



COLORADO BUFFALOES

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Xavier Johnson scored 18 points and grabbed 12 rebounds against Cal

Photo Courtesy: Joel Broida



Brooks: Buffs Beat Bears, Reach .500 In Pac-12

Release: 01/27/2013 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER - It was a steep climb out and the trail only gets steeper, but the Colorado Buffaloes finally surfaced on Sunday at the Coors Events Center. Opening with another stellar defensive performance then staying above ground with a season-best effort from the free throw line, CU beat California 81-71 to even its Pac-12 Conference record at 4-4.

The Buffs began conference play 1-4, and in that nowhere-to-go-but-up context, reaching .500 "is really a positive sign," said CU coach Tad Boyle. "But when we were 1-4, we wanted to get to 2-4 . . . we worried about the next game. But we're not happy being 4-4; we have to win the next game and keep scratching and clawing and move our way up."

Did we mention the trail only gets steeper?

Three consecutive road games await, beginning Saturday at Utah, followed by trips to first-place Oregon (Thursday, Feb. 7) and struggling Oregon State (Sunday, Feb. 10). The Buffs don't return to the CEC until Feb.

BUFFALO EXTRAS



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Box Score



Quotes



Game Notes

14, when Arizona visits.

But with January waning, CU appears to be shaping up, even though at times Sunday it was hard to tell. Said Boyle: "The game was one of those deals where our shooting (59.6 percent) overcame a lot of other ills and some deficiencies we know we have to get better at."

Topping his list were the 20 CU turnovers that led to 22 Cal points. There also were the Bears' 53 second-half points - 33 of them attributable to guards Allen Crabbe and Justin Cobbs, who finally got untracked after nearly silent first halves and helped whittle an 18-point Buffs lead to eight in the final minute.

"We let them get closer than we should have," Boyle said.

But in the final 60 seconds, Spencer Dinwiddie hit eight consecutive free throws to keep the Buffs afloat. For the afternoon, he hit 9-of-10, leading CU to its best foul-shooting performance of the season - 18-of-22 (81.8 percent).

Finishing with 16 points, Dinwiddie was one of four CU players in double figures. Askia Booker scored 20, Xavier Johnson added 18 and Andre Roberson 15. Johnson, a 6-6 freshman, also collected 12 rebounds for his first career double.

Roberson played only 2 first-half minutes due to foul problems and was limited to five rebounds after his 20-board performance against Stanford on Thursday. He led the nation in rebounding (11.9) entering the game.

But despite his first-half foul problems and those of Josh Scott, who missed the half's last 7:53 after picking up his second foul, the Buffs prospered before intermission. That was mainly due to Johnson, who stepped up Roberson's absence and got 10 of his points and eight of his rebounds before the break.

"You could make a legitimate argument that he was the game's offensive MVP," Boyle said. "He was terrific . . . he's really grown up."

When Roberson went to the bench, Johnson said he "felt like I needed to help in rebounding . . . Andre is a big part (of that)."

Cal (11-8, 3-4) was led by Cobbs with 22 points - 16 in the second half, and Crabbe added 21 - 17 of those in the second half. But in combining for their 43 points, they needed almost that many shots between them - and Boyle said he could live with that: "They made some tough shots . . . if they're going to get 43 points you want them to take 41 shots to get them."

CU's lock-down defense in the first half - Cal was limited to 20.6 percent from the field - and the Buffs' overall strong board work - a 35-30 rebound advantage - created enough of a cushion before Cobbs and Crabbe began finding their groove in the final 20 minutes.

The Buffs led 34-18 at halftime and shot 50 percent from the field (13-for-26). But that percentage at times belied their offensive efficiency. After taking a nine-point lead (14-5) on consecutive treys by Booker, CU went nearly 7 minutes without scoring again.

That drought wasn't fatal, though, because the Buffs defense nearly had the Bears clamped shut. Cal's 18 first-half points were its lowest this season. But with Crabbe and Cobbs heating up, the Bears finished the game at 41.7 percent from the field - slightly above Boyle's defensive goal.

"I thought we got tired," he said. "'XJ' was exhausted; he's not used to playing 18 minutes in the first half. But they were tired, too . . . then when Cobbs and Crabbe started making shots, it's amazing how that energizes you."

