 1-5 0-0 1-1 3 0 3

Richardsn 16 1-2 2-2 0-3 2 4 5

Ubel 23 4-9 1-1 1-4 0 0 9

Niemann 2 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 1 0

Gallegos 17 0-4 0-0 0-2 0 4 0

Almeida 16 2-3 1-4 1-1 0 1 5

Totals 200 22-50 7-15 8-34 14 17 57

**Percentages:** FG .440, FT .467.

**3-Point Goals:** 6-18, .333 (McCray 2-5, Walker 1-1, Richardson 1-1, Jeter 1-3, Jones 1-4, Gallegos 0-1, Ubel 0-1, Beranek

0-2).

**Team Rebounds:** 2.

**Blocked Shots:** 4 (Almeida 2, Diaz 2).

**Turnovers:** 15 (Walker 4, Jeter 3, Jones 2, Richardson 2, Beranek, Diaz, McCray, Gallegos).

**Steals:** 3 (McCray 2, Gallegos).

**Technical Fouls:** McCray.

## COLORADO

### FG FT Reb

#### Min M-A M-A O-T A PF PTS

Dufault 19 2-4 0-0 0-3 0 3 4

Relphorde 31 5-12 6-6 1-5 2 2 19

Burks 33 3-11 6-8 1-2 3 1 12

Higgins 34 5-12 2-2 0-3 3 1 12

Knutson 29 5-10 0-0 0-3 2 1 13

Tomlinson 16 0-0 1-2 0-1 1 1 1

Sharpe 8 0-0 0-0 0-2 0 0 0

Beckley 3 1-2 0-0 0-0 0 1 2

Coney 2 0-1 0-0 1-1 0 0 0

Roberson 25 2-4 0-0 3-10 1 2 4

Totals 200 23-56 15-18 7-32 12 12 67

**Percentages:** FG .411, FT .833.

**3-Point Goals:** 6-13, .462 (Relphorde 3-3, Knutson 3-5, Roberson 0-1, Higgins 0-1, Burks 0-3).

**Team Rebounds:** 2.

**Blocked Shots:** 5 (Roberson 3, Dufault 2).

**Turnovers:** 5 (Burks 2, Roberson, Relphorde, Tomlinson).

**Steals:** 9 (Relphorde 4, Roberson 2, Burks, Higgins, Tomlinson).

**Technical Fouls:** None.

**Nebraska 28 29 -- 57**

**Colorado 33 34 -- 67**

**A -- 11,112.**

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# Ringo: Decision looms for CU Buffs' Alec Burks

**By Kyle Ringo** Camera Sports Writer  
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 03/06/2011 12:10:16 AM MST

Three rows up, right on the aisle in section 22 at the Coors Events Center sat Steve and Dina Burks on Saturday evening watching their son, Alec, and his Colorado teammates beat the Nebraska Cornhuskers.

It was senior night for five of Burks' teammates, and it might have been the sophomore's final game in the building as well, sans the framed jersey and postgame farewell speech.

If the pundits who view Burks from afar and the NBA scouts who actually come to see him play by the dozens are to be believed, Colorado's leading scorer and rebounder is a lock to be a first-round draft choice this summer. Better yet, some say he's destined to be a lottery pick, an elite player in the top 14 picks of the first round.

As the fifth sellout crowd of the season cheered on Cory Higgins, Levi Knutson, Marcus Relphorde, Javon Coney and Trent Beckley one final time -- barring a home NIT game -- it crossed more than a few minds that Burks has a decision to make.

Stay for another year, enjoy college life, develop his skills further, move another year closer to graduation, play a season in the Pac-12 Conference where CU should be even more competitive and risk injury.

*Or*

Turn pro and begin making millions of dollars to do what he loves most, playing basketball.

Even his parents say they don't really know if their son is leaning one way or the other right now and what factors he might be considering. They decided long ago to wait to the end of the season to sit down with Alec and discuss it.

Hundreds of students made sure to share their opinion with Burks the first time he went to the free-throw line and all eyes were on him with 9 minutes, 44 seconds left in the first half.

"One more year, one more year..." they chanted.

They made their point again in the second half.

During his postgame meeting with reporters, coach Tad Boyle was asked jokingly if he planted the chant with students. You couldn't blame him for wanting to keep Burks' talent after all. But Boyle couldn't take credit.

"It wasn't a bad idea," he said. "I don't know if it's going to work or not, but we're not going to worry about it right now."

