

Boyle's Buffs look to build résumé

Win at Georgia could help CU's bid for Big Dance

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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ATHENS, Ga. -- During Jeff Bzdelik's three seasons at Colorado the Buffs only experienced one happy charter flight home.

And it was a short one, from Lincoln.

The Buffs were 4-30 in true road games under Bzdelik with wins at Air Force, Colorado State and Denver during his first season on the bench in Boulder.

Last season's victory at Nebraska snapped the program's 36-game losing streak in Big 12 road games -- which dated back to the Ricardo Patton days -- and a 28-game skid in road games against Division I competition.

A more experienced and confident CU squad gets a fresh start away from home here tonight against Georgia at Stegeman Coliseum (5 p.m., FSN).

"I believe in our guys," first-year head coach Tad Boyle said after Monday's practice when asked why he scheduled a road trip to SEC country. "The one thing I know about players is they want to play against good competition. Georgia was looking for a game, we were looking for a game, so I thought it would be a good test for us. ...

"How close are we to Big 12 caliber competition? We'll find out."

The Bulldogs (1-0) -- who will make a return trip to Boulder next season -- received 42 votes (29th) in the first Associated Press poll of the season. CU received seven votes (38th). The victor tonight might be able to look back on this November game in March and point to it as a "quality win" when making a case for the NCAA Tournament.

"These early games are crucial because you never know what it's going to come down to in March," Cory Higgins said. "They might be on the bubble, we might be on the bubble, you never know. We have to have this game."

Trey Thompkins, the preseason SEC player of the year, did not play in Georgia's 72-70 victory over Mississippi Valley State in the opener. The 6-foot-10 power forward is questionable tonight with a sprained ankle.

Thompkins, like CU's Alec Burks, is a possible NBA lottery pick. NBAdraft.net has Burks being taken seventh overall by Detroit and the Bulldogs star going eighth to Philadelphia in its latest 2011 mock draft.

"I feel like we're going to be a good road team," said Burks, who scored 20 points in CU's 88-80 victory over Idaho State on Friday night. "We know what to expect and we have a lot of good people coming back. We're going to be a great road team this year."

Georgia shooting guard Travis Leslie, who opened the season with 16 points and 11 rebounds, and Higgins may also have futures playing at the next level.

"I think it's a good chance to see exactly where we're at and it will be a measure of where we want to get to," Higgins said. "Georgia is a tough, athletic team and this will be good for us. They like to run, just like we do, and they take the first open shot. It will be a good test for our defense to try and make some strides."

Boyle was pleased that his team only had seven turnovers in the season's first game, but the Buffs gave up 22 layups against Idaho State.

"We charted every one of them, found out who was responsible for every one of them, and we watched every one of them

on film," Boyle said. "You walk out of here and everybody's patting you on the back and you feel good about your first win. Then you go home and watch the film, and that tempers the enthusiasm a little bit."

This is the first of six non-conference games that CU will play on the road or at a neutral site.

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CU men vs. Georgia

Camera staff
Boulder Daily Camera

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TODAY: The Buffs (1-0) travel to Athens to face Georgia (1-0) at 5 p.m. at Stegeman Coliseum.

BROADCAST: Television on FSN with Chip Carey (play by play) and Larry Conley (analyst). Radio on KKZN (AM 760) with Mark Johnson (play by play) and Chris Lewis (color).

STORYLINES: The Buffs opened the Tad Boyle era with an 88-80 victory over Idaho State. ... Alec Burks scored 20 points and Cory Higgins added 16, but the CU stars were only 9-for-28 combined from the floor. ... Freshman forward Andre Roberson grabbed 11 of CU's 29 rebounds. ... The Bulldogs, playing without preseason SEC player of the year Trey Thompkins (sprained ankle), needed an 8-0 run down the stretch to pull out a 72-70 win over Mississippi Valley State in their opener. ... Georgia received 42 votes (29th) in the first Associated Press poll of the season. CU received seven votes (38th).

COACHES: Tad Boyle is 1-0 in his first season at CU after going 56-66 in four seasons at Northern Colorado. Mark Fox is 15-17 in his second season at Georgia.