Booker (13) and Johnson (10) were CU's only two players in double figures in the first half, while Cal had no one totaling more than six points. Crabbe (19.6 ppg) and Cobbs (14.3 ppg) were held to four and six points, respectively.

Roberson and Scott were back in the Buffs lineup to open the second half, but their return didn't prevent the

Bears from a 7-0 start to pull Cal to 34-25 in the first 1:34. Crabbe scored five of those seven points, prompting a timeout from Boyle.

On that possession, the Buffs got a layup from Johnson, then one of two free throws by Roberson to restore their double-digit lead (37-27). Three minutes later, Booker's fourth trey of the game pushed CU ahead by 14 (46-32), and if Cal felt this one slipping away, that feeling was justified.

By the 9:05 mark, the Buffs had gone up 58-40 - matching their big lead of the afternoon - on a layup by Johnson. But with Crabbe hitting back-to-back treys, the Bears crept to within 65-54 with 4:06 to play.

Then it was Cobbs' turn. Scoring nine consecutive points, he pulled the Bears to within nine (73-64) in the final 1:05. A trey by Tyrone Wallace got them to 75-67, but Dinwiddie was perfect on eight free throw attempts in the last minute to keep the Buffs safe.

Cal's hot second-half shooting (60.5 percent) and closing to within eight points late, said Dinwiddie, were the result of "mental lapses. As much as you preach playing the possession, I think all of us as a team look at the scoreboard and say, 'Look, we're up 12, then we hit a three and we're up 15.'

"When that starts to roll downhill a little bit and you're only up eight, then you have to tighten the screws a little bit. Sometimes you can't."

Nonetheless, the win put CU (14-6 overall) in fifth place in the Pac-12, trailing Washington (4-3), the two Arizona schools (5-2), UCLA (6-2) and Oregon (7-0). Dinwiddie called the win "very important. To say you don't look at the standings would be a lie. You don't focus on them, but you look at them.

"We knew that people on top of us were playing each other . . . these (Stanford and Cal) are two very big wins. We're going to look to go to Utah and just continue to win the next game."

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SHOW MENU





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Xavier Johnson was a force for the Buffs on Sunday.

Photo Courtesy: Joel Broida



'XJ' Leaves His Mark On Cal With First Double-Double

Release: 01/27/2013 Courtesy: Caryn Maconi, CUBuffs.com

BOULDER - Colorado freshman Xavier Johnson continues to mature and come into his own on the basketball court - and it was never more evident than in the Buffaloes' 81-71 Pac-12 Conference win against California on Sunday.

The 6-6 guard from Los Angeles recorded his first career double-double, scoring a career-high 18 points and grabbing a game-best 12 rebounds. No other CU player collected more than five boards on the night.

"I can't say enough about Xavier Johnson," CU coach Tad Boyle said. "I think you can make a legitimate argument that he was the MVP of today's game offensively."

Johnson had recorded 10 points by intermission, helping the Buffs to a 34-18 halftime lead.

Boyle said Johnson showed more maturity than ever, but that his level of play has been rising throughout the conference season.

"He played aggressive, he took good shots, and when he drives it and takes it to the rim, he's pretty hard to

BUFFALO EXTRAS



Watch:

Players Postgame
01/28/2013

handle down there," Boyle said. "Xavier was terrific for a freshman. He's really grown up these past three weeks. Ever since we've started conference play, he's stepped his game up."

Johnson's play, however, while consistently strong against Cal, was far better than his norm. Before Sunday, Johnson had averaged 9.6 points and just 3.6 rebounds per game, shooting 44.7 percent from the field. Sunday, Johnson shot 70 percent from the field (7-for-10) and hit all four of his free throw attempts.

While he did record five turnovers, that number was not an unusual one for the Buffs on Sunday. The Golden Bears forced 20 Buffs turnovers and recorded 16 steals.

Sophomore point guard Askia Booker, however, said that the team's decent scoring helped outweigh some of that sloppiness, especially in the second half.

