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## Colorado's Burks focusing on this week, not NBA

By RUSTIN DODD  
The Kansas City Star

Alec Burks bounced around the floor of the Sprint Center on Tuesday afternoon, weaving through layup lines and working up a sweat in his Colorado Buffaloes practice jersey.

In the grand scheme of Burks' season, the short practice session served as a final warm-up for fifth-seeded Colorado's game at 2 p.m. today against No. 12 seed Iowa State in the opening round of the Big 12 tournament.

But for Burks, a sophomore from Grandview, the shootaround was loaded with extra meaning.

Burks is playing in his final Big 12 tournament this week — just a few miles from where he grew up.

And this is where things get complicated.

Colorado is heading west to the Pacific-10 next season, but Burks — a first-team All-Big 12 selection — will soon have his own relocation decision to consider. As a projected first-round pick in this year's NBA draft, Burks could be playing his final games for Colorado, too.

"I hear it everywhere I go," Burks said of his looming decision. "I can't go a day without hearing what I'm gonna do; so it's everyday talk. But I just gotta put it away and play hard for my teammates."

Colorado coach Tad Boyle says Burks has handled the draft chatter in the same manner he's handled Big 12 defenders — which is to say he's smoothly sidestepped the potential distractions.

For the record, Burks, who is averaging 19.5 points and 6.2 rebounds per game, says he's still pondering the jump to the NBA.

But he's more concerned with helping Colorado get its first NCAA Tournament bid since 2003.

"We're going to take it one step at a time with Iowa State," Burks said.

In any instance, this would be the logical thing to say. As Boyle says, every team is 0-0 once it arrives in Kansas City.

But after a 95-90 loss March 2 at Iowa State — a loss that muddled Colorado's NCAA Tournament resume — you can be sure that the Cyclones will have the Buffaloes' full attention.

And while Colorado owns high-quality wins over Kansas State (twice), Texas and Missouri, Boyle knows his team will spend the next few days in the middle of NCAA bubble talk.

The cloud of uncertainty extends over Burks' future at Colorado as well. But for now, Burks and the Buffaloes are focused on making sure that Burks' time in Colorado includes an NCAA Tournament appearance.

"We know what's at stake," Boyle said. "And our players know what's at stake."

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