



COLORADO BUFFALOES

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Jeremy Adams (31) wants to stay productive in CU's final four regular-season games.

Photo Courtesy: Denis Concordel / www.widgic.com



Brooks: Do Numbers Favor Buffs Down Final Stretch?

Release: 02/26/2013 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER - March is a couple of days away, which means Madness isn't far behind. 'Tis the time of season when college hoops and its soon-to-be-wacko fans can start paying serious attention to bracketology and RPIs - and if I have to footnote either term, you might as well stop reading here.

BUFFALO EXTRAS



Game Notes at Stanford

After practice the other day, Colorado coach Tad Boyle conceded he pulls up bracketology on his desktop computer about "once a week - and I shouldn't admit that." He also "checks our RPI daily; that's a number I'm pretty dialed into."

And why should Boyle forbid himself to peruse either? Although he's a strict one-game-at-a-time guy, he's got a little more invested in Buffs basketball than you or me. But like you and me, he's keenly interested in various seers' mid-March forecasting and where his team might land.

"It's part of the world we live in," Boyle explained. "I don't focus on it, I can promise you that. When I come to practice I don't think about it. I don't think about it before I go to bed. But once a week or so I kind of see where they have us and take the temperature, so to speak."

In NCAA Tournament terms, the Buffs' current temperature is near normal, maybe a degree above. Boyle

would like it to be feverish. On four randomly selected websites I checked on Tuesday morning, CU's RPI was 29, 29, 27 and 28. Its four projected tournament seeds were 11, 10, 8 and 10 - and at this point all the numbers mean nothing.

The exact NCAA seeding, of course, won't happen until Selection Sunday, and neither Boyle nor his players want to peek that far into March. I'd be surprised if the dark memory of that day two seasons ago still isn't lurking in the back of his mind. What was to be a celebration at his home turned maudlin when the Buffs were snubbed.

That shouldn't happen this March, but then . . .

CU has four regular-season games remaining, plus the Pac-12 Conference tournament. The Buffs are 18-8 overall, 8-6 in conference. Flash back to last season at this time: The Buffs also were 18-8 overall, but 10-4 in conference. They proceeded to lose three of their final four, finish 11-7 in the league and enter the Pac-12 tournament as the No. 6 seed.

You know the rest . . .

THE DIFFERENCE IN THIS SEASON and last is found in the number Boyle says he checks daily - the speculative RPI. Calling scheduling "part art, part science," Boyle hit on the right blend this season. His 2012-13 non-conference schedule was more demanding, plus the Pac-12 is better overall this season than last. "We haven't played too many patsies," Boyle said.

Last March, CU's RPI hovered in the low 60s to low 70s, making an at-large NCAA bid unlikely and forcing the Buffs to win the Pac-12 tourney for the league's automatic bid. The Buffs' best-case scenario this March is maintaining an RPI - the upper 20s will do - that will allow them to be relatively assured of an at-large NCAA bid when they leave for Vegas.

And that means a strong finish this week in the Bay Area against Stanford (Wednesday, 9 p.m. MST, ESPN2) and California (Saturday, 2 p.m. MST, ESPNU) and next week in the Coors Events Center against Oregon and Oregon State. The Pac-12 tournament is March 13-16.

The Buffs are 7-2 in their last nine games, with the most recent win against Utah (60-50) accomplished minus freshman center Josh Scott. He remains day-to-day for the Bay Area trip after being elbowed in the head on Feb. 16 in the overtime loss against Arizona State.

Against Utah, CU compensated for Scott's absence, getting fill-in productivity from several players. Said Boyle: "It's the time of the year when you need all hands on deck. The bench has got to play well, the starters have to play well. Everybody has to step their game up; it's crunch time. This is what you work for all year - to put yourself in this position."

Against the Utes, the Buffs got that kind of step-up effort from Jeremy Adams with nine points, three rebounds, two steals and a blocked shot in 17 minutes. Adams, a 6-5 junior, has been a study in perseverance after being diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes shortly after enrolling at CU two years ago.

Much of last season was spent getting the disease under control, and he now says, "I've got that figured out pretty well thanks to the Barbara Davis Center (in Aurora)." But yet to come were knee and foot ailments; Adams has patellar tendon tears in both knees and plantar fasciitis in his left foot.

"That's another thing that's kind of frustrating," he said. "I kind of had everything about the diabetes figured out. Then my knees happened, then the foot . . . that's what frustrating. I talked to my parents and they've told me to focus on the things I can control.

"I've tried to come out with a good attitude. There were some times when my dad would tell me that maybe I should go tell coach that I don't think I can play this game. But I couldn't do that; I just have to push through it."