The Burks family has been under siege all season by agents attempting to make their pitch. They call Steve and Dina, who politely dispatch them. They creep up to them in public and at Colorado games and try to introduce themselves. They have replied with one consistent message from the beginning.

"We're not interested. Our son is a sophomore at the University of Colorado right now and that is all we're focused on," Steve Burks said.

The father says he and his wife haven't really talked about the decision with their son all year. As parents, they talk to each other and Steve Burks has friends with experience in professional basketball whom he can ask questions and receive reliable answers.

But they have tried to allow their son's sophomore season to be as free as possible of the stress of such a big life change. There have been moments when even they get a surprise glimpse into what he is thinking when they read a quote from him about his future, such as one earlier this year when Alec Burks said if there was one determining factor that would help



him decide it would be whether or not he was viewed as a lottery pick.

Under the NBA salary scale for rookies, the No. 14 pick in last year's draft was scheduled to make \$1.5 million this year, \$1.6 million next season and \$1.7 million the following year. All three years are guaranteed and the teams have a fourth-year option.

It's going to be tough to pass that up.

In fact, just one man's opinion here, but Burks would be crazy to pass it up considering it could all be gone with the tear of a ligament or worse.

"Alec is a very talented kid and he's a strong kid," Steve Burks said sitting in his seat and watching his son warm up an hour before Saturday's game started. "He's been raised in a good home, a strong home. We're not overly fascinated by it. We're just humbled by it and just try to keep everything on an even keel and keep level with everybody."

Steve Burks is the son of a Kansas City postal worker. He grew up on 53rd Street and always remained loyal to his old neighborhood. He has worked for the same linen service company for 27 years and plans to continue working there regardless of what his son decides. He has taught his sons to treat people right, be honest, and make smart decisions and he doesn't plan to deviate from that advice in this situation.

His youngest son is always in the newspaper, often on television and could be a millionaire in few months as a 20-year-old. But what had Steve Burks bursting with pride most as he talked about Alec on Saturday was how much he believes he has matured in his two years in Boulder. He no longer has to tell his son to do some of those things he used to.

"Alec has to be comfortable with it and what he wants to do with his life because it's his life going forward," Steve Burks said. "If he's comfortable making that decision at the end of the day, I support him 100 percent, whichever way he goes."

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## Seniors leave their mark

Colorado beats Nebraska 67-57

*By Shay Knolle on March 6, 2011*

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Inspired by the sold-out crowd that packed the Coors Events Center on Senior Night, the Colorado Buffaloes looked like a team poised to take part in the NCAA tournament.

Following the loss to Iowa State on Wednesday, the Buffs (19-12, 8-8) knew their chances to make the tournament were shrinking. Nonetheless, the Buffs stormed out of the gate against the visiting Nebraska Cornhuskers (19-11, 7-9) on Saturday night, who look stunned by the explosive start by the Buffs. The Buffs ended the night by beating the Cornhuskers 67-57 in Boulder to keep their “Big Dance” dreams alive.

After some delays due to scoreboard issues, seniors Levi Knutson and Marcus Relphorde got off to a quick start, giving Colorado a commanding 14-3 lead at the start of the first half.

“We wanted to come out and punch them in the mouth,” Cory Higgins said when asked about their good start.

The Buffs shot 42 percent from the floor and 40 percent from beyond the arc. The defense smothered the Cornhuskers, limiting them to shooting a lowly 38.5 percent from the field in the first half. The Huskers could never overcome the Buffs’ lead, which Colorado held on to the entire game.

Nebraska managed to get within three points, midway through the second half, finishing the night with shooting 44 percent from the floor. The Buffs managed to keep their lead, in part to poor free throw shooting by the Cornhuskers who shot 46.7 percent.

Senior forward Relphorde led the team in scoring with 19 points. He went perfect from the 3-point line, making all three of his attempts. Senior guard Knutson scored the second most points with 13, shooting 60 percent from beyond the arc.

Higgins and sophomore Alec Burks contributed too, each adding 12 points to strengthen the Buffs’ lead.



Senior guard Cory Higgins drives past Nebraska’s Lance Jeter during the first half of the Buffaloes’ 67-57 victory over the Cornhuskers on Saturday night. Higgins finished with 12 points and 3 assists on senior night. (CU Independent/Patrick Ghidossi)

This game is possibly the last home game the seniors will play in the Coors Events Center. The seniors said that the crowd played a large part in their success.

“It was awesome. The crowd has been really supportive all year,” Higgins said.