"A little lackadaisical," Booker said of the team's second-half play. "We didn't get stops when we needed them. But we scored the ball well and we shot almost 60 percent, so I mean, sometimes that's going to make up for our defense."

Johnson and Booker scored a combined 36 points, 44.4 percent of the Buffs' total.

Scoring well is not always enough, though, and Booker said his team won't be satisfied with all aspects of Sunday's game.

"Our philosophy is defense and rebounding, so we have to get better at that," Booker said.

According to that philosophy, Johnson's dozen rebounds against the Golden Bears is an example worth following. His teammates call him the "X-Factor" - and he's living up to that nickname more fully with every game.

SHOW MENU



Ringo: 10 goals for Boyle's CU Buffs

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

There are 10 games left in the regular season for the Colorado men's basketball team. This is the time of year when NCAA tournament resumes are solidified. It's also when some are proven unworthy.

It can still go in either direction for these Buffaloes.

"It's put up or shut up time," as coach Tad Boyle said Sunday.

Things are trending positively right now following CU's third consecutive win Sunday afternoon 81-71 against Cal in the Coors Events Center. But the picture could look much different just two weeks from now because the next three games are on the road where the Buffs are 2-5 this season.

Hundreds of teams over the years have felt pretty good about themselves at this stage of the season only to fall short of March Madness. The Buffs are 14-6 and definitely can't afford many more losses.

Here are 10 goals for the Buffs to achieve by the time the final horn sounds on their season. If they achieve even most of them, there should be plenty of smiling faces in the Coors Events Center in the second half of March.

Beat Arizona -- This one is more about karma than anything. The Buffs and their fans justifiably feel like they beat the Wildcats Jan. 3, in Tucson but Sabatino Chen's game-winner was wiped away after officials used replay to change their initial call of a made 3-pointer at the buzzer. CU lost in overtime.

The Wildcats visit Boulder on Valentine's Day. It should be a wild atmosphere and a victory over a top-10 team, assuming Arizona is still ranked that high, would be big for the Buffs.

Winning mindset on the road -- This is a tough assignment for experienced teams and the Buffs have plenty of young faces. But that shouldn't be an excuse and Boyle certainly won't settle for it. The only way this program ever becomes a perennial top-25 team competing for the Pac-12 championship regularly is by winning more often on the road.

Free throw shooting -- CU went into Sunday's game ranked 10th in the Pac-12 in free throw shooting at 66 percent. Poor free throw shooting has been a significant part of the reason the Buffs have lost at least three times this season. They can't afford to lose any more games at the foul line.

In fact, maybe the goal here should be proving they could beat a good team by making free throws in the clutch. They took a step in that direction Sunday shooting 82 percent from the line and Spencer Dinwiddie making nine of 10 free throws.

Improving freshmen -- Xavier Johnson and Josh Scott have been the stars of the freshman class so far, but all six have made significant contributions in practices or games. Johnson and Scott are looking like future cornerstones of the program just as Dinwiddie and Askia Booker did a year ago.

But this is also the time of year when freshman fade. There is still a lot of basketball to be played and Boyle

probably gave his team the next two days off with that in mind.

Rebounding title -- Andre Roberson said in the preseason he would like to lead the nation in rebounding. He went into Sunday's game leading the nation for the first time in his career, but he spent most of the first half on the bench in foul trouble and finished with just five.

It would be one of the greatest individual achievements in the program's history if he can do it. It would be on par with a CU linebacker winning the Butkus Award or defensive back winning the Thorpe Award.

Fourth or better -- The Buffs won the conference tournament a year ago by winning four games in four days. It's unlikely this team could repeat that feat because of limited contributions from the bench and the overall improvement of the league.

The Buffs would make it much easier on themselves to win a second straight tournament by finishing the regular season strong as one of the top four teams in the league, earning a bye in Pac-12 bracket. They clawed back to 4-4 in the league Sunday after a 1-4 start.

Semifinals or bust -- Depending on how they finish the regular season, the Buffs could need to reach the semifinals of the Pac-12 tournament to shore up their NCAA tournament resume. But let's be honest, falling short of the final four in the Pac-12 would be a disappointment considering the Buffs have shown they can play with anyone in the conference. Bowing out any earlier just wouldn't be the right way to follow up last season's title run.

