



COLORADO BUFFALOES

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Andre Roberson (21) leads CU in rebounding, steals and blocked shots.

Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



Brooks: Roberson, Buffs Can't Feel Too Good Too Soon

Release: 01/26/2013 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER - After one of those rare occasions when he saw his Colorado basketball team turn in a complete game, Tad Boyle was prepared only to savor the moment - not the rounding of any corners.

On Friday, starting with Andre Roberson's bravo board work, there were plenty of moments to savor from the previous night's 75-54 rout of Stanford. The Buffaloes delighted their coach with a full 40-minute win in which they exhibited the rebounding - 'Dre' collected 20 of CU's 48 - and defense that Boyle wants nightly. There also was overall toughness against a physical opponent, an element that's been lacking.

But as for that game offering a sign that poorer past efforts won't be repeated, Boyle won't go there. Asked how many more wins it would take to persuade him to say the Buffs had turned a corner, he laughed and answered "(win) 11 more games . . . I don't know the answer to that. I feel like defensively we've got three great outings in a row. But UCLA shot 52 percent on us (in a 78-75 CU loss), so doesn't mean I'm going to stop worrying about it."

Still, with California visiting the Coors Events Center on Sunday (1:30 p.m., FSN; KOA AM 850), the Buffs appear to be evolving into the type of outfit Boyle wants. In their last three games - two of them 'W's' - they have

BUFFALO EXTRAS



MBB Notes vs. Cal

outrebounded all three opponents and kept each under 40 percent shooting from the field.

That's Boyle's recipe for winning. Couple it with the intensity the Buffs showed against the Cardinal, keep that tough edge intact, and they might be onto something as February approaches.

"That's the challenge," Boyle said. "We talked about putting a 40-minute game together - that's hard enough. Once you've done that, you've got to put a season together. Maybe I'm getting greedy, but that's got to be our challenge, that we play with that edge, that emotion and passion every night.

"Sometime you're going to play with it and the other team's going to play with it . . . that's when you get into college basketball games that are pretty darn fun to watch, when you're going toe-to-toe. You might not win all those games, but this place will be packed like it was because they know they're going to get a show every time they come to see us play."

Thursday night's crowd of 11,212 - the fourth-largest in CEC history - was loud and appreciative. Roberson's 20 rebounds matched a personal best. He set an early example for teammates with his relentless work. "I expect that from Andre every game," freshman forward Xavier Johnson said. "He's a great rebounder and a great player. I'm used to that."

But for the first time in his career, Roberson, a 6-7 junior, ranks first nationally in rebounding at 11.9 a game. Getting to the top spot, he said, was "definitely a personal goal from beginning. I just have to keep doing what I am for this team - defense and rebounding. I want to keep growing from there."

Each year, Boyle said Roberson "gets a little smarter, more experienced, a little craftier. But what makes him a great rebounder, I wish I could say I could coach. If I could, we'd have 10 of 'em. He's pretty special."

At the same time, Roberson is a curious study that runs contrary to rebounding fundamentals. Just imagine what he might do if he boxed out? Most of his board work is accomplished through an instinctive pursuit of the ball and his superb athleticism.

"Andre is not a great box-out guy," admitted Boyle, who assigned Roberson defensively to Stanford's 6-10 Dwight Powell rather than 6-7 Josh Huestis. "We afraid he couldn't box Huestis out. Josh Scott (6-10) would and could . . . it's one of those coaching clinic conversations: would you rather have a guy who can box out every time or who never boxes out and just goes and gets the rebound? (Roberson) is the first guy I ever coached who I said, 'Don't box out, just go get the rebound.'"

That's what Roberson does, and an added benefit is that his passion for scouring the glass has crept into his defense. For the third consecutive season, he's also leading the Buffs in steals (39), blocked shots (28) and is averaging 10.6 points. Those cumulative numbers should make him NBA worthy, but when is the question for the 16 NBA scouts expected to attend Sunday's game.

Roberson, said Boyle, has become a much better post defender, mainly because he has "great feet, a great mind and can anticipate well. He gets in passing lanes and gets to balls and rebounds. He just went and got the first three or four rebounds against Stanford. From the opening tip he was dialed in."

Roberson is aware of his leadership value to the Buffs and how his early play on Thursday night set emotional and physical tones that flowed for the next 40 minutes. "I feel like I play a big part in that," he said. "There's a couple of guys on this team who play a part in the energy thing, too. But (Thursday) night, I told the guys to get after it. (Stanford) was the only team that beat us here in conference. It wasn't a great feeling. I told the guys to get after it and it started with me, being a leader on the team. I just kept it rolling."