Adams and CU trainer Trae Tashiro finally concluded the best treatment for his knees and foot would be acupuncture. "We had exhausted about all of our other options as far as rehabbing," Adams said. "(Tashiro) said let's see how acupuncture does."

It was a first for Adams, but he received his initial treatments about three weeks ago and thus far is pleased with the results.

Adams doesn't want his or his teammates' productivity off the bench to slip in the season's final four games. Said Adams: "We understand with Josh's injury that people have to step up, and we have a lot of people on the bench that are capable of doing that."

The bench contributions against Utah, said guard Spencer Dinwiddie, allowed the Buffs "to play with a higher level of intensity and be a little fresher doing things like pressing and trapping, like you saw in the Utah game. That's what's really helpful."

LAST SEASON, FACING THE SAME four teams in its final four games, CU lost at Oregon and Oregon State, then at home to Stanford. The upside of this season's final four games: CU already has defeated each of its last four opponents, beating Stanford (75-54) and Cal (81-71) in late January at the CEC, then winning at Oregon (48-47) and Oregon State (72-68) in early February.

But since those four games, there have been seismic shifts in the Pac-12.

Oregon point guard Dominic Artis hasn't played since Jan. 23 and the Ducks are 5-4 without him, falling from No. 9 when CU visited Eugene to No. 24 in this week's AP rankings. With Artis in the starting lineup, Oregon was 17-2 overall, 6-0 in the Pac-12, and averaging just shy of 76 points a game. Without him, the average is 63.7.

But Artis, who has a left foot injury, could return this week against Oregon State and most likely would play in Boulder next week.

Stanford has been the Pac-12's poster child for erratic and inconsistent play, going 2-3 in its last five games. The Cardinal won 62-59 at Arizona State, then followed with a 65-64 home loss to Southern California.

Cal has surged, with two of its five consecutive wins coming at league co-leaders Arizona (77-69) and Oregon (48-46). At 10-5, the Bears have moved into fourth place behind the Wildcats and Ducks (both 11-4) and UCLA (10-4). OSU is 1-4 in its last five games and is in 11th place.

CU (8-6) is in sixth place, trailing ASU (9-6) and would lose the head-to-head tiebreaker due to the Sun Devils' sweep of the series. But ASU's three remaining games are on the road - at UCLA, at USC, at Arizona, while Cal has visits by Utah, CU and Stanford for its final three.

At stake is the No. 4 seed (and a first-round bye) for the Pac-12 tournament. A day off on Day 1 of the tourney is no guarantee of advancing, but most coaches - including Boyle - like their chances of resting on the first day and winning three instead of having to win four.

But for CU, the setup for any scenario in Vegas starts in the Bay Area and ends next week in the CEC. Boyle says the Buffs aren't "in a make-or-break mode. Obviously every game is important, especially if we want that fourth seed and a bye in the tournament we've got to win.

"We've got to win Wednesday and Saturday . . . but this team has shown resilience all year and I think we've become a much better road team, especially for the youth that we have. We have confidence. The first one's important because it's the first one; you can't sweep without winning the first one. That's where our attention is right now."

And Adams says the Buffs who were on last year's roster realize the significance of the final road trip and finishing the season strong for prime positioning in Vegas.

"It's extremely important," he said. "We were in the same position last year, and hopefully the people who were on the team last year will have a little experience and know what we need to do to take care of business."

In last season's final four games, business took care of the Buffs. No one is looking for that kind of repeat to end this regular season.

Thorburn: CU Buffs' Andre Roberson turning heads in Pac-12

By Ryan Thorburn *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

Posted:

Buffzone.com

STANFORD, Calif. -- Of course Tad Boyle is going to lobby for his guy.

Last week Colorado's head coach made the case that Andre Roberson is not only deserving of the Pac-12's defensive player of the year award this season, but also the best defensive player in the country.

During Tuesday's coaches media teleconference, Arizona's Sean Miller was asked to name some of the top players in the conference this season.

He spoke of one player: Boyle's guy.

"Hands down the best defensive player in our conference and I think the best defensive player in the country is Andre Roberson," Miller said. "He may be the most versatile of anyone I've seen."

Miller pointed out Roberson's ability to defend elite perimeter players like Cal's Allen Crabbe as well as relentless forwards like Arizona's Solomon Hill.

With Josh Scott (concussion) unavailable for last Thursday's game against Utah, Roberson was assigned to defend skilled 6-10 center Jason Washburn.

CU's skinny 6-7 junior held Washburn to 10 points and five rebounds while finishing with 13 rebounds, 10 points, four steals and two blocks during the Buffs' 60-50 victory.