PROBABLE STARTERS

Colorado -- (2009-10 statistics) G Nate Tomlinson, 6-3, Jr., 6.0 ppg, 3.0 apg; G Marcus Relphorde, 6-7, Sr., 12.0 ppg, 1.0 rpg; G Alec Burks, 6-6, SO., 20.0 ppg, 0.0 rpg; G Cory Higgins, 6-5, Sr., 16.0 ppg, 3.0 rpg; F Austin Dufault, 6-9, Jr., 9.0 ppg, 3.0 rpg.

Georgia -- G Travis Leslie, 6-4, Jr., 16.0 ppg, 11.0 rpg; G Dustin Ware, 5-11, Jr., 8.0 ppg, 5.0 rpg; F Connor Nolte, 6-7, Jr., 6.0 ppg, 2.0 rpg; G Gerald Robinson, 6-1, Jr., 19.0 ppg, 3.0 rpg; F Jeremy Price, 6-8, Sr., 20.0 ppg, 5.0 rpg.

SERIES: Georgia leads 5-1, including a 3-0 edge in Athens.

UP NEXT: The Buffs will have another road game on Saturday at San Francisco (8 p.m., no television).

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CU hoops learning on the fly

By Brian Howell
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The University of Colorado men's basketball team wasn't thrilled with its overall performance in a season-opening 88-80 win over Idaho State on Friday.

As they prepare to face Georgia tonight, however, the Buffs realize that learning how to play under first-year head coach Tad Boyle could take a while.

"It's still a learning process with the new coaching staff," sophomore guard Alec Burks said. "We're trying to adjust to everything new, but we'll get there. We're going to keep going at it until it gets there, one game at a time."

CU (1-0) will visit Georgia (1-0) in Athens, Ga. The Buffs were 2-14 away from Boulder last year and they'd like to get off to a good start on the road tonight. Mainly, however, the Buffs want to see a better performance, especially on defense, than they had against Idaho State.

"We have expectations on this team and we know where we want to be," senior guard Cory Higgins said. "We can tell that we're not there yet, but we're not down on ourselves. We're eager to get back in the gym and get better."

WOMEN BACK ON COURT: CU's women's basketball team plays tonight, as well. The Buffs will visit Denver University for a 7 p.m. tipoff.

After finishing 1-13 to wrap up last season, the Buffs have looked good against a couple of in-state teams. They defeated Western State 93-62 in an exhibition on Nov. 5, and then routed Regis 76-38 on Friday.

"It feels good to win," senior Brittany Spears said. "We're playing more as a team this year, compared to last year. It's a better feeling, and you just feel more confident on the court, knowing that the team has your back."

The Buffs are in the midst of a tough stretch to start the season, however. The game against Regis was the first of four games in 10 days, and the Buffs play nine games in the first four weeks.

Making that even tougher is the fact that CU has just eight healthy players. Chelsea Dale is out this semester for academic reasons, while Brenna Malcolm-Peck is nursing a knee injury and Melissa MacFarlane is out for personal reasons. Freshman Shae Kelley left the team before Friday's opener.

First-year head coach Linda Lappe believes the Buffs can make their situation into a positive, however.

Tonight's games

Colorado men (1-0) at Georgia (1-0)

When/Where: 5 p.m. tonight, at Stegeman Coliseum in Athens, Ga.

TV/Radio: FSN/760-AM

The series: Georgia leads 5-1, including 3-0 in Athens. The teams have not met since a 71-70 Georgia win in Boulder on Dec. 3, 2002.

Leading scorers: CU — Alec Burks (20 points in opener); Georgia — Jeremy Price (20 points in opener).

Notes: CU had four players score in double figures in an 88-80 win over Idaho State on Friday, including 16 apiece from Levi Knutson and Cory Higgins. ... Price, Gerald Robinson (19 points) and Travis Leslie (16 points, 11 rebounds) all had strong debuts in Georgia's 72-70 win over Mississippi Valley State on Friday. ... CU will put on a lot of miles this month. After tonight's game in Athens, they play at San Francisco on Saturday, home in Boulder on Nov. 23 and at Harvard in Cambridge, Mass., on Nov. 28.

Colorado women (1-0) at Denver (0-1)

When/Where: 7 p.m. tonight, at Magness Arena in Denver

TV/Radio: No TV/760-AM

The series: CU leads 4-1. The Buffs are 1-1 against the Pioneers in Denver. CU won last year, 84-57 in Boulder, but hasn't been to Denver since 1999.

Leading scorers: CU — Brittany Spears (20 points in opener); Denver — Kaetlyn Murdoch (17 points in opener).