Earn a third straight postseason appearance -- CU has never gone to the postseason in three consecutive seasons and nothing less is acceptable at this point. The Buffs are just a few wins away from being deserving of an NIT invite, but it would be a disappointment to fall short of another NCAA tournament.

Win more than 24 games -- This will be a challenge. Boyle has led the Buffs to back-to-back 24-win seasons. It would be nice to see this season's team exceed all expectations by beating the previous two editions, which featured some great senior leadership and exceptional individual players.

CU would need 11 more victories to make it happen. If the Buffs can earn six wins in the final 10 regular-season games, three in the conference tournament and two in the NCAA tournament they could get there.

That would also get the Buffs to the Sweet 16, which would make this the best basketball season in the modern era in Boulder -- bar none.

Last but not least -- Sabatino Chen is one of the hardest working players on the roster and always a team-first guy. It would be nice to see him finish his CU career being known for more than the guy who had his game-winning shot at Arizona wiped away by a bad call from officials.

Follow Kyle on Twitter @KyleRingo

Men's basketball: CU Buffs close out Cal, 81-71

By Ryan Thorburn *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

Posted:

Buffzone.com

The glass (cleaner) was only half full this time.

Andre Roberson, the nation's leading rebounder, was stuck on the bench in early foul trouble for 17 minutes and 53 seconds of the first half.

The 6-7 junior forward finished with an efficient 15 points and five rebounds anyway to help Colorado hang on for an 81-71 victory over Cal on Sunday at the Coors Events Center.

Josh Scott and Spencer Dinwiddie were also whistled for two fouls and plopped down next to Roberson before the intermission.

CU still built an 18-point lead without three of its key cogs and never trailed over the final 39:45.

"I thought that was really a positive thing for our team," head coach Tad Boyle said of leaning on some of the supporting cast in a big game. "It speaks to our bench and the progress that they have made over the last couple of weeks."

Roberson, who sparked a key 7-0 run with an artistic reverse layup high off the glass, had plenty of help as the Buffs cruised to their third consecutive victory.

Askia Booker finished with 20 points on 8-for-12 shooting, Xavier Johnson scored a career-high 18 points and Dinwiddie (16 points) closed out the visitors by making eight free throws in the final minute.

"Very important," Dinwiddie said of CU's home sweep of the Bay Area teams. "To say you don't look at the standings would be a lie. You don't focus on them, but you look at them."

The Buffs were looking up at most of their peers after a 1-4 start to conference play. The team is now sixth in the standings with an attainable road win available Saturday at Utah.

"The fact that we are .500, given the fact that we were 1-4, is a really positive sign," Boyle said. "But we're not happy being 4-4. We have to win the next game and keep scratching and clawing and move our way up."

A drive by Johnson, which was assisted brilliantly by Sabatino Chen, gave CU a 58-40 cushion with just more than nine minutes remaining.

The 6-6 freshman finished 7-for-10 from the field, 4-for-4 from the free throw line and collected 12 rebounds with Roberson limited to 22 minutes of court time.

"Andre is a big part of our rebounding. I felt like I needed to help him in rebounding while he was on the bench," said Johnson, who was responsible for five of CU's 20 turnovers. "We need to be more careful with the ball. We can't just turn the ball over like that."

Allen Crabbe sparked the listless visitors with a 3-pointer and a layup during a 7-0 spurt to start the second half after going 1-for-7 from the field during the first 20 minutes. The Pac-12's leading scorer splashed two

consecutive 3-pointers to slice the deficit to 65-54 with 4:06 left.

Justin Cobbs scored 12 points in the last 3:29 and the Bears clawed to within eight points, but Dinwiddie kept the game from really getting interesting by knocking down his foul shots.

Cobbs (22 points) and Crabbe (21), the conference's best one-two scoring punch, were a combined 18-for-41 from the field.

"Those guys are tremendous athletes, they can shoot from anywhere on the floor and create their own shots," Booker said. "We have to contest their shots the best we can. They're going to knock down difficult shots and if they make them, they make them. When they do, we have to come down and score and be really efficient on offense, which I feel we were."