"He reminds me of kind of a Dennis Rodman type of guy when you consider how he can impact a game without scoring," Miller said.

Roberson (1,006 career rebounds) is on the verge of breaking the program record held by Stephane Pelle (1054, 1999-2003) in only three seasons. He is also leading the nation in rebounding (11.8 rpg), is tied for the Pac-12 lead in steals (2.3 spg) with Oregon's Arsalan Kazemi, and seventh in blocked shots (1.4 bpg).

Streaking in Berkeley

CU plays Stanford on Wednesday night before taking on the hottest team in the conference -- the Cal Golden Bears -- on Saturday across the Bay.

Mike Montgomery and Co. were a mediocre 11-8 overall and 3-4 in conference play after suffering an 81-71 loss on Jan. 27 in Boulder.

Led by one of the best backcourt tandems in the country -- Pac-12 player of the year front-runner and Allen Crabbe and reigning conference player of the week Justin Cobbs -- Cal has won five consecutive games and seven of its past eight.

"I think we're playing better basketball for longer periods of time and we've managed to win some games that looked like they were in serious doubt," Montgomery said of the streak. "There's probably four teams that if anybody in that group wins all of their remaining games then they would deserve to win the conference."

The short list of legitimate contenders: Arizona (11-4), Oregon (11-4), UCLA (10-4) and Cal (10-5).

Boyle said the six-place Buffs (8-6) have to be perfect to down the stretch just to earn a bye at the Pac-12 Tournament.

"Quite frankly, I think we have to win out to have a chance to finish fourth," Boyle said.

National numbers

Arizona moved up one spot to No. 11 in both the Associated Press and USA Today/Coaches polls this week. Oregon is still No. 24 in the AP poll after losing at home to Cal.

The Bears are the only other Pac-12 team receiving votes in the AP poll.

My ballot: 1. Indiana, 2. Gonzaga, 3. Duke, 4. Michigan, 5. Miami, 6. Florida, 7. Louisville, 8. Kansas, 9. New Mexico, 10. Georgetown, 11. Michigan State, 12. Arizona,

13. Kansas State, 14. Syracuse, 15. Oklahoma State, 16. Wisconsin, 17. Memphis, 18. Saint Louis, 19. Marquette,

20. Notre Dame, 21. Colorado State, 22. Butler, 23. Akron

24. Louisiana Tech, 25. Ohio State.

The official NCAA RPI still likes CU, which checks in at No. 29 this week. Only Arizona (11) is higher with UCLA (42), Cal (45) and Oregon (49) also in the top 50.

"We certainly check on (RPI) when our non-conference season ends," Miller said. "Once our conference season begins you're at the mercy of how everybody scheduled and how they did in the non-conference."

USC (107), Utah (177), Oregon State (183) and Washington State (187) are four reasons why the Pac-12 now ranks behind the Mountain West in the Sagarin ratings.

Notable

Oregon coach Dana Altman said his starting point guard, Dominic Artis, who has been out five weeks with a foot injury, could give the Ducks "a few minutes" on Thursday against Oregon State. ... Over the last eight games, Stanford forwards Josh Huestis (14.8 ppg, 11.3 rpg) and Dwight Powell (17.6 ppg, 9.9 rpg) have both been dominant double-double machines. ... UCLA's Larry Drew II has 205 assists this season, which makes him the first Bruin with over 200 assists in a season since Tyus Edney dished out 216 assists in 1995. The Bruin single-season record is 236, set by Pooh Richardson in 1989. ... Pac-12 commissioner Larry Scott will attend Wednesday night's CU-Stanford game at Maples Pavilion.

Quotable

"I wouldn't bet against Colorado," Utah Larry Krystkowiak said when asked of the Buffs were capable of getting hot and winning the Pac-12 Tournament again.

Follow Ryan on Twitter:

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Pac-12 power rankings

Ranking/previous (record) comment

1/2 Arizona (23-4, 11-4) -- It just feels like the Wildcats are going to win the regular-season title. Up next: Wednesday at USC.

2/1 Oregon (22-6, 11-4) -- Ducks are 6-3 in true road games and 3-1 vs. ranked teams this season. Up next: Thursday vs. Oregon State.

3/5 Cal (18-9, 10-5) -- Bears are 7-1 since falling to 3-4 in conference play after Jan. 27 loss in Boulder. Up next: Thursday vs. Utah.

4/3 UCLA (20-7, 10-4) -- Bruins tied for first in the loss column after big road win against rival Trojans. Up next: Wednesday vs. Arizona State.