Head Coach Tad Boyle, who said he was displeased with the way his team performed against Iowa State, praised their performance after the game.

“Tonight was a great night for Colorado basketball in a lot of different ways and on a lot of different levels,” Boyle said. “I couldn’t be more proud of the team.”

Boyle said he was proud of the way the team performed, especially the seniors, who rose to the occasion on their special night.

“It was nice to see them step up tonight. It was nice to see them get this opportunity,” Boyle said.

Coach Boyle acknowledges the hype surrounding the tournament, and is aware of the impact it has on his players, but he said he is more concerned about getting through the next game.

“We have talked about post-season play,” Boyle said. “That has been the goal of this team since day one. Post-season play is our goal.”

With this win, the Buffs were able to secure the 5th seed in the Big 12 championships, where they’ll be looking for revenge against Iowa State in the first round on Wednesday.

Contact CU Independent Staff Writer Shay Knolle at [shay.knolle@colorado.edu](mailto:shay.knolle@colorado.edu)

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tom kensler

## Kensler: CU one of many Front Range teams with bright future

By Tom Kensler  
*The Denver Post*

Posted: 03/06/2011 01:00:00 AM MST

Shane Harris-Tunks had never been called a metaphor, but the 6-foot-11 Colorado redshirt realized that, yeah, his towering stature could be symbolic of the future. Things are looking up for the Buffaloes.

That could be said of just about every Division I men's and women's basketball program along the Front Range.

"It certainly seems like teams around here are on the rise," CU men's coach Tad Boyle said.

The Colorado men's team could take a bit of a dip, with the departures of seniors Cory Higgins, Levi Knutson and Marcus Relphorde and the possible loss of sensational sophomore guard Alec Burks to the NBA.

But Harris-Tunks, a sophomore from Australia, couldn't be more eager to help keep Colorado reaching new heights next season when the Buffs make their debut in the new Pac-12.

Harris-Tunks was called the most improved player on the team before he tore an ACL in an October practice and needed knee surgery. That ended his season before it began.

Having attacked the physical rehabilitation with the same gusto as he would an opponent in a game, Harris-Tunks lost his limp within a week or two of the surgery.

He is scheduled to begin light workouts this month and could be cleared for full-speed drills by early May.

There is no telling what impact Harris-Tunks might have made on the current season if he had been available. With just two or three additional victories, CU could have avoided the NCAA Tournament bubble.

Before the ACL tear, Boyle said Harris-Tunks had been the team's best baseline defender. He also set road-block screens for CU jump shooters and hit them with a kick-out pass.

"I'm not going to be a guy that comes back and scores 30 points a game," said Harris-Tunks, who was seldom used as a freshman by then-Buffs coach Jeff Bzdelik. "But I think I can help by giving guys good screens and being a big enough threat inside that they have to respect that."

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CU will be counting on the big man. The Buffs will return two junior starters in guard Nate Tomlinson and 6-9 Austin Dufault, who can move to his more natural position at forward when Harris-Tunks returns. Carlon Brown, a 6-5 senior guard, becomes eligible after sitting out the season as a transfer from Utah. A high flier known for his dunks, Brown averaged 12.6 points in his last season at Utah and figures to be CU's go-to scorer next season. Andre Roberson, a 6-7 rebounding machine as a freshman, has unlimited potential and supplies another piece to Boyle's plan.

CU signed three recruits in November and could land one or two more this spring. Several will need to contribute immediately, especially 6-4 point guard Spencer Dinwiddie and 6-7, 230-pound power forward Damienne Cain, both from Los Angeles.

"We're going to miss guys next year," Tomlinson said. "But we're going to have some talent as well."

The same could be said for Division I men's and women's teams up and down the Front Range. Colorado State loses powerful Andy Ogide, but coach Tim Miles has a wealth of depth. Northern Colorado must replace several seniors, including Big Sky player of the year Devon Beitzel, but recruiting has been strong.

UNC's women's team may be the Big Sky's best.

First-year CU women's coach Linda Lappe will find out next season what life is like without

career 2,000- point scorer Brittany Spears, but the Buffs return flashy point guard Chucky Jeffery and reinforcements are on the way.

The men's and women's teams at the University of Denver are filled with optimism.

And Boyle said Air Force men's coach Jeff Reynolds "may have done the best job of any of us in the way his team improved."

College basketball along the Front Range is back.

"That's good to see," Boyle said. "That will help everybody."