Unlike Stanford with its knock-around style, said Boyle, Cal (11-7, 3-3) relies on finesse, talent and skill. "They won't bang you; their 'biggs' are tall and skinny." But, he added, guards Allen Crabbe (19.9 ppg) and Justin Cobb (14.3 ppg) are fast and potent scorers.

At 3-4 in the Pac-12 (13-6 overall), CU is within a game of reaching .500 and moving into fourth place in the conference standings. There is a three-team log jam at third - Arizona, Arizona State and Washington are at 4-2 - and with a win Sunday the Buffs would have overtaken the two teams ahead of them in fourth.

But like his coach, Roberson isn't ready to say the Buffs have turned any corners. Still, he likes what he's seen over the past three games. "I don't know how many games it would take, but it starts in practice," he said. "It's just the carryover from practices. We have good practices. (Thursday) I feel like it finally carried over into the game, as far as the offense moving the ball and playing great defense as a team. If we do that every team, nobody can beat us. It's all up to us.

"We're unstoppable when everybody gets on the same page and is clicking . . . we showed a little bit of that in Charleston, then had a little slump. But we're picking it back up now."

It's happening at the right time, and if it continues - if that corner is indeed turned - February and March could be special.

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SHOW MENU



Men's basketball: CU Buffs' Xavier Johnson maturing quickly on court

By Ryan Thorburn *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Tad Boyle didn't notice a "light bulb" moment for Xavier Johnson.

The talented 6-6 freshman forward from Los Angeles says his game hasn't changed.

But Andre Roberson believes Johnson had an awakening after Colorado's disappointing 78-75 loss to UCLA on Jan. 12.

"I definitely would say after the UCLA game, (Johnson) came and hooked it up in practice and got after it," Roberson said. "He definitely picked it up there, and I've seen a lot more progress, especially getting the offense a lot more and moving without the ball."

Since CU's only home defeat of the season, Johnson has averaged 11.3 points, 3.7 rebounds and led the Buffs in highlight dunks.

During Thursday's 75-54 victory over Stanford, Johnson had four poster-worthy slams and a 3-pointer in 24 electrifying minutes.

"I just think it's the fact that I'm getting more used to it," Johnson said of playing at a Pac-12 level. "The more experience you have playing collegiate basketball, the better you get. That's where I'm at right now."

Boyle said it took some time for Johnson, a star at powerhouse Mater Dei (Santa Ana, Calif.) High School with fellow CU freshman Eli Stalzer, to adjust to some of the mental challenges college athletes face.

"I think he has really matured in a sense," Boyle said. "You get that when you get really physically talented freshmen. Because he has been able to get by with his athleticism and his strength. In high school he could bully anyone he wanted to bully on a basketball court. Now he has to think a little bit and he has made some great strides."

The Buffs (13-6, 3-4) have made some significant strides on the defensive end since the UCLA game and are seeking their third consecutive victory on Sunday against Cal at the Coors Events Center (1:30 p.m., Root Sports).

Boyle is hoping his team will play with the same energy and intensity it showed while out-rebounding the Cardinal 48-30 and holding the visitors to 31.3 percent from the field.

"That's the challenge. We've talked about trying to put a 40-minute game together, that's hard enough. Now once you've done that you've got to put a season together," Boyle said. "Maybe I'm getting greedy there. That's got to be the challenge: We play with that edge, that emotion, that passion every night."

"Sometimes you're going to play with it and the other team is going to play with it. That's when you get into college basketball games that are pretty darn fun to watch."

Roberson was spectacular against Stanford, matching his career high with 20 rebounds. The Pac-12's reigning rebounding champion currently leads the nation (11.9 rpg) in that category.

"I was just getting tired of the fact that the coaches were getting on us about last year and how Stanford just bullied us and outplayed us and beat us on the boards," Roberson said. "I just took the initiative to get after them."

The Bears (11-7, 3-3) feature the conference's leading scorer, 6-6 junior guard Allen Crabbe (19.9 ppg), who will be defended by both Spencer Dinwiddie (6-6) and Roberson. Crabbe and backcourt mate Justin Cobbs are the highest scoring 1-2 punch in the Pac-12, combining for an average of 34.2 points.

Cal began the road trip with a 62-57 win at Utah. Crabbe made four 3-pointers and finished with 23 points.

"I think we really, really have been doing some soul-searching and we were ready to get back on track," Bears guard Brandon Smith, who returned after a six-game absence from a concussion, told the Oakland Tribune. "I'm hoping that is the brand of basketball we continue to play through the rest of conference because we're capable of bringing that every night."