The Buffs shot a blistering 59.6 percent from the field and appeared to be in control at halftime with a 34-18 lead.

Even with CU's best defensive player watching from the bench, Cal made just 7 of 34 (20.6 percent) field goals before the intermission.

Roberson, coming off a 20-rebound performance in the 75-54 victory on Thursday against Stanford, was whistled for two quick fouls on one possession and took a seat.

The Buffs seized a 14-5 lead after back-to-back 3-pointers by Booker.

Neither team scored a point for 4:36 (15 possessions), and then Johnson started to heat up, scoring eight points to help CU extend its cushion to 13 points.

Shane Harris-Tunks chipped in with a field goal and took a charge as the Buffs led 30-15.

Booker (13 points) and Johnson (10) were both in double figures at the intermission while Cobbs paced the visitors with six points on 3-for-10 shooting.

CU will hit the road for its next three games starting in Salt Lake City against the Utes.

Follow Ryan on Twitter: @RyanThorburn

Colorado 81, California 71

CALIFORNIA

FG FT Reb

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

Solomon 28 2-7 0-0 1-4 0 2 5

Kravish 19 3-7 0-0 0-1 0 3 6

Cobbs 36 10-20 1-1 1-1 6 4 22

Wallace 32 2-6 2-5 3-5 3 5 7

Crabbe 39 8-21 2-2 1-5 2 2 21

Smith 14 1-2 0-0 0-0 1 1 2

Bak 3 0-1 0-0 0-2 0 0 0

Powers 3 0-3 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Thurman 26 4-5 0-0 3-7 0 0 8

Totals 200 30-72 5-8 13-30 12 17 71

Percentages: FG .417, FT .625.

3-Point Goals: 6-18, .333 (Crabbe 3-9, Solomon 1-1, Wallace 1-3, Cobbs 1-3, Powers 0-2).

Team Rebounds: 5.

Blocked Shots: 0.

Turnovers: 10 (Smith 5, Wallace, Crabbe, Solomon, Cobbs, Thurman).

Steals: 16 (Crabbe 4, Wallace 3, Smith 3, Cobbs 2, Solomon 2, Thurman, Kravish).

Technical Fouls: None.

COLORADO

FG FT Reb

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

Jhnsn 30 7-10 4-4 1-12 0 3 18

Rbrsn 22 5-7 4-5 1-5 1 2 15

Scott 25 2-5 1-1 1-3 2 2 5

Booker 32 8-12 0-0 0-4 3 0 20

Dnwde 29 3-8 9-10 0-1 4 3 16

Talton 1 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Stalzer 10 1-1 0-0 0-1 0 0 2

H-Tnks 16 1-2 0-2 0-2 1 3 2

Chen 23 1-2 0-0 1-4 2 0 3

Adams 12 0-0 0-0 0-2 0 1 0

Mills 0 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Totals 200 28-47 18-22 5-35 13 14 81

Percentages: FG .596, FT .818.

3-Point Goals: 7-15, .467 (Booker 4-6, Roberson 1-2, Chen 1-2, Dinwiddie 1-3, Johnson 0-2).

Team Rebounds: 1.

Blocked Shots: 1 (Roberson).

Turnovers: 20 (Johnson 5, Booker 4, Roberson 3, Harris-Tunks 3, Chen 2, Stalzer, Dinwiddie, Scott).

Steals: 4 (Chen, Scott, Dinwiddie, Booker).

Technical Fouls: None.

Colorado 34 47--81

A -- 10,132.

Last season's Pac-12 Tournament MVP paying dues in NBA D-league

By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Carlton Brown turned D-League travel hell into a pleasant trip down memory lane on Sunday.

The former Colorado guard and Pac-12 Tournament most valuable player was trying to make a connection at DIA en route from Dallas to Boise, Idaho.

Brown scored eight points during the Idaho Stampede's 104-88 road win against the Texas Legends on Saturday night.

When the airline announced that Brown's flight to his new home was overbooked and asked for volunteers to take a later flight, the 6-5 guard was happy to assist.

"I took advantage of it, got a nice little RTD ride down here, and caught the game," Brown said after watching CU's 81-71 victory over Cal at the Coors Events Center.