## SPOTLIGHT ON

### Neal Kingman, F, UNC

Talk about a local boy making good, Kingman recently was named co-Big Sky Conference player of the week after the 6-foot-7, 220-pound senior forward averaged 18.5 points, four rebounds and two assists in victories over North Dakota and Northern Arizona.

Then-UNC coach Tad Boyle didn't have to go far to find Kingman, recruiting him out of Greeley West High, where he was an all-state selection as a senior. Kingman redshirted his first season with the Bears because of an injury and has improved each season.

He saved his best for last, averaging double figures for the first time (10.7) in his college

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career this season. His scoring threat is needed to take some pressure off senior guard Devon Beitzel (21.0).

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cu basketball

## Bufs roll to win over Nebraska in home finale

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

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Colorado's Marcus Relphorde, left, and Andre Roberson struggle with Nebraska's Lance Jeter during the first half of an NCAA college basketball game on Saturday, March 5, 2011, in Boulder, Colo. (Cliff Grassmick, The Daily Camera)

BOULDER — After saluting five Colorado seniors Saturday night after an emotional 67-57 victory over Nebraska in their final home game, Buffaloes coach Tad Boyle turned toward the sellout crowd at the Coors Events Center. There was something else to say.

"We're not finished yet! We're not finished yet!" Boyle said.

Three days after Colorado's chances at earning an at-large bid to the NCAA Tournament appeared to be on life support when, as Boyle described it, the Buffs "laid an egg" in a 95-90 loss at Iowa State, Colorado just might have hopped back on the bubble.

It's March — a wonderful time for a college basketball team to have regained a spring in its step.

"We're not a consistent team," Boyle said. "But we sure are resilient."

Getting 19 points from senior Marcus Relphorde and a solid defense by everyone, Colorado (19-12, 8-8 Big 12) finished the final Big 12 regular season with its first non-losing league record since going 9-7 in 2006.

More important, CU secured the No. 5 seed at this week's Big 12 Tournament in Kansas City, Mo., drawing the league's last-place team in a first-round game at 1 p.m. Wednesday. Yes, the opponent will be Iowa State (16-15, 3-13).

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"Obviously the higher the seed the better," Relphorde said. "We like the fact that we're playing Iowa State again because of what happened in Ames."

Fellow seniors Cory Higgins and Levi Knutson reminded Boyle afterward that Colorado had been picked by the league's coaches to finish ninth in a preseason poll.

"It was a great night for Colorado basketball, in a lot of different ways, on a lot of different levels," Boyle said.

With a vocal crowd of 11,112 doing its best to help, Colorado turned out the lights for Big 12 Conference play at the Coors Events Center as the Buffs prepare to enter the Pac-12 this summer. It was only fitting that the team's senior leader, Higgins, would make sure there would be a victory celebration.

Higgins broke a double-team trap near the CU bench with a strong dribble, and then blew past two more Husker defenders for a driving layup to put the Buffs up 59-50 with 2:25 remaining.

Nebraska (19-11, 7-9) also held out hopes to remain on the bubble for an NCAA Tournament bid, but that likely has burst. Down by as many as a dozen points early, the Huskers pulled to within 42-41 with 12:12 to go but could never pull even. Colorado answered every spurt by its long-time rivals. Nebraska is bolting the Big 12 to go to the Big Ten.

"Colorado had guys step up," Nebraska coach

Doc Sadler said. "That's what good teams do."

Colorado overcame an off night by sophomore guard Alec Burks (12 points on 3-for-11 shooting), who also may have played in his final home game. Burks has said he will wait until after the season to decide whether to declare for the 2011 NBA draft.

The Buffaloes avenged a 79-67 loss at Lincoln on Jan. 18.

"We're not done yet," Knutson said.

**Diaz 27 4-7 0-2 2-3 0 0 8**  
**McCray 24 4-7 0-1 0-7 2 5 10**  
**Walker 17 2-3 2-4 1-3 0 0 7**  
**Beranek 15 0-3 0-0 0-2 0 1 0**  
**Jeter 32 4-7 1-1 0-6 7 1 10**  
**Jones 11 1-5 0-0 1-1 3 0 3**  
**Richardson 16 1-2 2-2 0-3 2 4 5**  
**Ubel 23 4-9 1-1 1-4 0 0 9**  
**Niemann 2 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 1 0**  
**Gallegos 17 0-4 0-0 0-2 0 4 0**  
**Almeida 16 2-3 1-4 1-1 0 1 5**  
**Totals 200 22-50 7-15 8-34 14 17 57**  
**FG FT Reb**  
**NU (19-11, 7-9) Min M-A M-A O-T A PF Pts**

Percentages: FG .440, FT .467. **3-point goals:** 6-18, .333 (McCray 2-5, Walker 1-1, Richardson 1-1, Jeter 1-3, Jones 1-4, Gallegos 0-1, Ubel 0-1, Beranek 0-2). **Team rebounds:** 2. **Blocked shots:** 4 (Almeida 2, Diaz 2). **Turnovers:** 15 (Walker 4, Jeter 3, Jones 2, Richardson 2, Beranek, Diaz, McCray, Gallegos). **Steals:** 3

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(McCray 2, Gallegos). **Technical fouls:** McCray.