“It gives everybody the opportunity to get a lot of minutes,” she said. “With eight players, everybody’s got to contribute, and that leads to some very good team chemistry.”

“Most teams only play eight players anyway — eight or nine — and you have five or six sitting on the bench. We just don’t have the luxury of having those kids sitting on the bench.”

Brian Howell can be reached at bhowell@times-call.com.

Notes: Chucky Jeffery had a double-double (13 points, 12 rebounds) in CU's 76-38 win over Regis. ... The Pioneers lost at Wyoming in their opener. ... Denver has four starters back from a squad that went 18-13 a year ago, and finished third in the Sun Belt Conference. ... CU plays eight of its first nine games in Boulder; this is the only road trip in that stretch.

Brian Howell



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Analysis: Colorado Basketball On The Rise Again



Nate Rohnert (above) graduated, but the Pioneers return every other major contributor to the team. DU is one of the local colleges hoping to end the state's recent NCAA tournament hiatus.

Photo by Mile High Hoops

Basketball Programs In The State Improving Under Talented Coaches

By Jordan Freemyer

Mile High Hoops

When March rolls around, the NCAA Tournament will return to Colorado, with regional games at the Pepsi Center starting on March 17.

The question is, will Colorado return one of its colleges to the NCAA tournament?

No team from the Centennial State has made the Big Dance since Jeff Bzdelik took Air Force to the tournament as a No. 13 seed in 2006. After a four-year NCAA Tournament drought for Colorado's five Division I schools, three of them have a legitimate shot at getting there this season.

One of those teams plays its home games only a few miles from Pepsi Center.

[Joe Scott's](http://www.milehighhoops.com/article/mile-high-hoops-coaches-corner-joe-scott) (<http://www.milehighhoops.com/article/mile-high-hoops-coaches-corner-joe-scott>) Denver Pioneers won 19 games last year and return four starters from a team that tied for third in the Sun Belt Conference last season.

[The Pioneers](http://www.milehighhoops.com/article/2010-11-university-denver-mens-preview) (<http://www.milehighhoops.com/article/2010-11-university-denver-mens-preview>) will be without do-everything guard Nate Rohnert, who led them in points, rebounds and assists last season.

However, DU returns all of its major contributors from last season and adds junior [Trevor Noonan](http://www.milehighhoops.com/article/noonan-siblings-ready-to-lead-next-season) (<http://www.milehighhoops.com/article/noonan-siblings-ready-to-lead-next-season>), a 6-foot-9 transfer from Air Force, and should again contend for a championship in the tough Sun Belt.

About an hour north of Magness Arena lies Butler-Hancock Sports Pavilion at the [University of Northern Colorado](http://www.milehighhoops.com/article/2010-11-northern-colorado-mens-preview) (<http://www.milehighhoops.com/article/2010-11-northern-colorado-mens-preview>).

After setting a school record with 25 wins last season, UNC head coach Tad Boyle bolted to take the job in Boulder at CU, leaving the UNC program in the hands of his top assistant, B.J. Hill.

Hill will rely on senior guard Devon Beitzel to lead an explosive UNC offense that can shoot the three as well as any team in the nation.

The Bears were picked second in the Big Sky in the preseason coaches' poll behind a Weber State squad that has lost on its home floor in the conference tournament in each of the last two seasons.

Just west of UNC, Colorado State was picked fifth in the preseason poll of the Mountain West, a conference that is earning more national respect each year.

Like DU, the Rams lost just one senior from last year's squad.

Tim Miles' group could challenge the Mountain West's top tier with the inside-outside combo of Andy Ogide and Dorian Green and get an at-large berth in a conference that earned three of them last year.

It's been since 2003, when [Colorado](http://www.milehighhoops.com/article/2010-11-university-colorado-mens-preview) (<http://www.milehighhoops.com/article/2010-11-university-colorado-mens-preview>) and Colorado State were both double-digit seeds, that Colorado sent multiple teams to the Big Dance. To put that into perspective, it was the same year that Carmelo Anthony led Syracuse to the national title.

It looks like the state's time to shine in the college basketball spotlight is here again. With Boyle taking over at CU, Colorado is home to four talented, young coaches that have their respective programs headed in the right direction.

If not this season, look for UNC and DU to get their first NCAA bid and for CU and CSU to make a return to March Madness in the very near future.

Contact the writer at newsroom@milehighhoops.com (<mailto:newsroom@milehighhoops.com>)

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