Tad Boyle didn't know Brown was in Boulder until he walked out on the court and saw his March hero, who is currently sporting a James Harden-like beard, sitting courtside.

Brown was in the Golden State Warriors' training camp this summer where he battled Jarrett Jack, Steph Curry and Klay Thompson every day in practice.

After getting sent down to the D-League franchise in Santa Cruz, Calif., where he didn't get much playing time, Brown was traded to Idaho.

"The D-League has been up and down," Brown said. "I'm just appreciative of the opportunity regardless and trying to make the most of it."

Brown is averaging 9.7 points and 3.2 rebounds on the season, but has averaged 15.0 points over the last three games.

Another Coors 10K

The official attendance on Sunday was 10,132, which is the eighth game this season at the Coors Events Center witnessed by a crowd of at least 10,000 fans.

CU has drawn 102,897 for 10 home games (10,290 average), second in the Pac-12 behind Arizona.

The fourth-largest crowd in the venue's history (11,212) was on hand for CU's win over Stanford on Thursday.

The Buffs will be on the road for their next three games before the sold-out Feb. 14 game against Arizona.

Series update

CU leads 11-10 after its third consecutive win over Cal. The Buffs have won six of the last seven meetings

dating back to 2003 and are 8-1 against the Bears in Boulder.

Boyle and Co. visit Berkeley on March 2.

Notable

CU shot a season-best 81.8 percent (18-for-22) at the free throw line and made its final 13 attempts. ... The Buffs won despite committing 20 turnovers that led to 22 Cal points. ... Boyle improved to 62-32 at CU, including a 41-5 home record. ... CU improved to 2-0 this season wearing all-silver uniforms (also wore them against Colorado State).

Follow Ryan on Twitter: [@RyanThorburn](#)

Colorado's first-half defense enough to down Cal, Buffs back to even in Pac-12

By Tom Kensler *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — If somebody had told Colorado men's coach Tad Boyle before Sunday's 81-71 victory over California that foul trouble would keep CU forward Andre Roberson and center Josh Scott on the bench for a combined 26 minutes of the first half, Boyle might have wondered if the basketball gods were against him.

But Colorado's team defense and freshman forward Xavier Johnson came to the rescue. Buffs sophomore guard Spencer Dinwiddie limited Pac-12 scoring leader Allen Crabbe to four first-half points. And Johnson provided a much-needed spark, bouncing along the baseline for 10 points and eight rebounds in the first 20 minutes while Roberson and Scott could only sit and watch.

Colorado (14-6, 4-4 Pac-12) maintained its focus at the defensive end and somehow managed to take a 34-18 lead into halftime without its top two post players. And although one could argue that California (11-8, 3-4) outplayed the home team in the second half, that early deficit was too much for the Golden Bears to overcome.

"The fact that we did it (with key players in early foul trouble) is a huge boost to our confidence," Boyle said.

An NCAA Tournament participant last year, CU got 15 or more points from four players and became relevant again in the Pac-12 race. With a three-game winning streak, the Buffs have reached .500 in league play for the first time this season.

CU won for the ninth time in 10 home games. But California's big two of 6-foot-3 Justin Cobbs (22 points) and the 6-6 Crabbe (21) finally heated up during the final 10 minutes and no doubt kept Boyle and a Coors Events Center crowd of 10,132 holding their breath until the end.

"This was very important," said Dinwiddie, who finished with 16 points (9-for-10 on free throws) and four assists while trying to keep a hand in Crabbe's face at the other end. "To say you don't look at the standings would be a lie."

Roberson entered the game as the nation's top rebounder with an average of 11.9 boards per game. He had zero rebounds in the first half Sunday, called to the bench after picking up his second foul just 2:07 into the game. Scott joined him on the sideline for the last 7:53 of the first half after being whistled for his second foul.

The 6-6 Johnson, a former national top-100 recruit who seems to improve with each game, slashed down the lane and finished with his first college double-double: 18 points and 12 rebounds.

Both are his bests as a Buff and couldn't have come at a better time.

"You could argue that Xavier Johnson was MVP of the game," Boyle said. "When he gets it and drives to the rim, he's pretty hard to handle in there."

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