5/4 Arizona State (20-8, 9-6) -- Sun Devils' NCAA dreams could be made or broken in Hollywood this week. Up next: Wednesday at UCLA.

6/6 Colorado (18-8, 8-6) -- Buffs will have to win out to get a top-four seed at the conference tournament. Up next: Wednesday at Stanford.

7/8 Stanford (16-12, 7-8) -- This is a difficult team to figure out. Buffs need to sweep the Cardinal. Up next: Wednesday vs. Colorado.

8/9 Washington (15-13, 7-8) -- The basketball version of the Apple Cup is rotten this season. Up next: Sunday vs. Washington State.

9/7 USC (12-15, 7-7) -- Bob Cantu has done a good job, but you get the feeling the Trojans will hire a big name. Up next: Wednesday vs. Arizona.

10/11 Utah (11-15, 3-11) -- If you watch the Utes closely, Larry Krystkowiak has the program headed in the right direction. Up next: Thursday at Cal.

11/10 Oregon State (13-15, 3-12) -- Craig Robinson's team finding creative ways to lose every week. Up next: Thursday at Oregon.

12/12 Washington State (11-17, 2-13) -- Eight consecutive losses for the Cougars. Up next: Sunday at Washington.

Boyle's squad riding two-game winning streak heading into matchup with Stanford

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Tad Boyle loves some Chocolate Thunder Down Under.

Colorado's head coach hasn't had much of his favorite dessert lately from the Outback Steakhouse when the Buffaloes go on the road. After the Buffs started Pac-12 Conference play 1-4 in road games, Boyle and his assistants made the decision to take dessert off the menu during team meals on the road.

"We hadn't won a lot of road games early and I thought we were getting a little soft," Boyle said. "Nobody loves dessert more than coach Boyle. So that one hurt, but we said until we start winning some games let's cut it out. We got to stay hungry and humble maybe we were getting too fat and happy. So there was a dessert policy change."

Boyle recently allowed his players a dessert during a two-game trip to Oregon and Oregon State two weeks ago. The Buffs swept those teams on the road and carry a two-game road winning streak into Maples Pavillion tonight where they will face Stanford (9:05 p.m., ESPN2).

CU will remain in the Bay Area through Saturday when it plays at Cal. Boyle said he will decide whether his players get dessert during the trip based on how they play tonight and how they practice between games.

While Boyle discussed the dessert change with a smile on his face after practice earlier this week, he is serious as possible when addressing his team these days. With only four games remaining in the regular season, it's time for the Buffs to prove they belong in the NCAA tournament with a strong finish so they don't have to go into the Pac-12 tournament in Las Vegas next month with a ton of pressure on them.

A strong finish would also put them in better position for the conference tournament. CU can still earn one of the top four seeds in the conference bracket and first-round bye if it can finish the regular season strong.

It was at this point in the season last year that the Buffs fell apart and put themselves in must-win-the-whole-tournament mode in order to get to March Madness. Fortunately, they were able to come together for a week in Los Angeles and play their best basketball of the year capturing the Pac-12 tournament title and an NCAA berth.

"We didn't handle the adversity of the away teams very well last year," guard Spencer Dinwiddie said reflecting on the Buffs' weak finish to the regular season in 2012. "We've probably done a little bit better job of that this year, especially lately. So that's what I took away from it."

The Buffs handled the Cardinal in Boulder last month, playing one of their most complete games of the season. But Stanford has been playing some of its best basketball since losing to the Buffs. Boyle said four of the five Stanford starters are capable of scoring 25 points in any game.

"They're shooting the ball a lot better now than they were when they came in here ... They're a team again when they're making shots, they're all you can handle."

Stanford also is rebounding well with its tandem of Josh Huestis and Dwight Powell leading the way. It should be a war inside with CU forward Andre Roberson, who leads the nation in rebounding at 11.8 per game. It's uncertain if CU freshman center Josh Scott will be available for the game. He has been out since suffering a concussion against Arizona State nearly two weeks ago.

Boyle said regardless of who is available, he needs all his players to be ready to go. There is a lot left to play for and a lot to be decided across the conference. Boyle said he isn't the type to get obsessed with how others view his team, but he admitted checking out Bracketology and other NCAA tournament forecasts once a week to see how others view the Buffs and their resume.

Most of the most recent mock brackets and forecasts have the Buffs seeded between 8 and 10. But there is certainly enough basketball left to be played that the eventual seeding could be significantly different from the current perception.

If the Buffs fell flat in these final four games the way they did last season and then also do poorly in the conference tournament, it's possible they could miss the tournament completely.

One thing working in CU's favor is the veterans on this year's team seem to realize that.