## FG FT Reb

### CU (19-12, 8-8) Min M-A M-A O-T A PF Pts

Dufault 19 2-4 0-0 0-3 0 3 4

Relphorde 31 5-12 6-6 1-5 2 2 19

Burks 33 3-11 6-8 1-2 3 1 12

Higgins 34 5-12 2-2 0-3 3 1 12

Knutson 29 5-10 0-0 0-3 2 1 13

Tomlinson 16 0-0 1-2 0-1 1 1 1

Sharpe 8 0-0 0-0 0-2 0 0 0

Beckley 3 1-2 0-0 0-0 0 1 2

Coney 2 0-1 0-0 1-1 0 0 0

Roberson 25 2-4 0-0 3-10 1 2 4

**Totals 200 23-56 15-18 7-32 12 12 67**

Percentages: FG .411, FT .833. **3-point goals:** 6-

13, .462 (Relphorde 3-3, Knutson 3-5, Roberson

0-1, Higgins 0-1, Burks 0-3). **Team rebounds:**

2. **Blocked shots:** 5 (Roberson 3, Dufault 2).

**Turnovers:** 5 (Burks 2, Roberson, Relphorde,

Tomlinson). **Steals:** 9 (Relphorde 4, Roberson 2,

Burks, Higgins, Tomlinson). **Technical fouls:**

None.

**11,112. Officials —Ted Hillary, Warren Evans,  
Pat Boeh.**

**Nebraska 28 29 — 57**

**Colorado 33 34 — 67**

**A —**

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mark kiszla

## Kiszla: Burks better off with Buffs

By Mark Kiszla  
The Denver Post

Posted: 03/06/2011 01:00:00 AM MST

BOULDER — As sophomore guard Alec Burks stood at the free-throw line late in Colorado's 67-57 home victory against Nebraska, the student body in the arena issued a plea too loud to ignore.

"One more year! One more year!" chanted CU students, beseeching Burks to ignore the rich temptation of NBA money and return to school.

I can't tell you for a fact that the Buffaloes will make the NCAA Tournament field for the first time since 2003.

But this much I know is true: It would be to the benefit of everybody who loves CU sports and Burks if he continued his education for another 12 months before leaping to the NBA.

One more year?

I asked Colorado coach Tad Boyle if he planted

the idea with the enthusiastic students who rocked the Coors Events Center during the last regular-season game of the season.

"No, I didn't," Boyle said Saturday, smiling at the effort CU students made to lobby Burks. "It wasn't a bad idea. I don't know if it's going to work or not. But we're not going to worry about that right now."

One more year for Burks at Colorado?

More than one NBA scout will tell you in private that although Burks projects to be a first-round draft choice if he chooses to go pro now, it would probably pay off in the long-term if he stays with the Buffaloes and works on his game.

Meaning no disrespect to seniors Levi Knutson and Cory Higgins, who have done so much to put the Buffaloes back on the college basketball map, but if CU rides the bubble to land in the NCAA tourney bracket as an at-large entry, far and away the No. 1 reason will be Burks.

In the opening game of the Big 12 Conference schedule, Burks pushed CU into the postseason discussion with 36 points against Missouri. When the Buffaloes appeared to be holding to the slippery tourney bubble by their fingertips as the calendar turned to March, Burks saved his teammates from oblivion by scoring 33 in an upset of Texas.

The ability to score in a way that can carry a team is what fascinates NBA teams. But professional critics also describe Burks as soft,

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with a tendency to play smaller than his 6-foot-6 frame would suggest. That's why draftniks believe the CU sophomore might have to wait until late in the opening round to be selected.

To make the Big Dance, the Buffaloes will almost certainly have to win at least two games at the conference tournament, a task that will require them to sweep a three-game series against Kansas State.