The CU-Cal series is tied 10-10. The Buffs lost in Berkeley last season before beating the Bears in Boulder and in the semifinals of the Pac-12 Tournament.

Cal's other two conference wins this season were against USC and Washington State with losses to UCLA, Washington and Stanford.

CU returned to the form it showed in winning the Charleston Classic and also beating Colorado State early on the season with all five starters scoring in double figures against Stanford.

"I feel like we're unstoppable when everybody gets on the same page and is clicking," Roberson said. "Playing as a team, that's what coach Boyle has been wanting since the beginning. We showed a little bit of that in Charleston, we had a little slump, and we're picking it back up now."

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CU men's hoops preview

SUNDAY: The Colorado Buffaloes (13-6, 3-4) host the Cal Bears (11-7, 3-3) at 1:30 p.m. at the Coors Events Center.

BROADCAST: Television on Root Sports with Steve Physioc (play-by-play) and Corey Williams (analyst). Radio on KOA (850 AM) with Mark Johnson (play-by-play) and Chad Brown (color). Follow on Twitter: [@RyanThorburn](#).

CU STORY LINES: The Buffs are coming off an impressive 75-54 victory over Stanford on Thursday in front of the fourth-largest crowd (11,212) in Coors Events Center history. ... Andre Roberson matched his career high with 20 rebounds as CU out-rebounded the Cardinal 48-30. The 6-7 junior forward leads the nation in rebounding (11.9 rpg). ... All five starters scored in double figures against Stanford, led by Askia Booker's 13 points on 6-for-9 shooting. ... Freshman wing Xavier Johnson has scored 25 points on 10-for-15 shooting during the Buffs' two-game win streak. ... CU has only made 17 3-pointers over the last six games.

CAL STORY LINES: The Bears are coming off a 62-57 road win at Utah on Thursday. ... Allen Crabbe, the Pac-12's leading scorer at 19.9 points per game, sparked Cal's offense with 23 points, including four 3-

pointers. Spencer Dinwiddie and Roberson will try to slow down the dynamic shooting guard. ... Crabbe and Justin Cobbs are the highest scoring 1-2 punch in the Pac-12, combining for an average of 34.2 points. ... Mike Montgomery, who was 393-167 during 18 seasons as the head coach at Stanford, is seeking his 100th win at Cal Sunday.

KEY STAT: CU, which is 40-5 at the Coors Events Center under Tad Boyle, drew a sellout crowd of 11,212 for Stanford. CU is second in the Pac-12 in attendance (10,307) behind Arizona (13,920) this season.

COACHES: Boyle is 61-31 in his third season at CU. Mike Montgomery is 99-54 in his fifth season at Cal.

PROBABLE STARTERS: Colorado -- F Andre Roberson, 6-7, Jr., 10.6 ppg, 11.9 rpg; F Josh Scott, 6-10, Fr., 12.9 ppg, 5.7 rpg; G Spencer Dinwiddie, 6-6, So., 14.4 ppg, 2.6 apg; G Askia Booker, 6-1, So., 14.1 ppg, 2.5 apg; G Sabatino Chen, 6-4, Sr., 4.6 ppg, 2.4 rpg. Cal -- F Richard Solomon, 6-10, Jr., 8.1 ppg, 6.4 rpg; F David Kravish, 6-9, So., 7.8 ppg, 7.4 rpg; G Allen Crabbe, 6-6, Jr., 19.9 ppg, 5.5 rpg; G Justin Cobbs, 6-3, Jr., 14.3 ppg, 4.1 apg; G Tyrone Wallace, 6-4, Fr., 6.8 ppg, 4.9 rpg.

SERIES: Tied 10-10. The Buffs defeated Cal 70-59 in the Pac-12 Tournament semifinals last season and have won seven of the eight meetings in Boulder.

UP NEXT: The Buffs play Utah next Saturday at the Huntsman Center (12:30 p.m., Root Sports).

College hoops journal: Conference play more physical

By Tom Kensler The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

There was a whole lot of banging going on Thursday night during Colorado's 75-54 win over the Stanford men's team in Boulder, and not just in the paint.

Perimeter play was physical, as well. None of that surprised CU coach Tad Boyle. The conference schedule, after all, is in full swing.

"It was a blood bath out there," Boyle said afterward.

Styles of play may differ among conferences, but officials from coast to coast tend to let more things go and not be as eager to blow the whistle once league action begins. Boyle pointed out that four illegal screens were called against his team in the season-opening home win over Wofford and none since then. "One of the most important things our players have to learn is how to adjust to the officiating, how the game is being called," he said.