"It's the time of the year where you need all hands on deck," Boyle said. "The bench has got to play well, starters got to play well. Everybody's got to step their game up. It's crunch time. This is what you work for all year to put yourself in this position."

CU men's hoops preview

WEDNESDAY: The Colorado Buffaloes (18-8, 8-6) at Stanford Cardinal (16-12, 7-8) 9:05 p.m. at Maples Pavilion.

BROADCAST: Television on the ESPN2 with Dave Pasch (play-by-play) and Bill Walton (analyst). Radio on KOA (AM 850) with Mark Johnson (play-by-play) and Chad Brown (analyst). Follow on Twitter: @RyanThorburn.

CU STORY LINES: Freshman Josh Scott could return after missing last week's game against Utah with a concussion suffered in a Feb. 16 home loss to Arizona State. ...The Buffs have a two-game winning streak on the road and are 4-6 on the road this season. ... Junior Andre Roberson tied a career high with 20 rebounds in the first meeting with Stanford this season. ...Guard Askia Booker has made just 6 of 30 3-point attempts in the past six games. ... The Buffs have made at least one 3-pointer in 357 consecutive games. ...CU is averaging 16.2 fewer points on the road than at home this season.

STANFORD STORY LINES: The Cardinal is 4-3 at home in conference play and 10-4 at home overall this season. Stanford is trying to avoid its first three-game losing streak at home since 2010. ...Chasson Randle is averaging 17.7 points in three career games against the Buffs. ...Josh Huestis and Dwight Powell are the nation's second best rebounding pair (18.1 rpg) behind Colorado State's Colton Iverson and Pierce Horning (19.2 rpg). ...Stanford is leading the Pac-12 in 3-point shooting in league games only averaging 40 percent from behind the arc.

KEY STAT: Stanford is last in the Pac-12 in field goal percentage making only 41 percent of its shots.

COACHES: Boyle is 66-34 in his third season at CU. Johnny Dawkins is 91-69 in his fifth season at Stanford.

PROBABLE STARTERS: Colorado -- F Andre Roberson, 6-7, So., 10.3 ppg, 11.8 rpg; F Xavier Johnson, 6-6, Fr., 8.1 ppg, 4.6 rpg; G Spencer Dinwiddie, 6-6, So., 15.3 ppg, 3.0 apg; G Askia Booker, 6-1, So., 13.4 ppg, 2.3 apg; G Sabatino Chen, 6-4, Sr., 4.6 ppg, 2.2 rpg. Stanford -- G Chasson Randle, 6-1, So., 13.7 ppg, 3.0 rpg; G Aaron Bright, 5-11, Jr., 8.7 ppg, 3.3 apg; F Andy Brown, 6-7, Sr., 6.1 ppg, 2.7 rpg; F Josh Huestis, 6-7, Jr., 10.7 ppg, 9.6 rpg; F Dwight Powell, 6-10, Jr., 15.4 ppg, 8.3 rpg.

SERIES: Stanford leads 9-4. CU snapped a five-game losing streak in the series with a 75-54 win in Boulder on Jan. 24.

UP NEXT: The Buffs remain in the Bay Area for a game at California (3 p.m. Saturday).

FEBRUARY 26, 2013, 12:55 PM

Arizona coach Sean Miller agrees: Colorado's Roberson is nation's top defender

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

Speaking Tuesday during the weekly Pac-12 men's basketball teleconference, Arizona's Sean Miller agreed with what Colorado coach Tad Boyle has been saying for weeks: Buffs 6-foot-7 junior Andre Roberson is not only the best defensive player in the conference, he's the best in the country.

"The best defensive player in our conference, and I think the best defensive player in the country, is Andre Roberson," Miller said. "I know going into our game he was leading the nation in defensive rebounding. I know if someone like (7-footer) Jeff Withey of Kansas was doing that ... but it's remarkable now agile (Roberson) is. He's guarding players away from the basket, yet for him to be that prolific as a defensive rebounder, it doesn't happen very often.

"I know guarding really good players, shutting them down, he may be the most versatile player I've ever seen. He can guard somebody with the dribble, he can guard a longer player, a more physical player, shooters. He reminds me of a Dennis Rodman type of player, how he can impact a game without really scoring.

"He's blocked some shots against us that I don't know if anyone else could have blocked them. He's hands down the best defender in our conference and I think he's one of the elite defenders in college basketball."

ARTICLE PRINTED FROM THE FIELD HOUSE

<http://blogs.denverpost.com/colleges/2013/02/26/arizona-coach-sean-miller-agrees-colorados-roberon-is-nations-top-defender/26781/>

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