Chauncey Billups, the best player in CU history, left the program after his sophomore season in 1997. But he struggled upon entering the NBA, and Burks' game is not nearly as refined when compared to a young Billups.

With Nebraska chipping away at the Colorado lead in the second half, Burks took an outlet pass, knifed through the Cornhuskers' defense and threw down a two-handed slam dunk to put the home team ahead 48-43.

Spines tingled.

But you also had to wonder: Was this the last time Burks will play a basketball game in Boulder?

Sure, it's easy for me to suggest he should turn down the millions of dollars guaranteed to a first-round draft choice.

But the fun of CU basketball has only just begun.

Athletic director Mike Bohn made the right choice in Boyle. The Buffaloes are on the rise.

After joining the Pac-12, they could compete for a league championship. This team generates enough heat that spectators actually have to fan themselves in the arena on a winter night to stay composed.

Without Burks, CU's bubble would burst.

One more year?

Please.

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## Huskers' NCAA hopes hurt at Colorado

- Story

By BRIAN ROSENTHAL / Lincoln Journal Star | Posted: Saturday, March 5, 2011 10:20 pm

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Colorado's Cory Higgins (left) defends Nebraska's Lance Jeter during the first half of the Buffs' 67-57 win in Boulder, Colo., on Saturday, March 5, 2011. (AP Photo/The Daily Camera, Cliff Grassmick)

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BOULDER, Colo. -- A large mural in the upper corner of the Coors Events Center reads, "Welcome to 5,345 feet of Rocky Mountain altitude."

The public-address announcer offers the same reminder before the start of every basketball game. Something intimidating for the guests.

Nebraska's coach says the premise of visiting players wilting in thin air is a bunch of hogwash.



So why were Huskers asking to come out in droves in the second half of Saturday's 67-57 loss at Colorado?

"They were tired," Doc Sadler said.

But not because of altitude, evidently, or because of the sweltering conditions amid a cozy, sellout crowd.

Nebraska was gassed because of its own doing. First, the Huskers used every ounce of energy to fight back from Colorado's 14-3 blitz to start the game. Then, when in position to take the lead, they fired shots too quickly.

The Buffaloes took those quick misses as an invitation to get out and run.

"That," NU sophomore Brandon Ubel said, "more than anything, did us in."

And now the Huskers are left gasping for NCAA Tournament air.

Even Ubel admits reaching that goal will now take winning next week's Big 12 Tournament in Kansas City. Nebraska (19-11, 7-9) is the No. 8 seed and will play No. 9 seed Oklahoma State at 11:30 a.m. Wednesday.

Marcus Relphorde scored 19 points to lead four Buffaloes in double figures. Colorado (19-12, 8-8) is the Big 12 Tourney's No. 5 seed and may have sealed its first NCAA Tournament at-large bid since 2003.

Nebraska, down 12 points in the first half, cut the deficit to five by halftime and scored the first four points of the second half to pull within one. That's when the Huskers' first chance to take the lead disappeared on two missed free throws by Brian Diaz, who has missed his past seven free-throw attempts over a three-game stretch.

Trailing 36-34, Drake Beranek misfired a three-pointer. Down 42-41, Eshaunte Jones had a quick trigger and missed a three-pointer.

Nebraska never took the lead.

"Instead of making them work on defense, we didn't do that," Nebraska guard Lance Jeter said.

"We took quick shots, and they made us pay for it. I guess they can say they kind of wore us out."

The real dagger, though, came after the Huskers had pulled to 44-43. They then committed turnovers on three straight possessions, clearing Colorado's path for a 6-0 run that concluded with 9:17 remaining.

"We kind of lost our poise a little bit," Sadler said.

One of those turnovers came when Christopher Niemann mishandled a post entry pass. Niemann hadn't played in exactly one month, and he had logged 26 minutes all season.

"When I had to put Christopher in, Brian, Andre (Almeida) and Brandon, all three had asked to come out," Sadler said. "I wanted to buy about one minute out of it, and we made some mistakes there."

Sadler also counted on 17 minutes from guard Ray Gallegos, who played a combined five minutes over Nebraska's previous six games. Also, Jones didn't play against Missouri after logging five minutes at Iowa State. He played 11 minutes, as Sadler's bench went 11 deep, with 10 players logging at least 11 minutes.

But Ubel also dismissed the notion that altitude played a factor in players tiring.

"I think it's just the kind of game they play," he said. "They like to run and get up and down. We miss a shot, and they're out on the break. We're spending a lot of energy getting back in transition and playing 'D' on them. It's just their style of play."