Boyle expects another physical game Sunday afternoon in the Coors Events Center when the Buffaloes (13-6, 3-4 Pac-12) host California (11-7, 3-3) at 1:30 p.m. The Golden Bears play a more finesse brand of basketball than Stanford, and their bigs aren't as thick. But Cal ranks only behind Oregon in Pac-12 offensive rebounding, an indication that the Bears do not back away from contact.

"It was physical (against Stanford), but that's what we expect," said 6-foot-7 junior forward Andre Roberson, who matched his career best with 20 rebounds.

Boyle said 6-10 freshman center Josh Scott became frustrated Thursday night on more than one occasion when he thought he was fouled and nothing was called. That reaction is not unusual for a first-year player.

"We talked about it during timeouts: 'Guys. Don't be looking for the whistle. Look to put the ball in the basket,'" Boyle said. "Sometimes, Josh looks for the whistle a little bit. The physicality (at this level) is something that's different from what he faced growing up."

Playing in games with fewer whistles during conference play can have long-term benefits. NCAA Tournament games tend to be physical.

"There's no question about that," Boyle said. "And the same goes for state high school tournaments. They're more physical, for whatever reason."

Numero uno. After hauling in 20 boards against Stanford, Roberson topped Division I in rebounding for the first time in his career. He enters Sunday's game averaging 11.9 rebounds per game.

Rebounding has always come naturally to Roberson. But the San Antonio native said he continues to improve in that area because he is stronger and is able to play a more physical style than in past years. Roberson weighed 184 pounds when he arrived at Colorado. He's now at 205 pounds.

"Also, it's the experience and getting more of a feel at the college level for where the ball goes, and how hard it

comes off the rim," he said.

Boyle shakes his head when talking about Roberson's rebounding prowess because the forward rarely blocks out.

"Andre is the first player I've ever had where I say, 'Don't worry about blocking out, just go get the rebound,' " Boyle said with a grin.

Crabbe on menu. Boyle has called Roberson the best defensive player in the Pac-12 and said Roberson can guard every position on the floor. Roberson likely will be asked to help out Sunday on one of the Pac-12's top guards. Cal junior Allen Crabbe (6-6) entered the weekend as the Pac-12's scoring leader, averaging 19.9 points. Buffs sophomore guard Spencer Dinwiddie (6-6) likely will share time with Roberson against Crabbe, Boyle said.

The Bears' backcourt also features junior guard Justin Cobbs, who entered the weekend ranking 13th (14.3 average) among the league's scorers. "We've got a couple of ideas on how to guard those guys," Boyle said.

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Trending nationally

Kentucky a middling seed? It could happen. The Wildcats' five losses were to good teams, but they don't have any headline-grabbing wins. SEC showdowns vs. Florida (Feb. 12 and March 9) will be huge.

Power conferences beware. Entering the weekend, teams outside the "big six" conferences comprised 14 of the top 40 in RPI, including six of the top 18 with New Mexico (6), Gonzaga (8), Butler (12), UNLV (14), Wichita State (16) and, yes, Colorado State (18).

No "wow" factor. The midseason player of the year probably is Duke forward Mason Plumlee, a nice player but hardly a spectacular player.

Game of the week

Wyoming at CSU, 2:30 p.m. Saturday

Both must continue to win to impress the NCAA Tournament selection committee. This, the first of two Border War battles, will speak volumes about both teams regardless of the outcome. With 6-foot-8 Larry Nance Jr. and 6-7, 230-pound Leonard Washington, Wyoming's frontcourt can negate CSU's usual rebounding advantage. But the Rams have a decided edge in perimeter shooting.

The Post's weekly rankings

Pac-12

1. Oregon
2. UCLA 3. Arizona
4. Arizona State
5. Washington

Mountain West

1. New Mexico
2. UNLV
3. San Diego State
4. Colorado State
5. Boise State

Area connection

Kaileb Rodriguez, 6-foot-9 freshman forward, California. Don't expect the former ThunderRidge star to get on the court during Sunday's Pac-12 game against Colorado in Boulder. Described as a late bloomer while being recruited, Rodriguez is redshirting this season. He is listed at 225 pounds after playing at no more than 200 pounds in high school. Rodriguez became the first of Cal's freshman class to commit to the Bears when he extended an oral commitment to coach Mike Montgomery on April 16, 2011, before Rodriguez's senior season at ThunderRidge.

Top seeds as we see it

NO. 1

Duke

Kansas

Syracuse

Indiana

NO. 2

Michigan

Florida

Louisville

Arizona

NO. 3

N.C. State

Butler

Gonzaga

Oregon

NO. 4

Michigan State

New Mexico

Wichita State

Miami