



COLORADO BUFFALOES

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Andre Roberson recorded his 12th double-double this season vs. the Wildcats

Photo Courtesy: Joel Broida



Brooks: Buffs' Late Rally Fails To Overtake Wildcats

Release: 03/14/2013 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

LAS VEGAS - Let the waiting game begin. A year ago, the Colorado Buffaloes wrung the suspense out of Selection Sunday by winning the Pac-12 Conference Tournament and earning an automatic berth in the NCAA Tournament.

This year, it's not that clear-cut although the Buffs believe their NCAA case has been stated - even in Thursday's 79-69 quarterfinal loss to No. 18 Arizona in the Pac-12 Conference Tournament.

No. 5 seed CU rallied dramatically, cutting a 14-point lead by No. 4 seed Arizona to two in the final 63 seconds. But the Wildcats held on and left the Buffs holding their collective breath for one of 37 NCAA at-large bids.

"We're one of the top 37 teams in my mind," said CU coach Tad Boyle. "But it's not for me to say."

BUFFALO EXTRAS



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Box Score



Game Notes



Quotes

But Boyle did cite his argument for the Buffs, who finished 21-11 for their third consecutive 20-win season under Boyle. Last March, after punching the Pac-12's free ticket, they advanced to the NCAA second round before being eliminated by Baylor in Albuquerque. This March, Boyle cited CU's strength of schedule (No. 19), the overall strength of the Pac-12 this season, CU's league-low 15 home games and the return of Andre Roberson as reasons for the Buffs to be given strong NCAA consideration.

The Buffs finished the season 4-3 against Top 25 teams and were 9-9 against opponents in the top 100 RPI. CU's pre-game RPI on Thursday was in the low 30s. It all appears to give the Buffs impeccable NCAA credentials. Yet as Boyle said, inclusion in the 68-team NCAA field isn't for him or his players to determine despite "what we did over our whole body of work."

The work finished in dramatic if unfulfilling fashion as the Buffs overcame an enigmatic and sloppy start to push the Wildcats harder than they might have expected after the first 20 minutes.

Arizona, said Boyle, "played a hell of a game. You could tell from the very beginning they were ready to go." But it took more than a little while for the Buffs to find the same gear; they trailed 39-28 after a first half that saw them commit 10 of their 13 turnovers (leading to 15 first-half Arizona points) and hit only five of 12 free throw attempts.

With 12:24 left in the game, CU fell behind by 14 before tightening up its defense, rebounding more tenaciously and eventually closing to within 71-69 on a pair of Andre Roberson free throws with 1:03 remaining. But Arizona's Nick Johnson scored a layup between two CU defenders at the other end to push the Wildcats up four.

Then two free throws by guard Mark Lyons with 23.6 seconds left gave Arizona a comfortable six-point advantage. The Wildcats added four more free throws in the final 14.2 seconds to win by double digits.

"Coach Boyle always preaches defend and rebound, and I felt like that's when started to do that and we had a run," said Roberson, who collected his 37th career double-double (15 points, 11 rebounds). "I feel like we just didn't do it consistently throughout the whole 40 minutes. That's how we fell off in the first half, and that's how we got back into the game in the second half."

CU outrebounded Arizona 33-31, but allowed the Wildcats to shoot 45.2 percent for the game. The Buffs' goal is to hold opponents below 40 percent from the field. Arizona also got 25 points from a bench that Boyle says offers "the most quality depth of anybody in our league . . . they go ten deep."

When the Buffs were surging back, Lyons hit what Boyle called "the play of the game." With a second showing on the shot clock and Arizona cradling a 68-64 lead, Lyons (14 points, three assists, one steal) took an inbound pass and fired desperately from the left corner. It swished and CU's momentum took a hit.

Boyle called the quick inbound play "a breakdown on our part defensively. We've practiced that situation. We just didn't do what we were supposed to do and it cost us."

If Lyons' three-point prayer had competition as "the play of the game," one that followed by Nick Johnson deserved special consideration.

After the Buffs had pulled to 71-69, Johnson scored in the lane between Roberson and Xavier Johnson to push the Wildcats back up by four. Roberson said Nick Johnson "was stuck in the key looking for a teammate . . . he didn't have any other option but to go up with it. Maybe I could have been a little more aggressive, but 'XJ' was trapping him. He just made a tough shot."

The fourth-seeded Wildcats (25-6) play top-seeded UCLA (24-8) in one of Friday's semifinals at the MGM Grand Garden Arena, which saw a record crowd of 12,915 on Thursday afternoon.

CU, which defeated Arizona 53-51 last season for the inaugural Pac-12 championship in Los Angeles, was led by Spencer Dinwiddie with 18 points. Askia Booker contributed 12 and Xavier Johnson 11. Arizona had three players in double figures, topped by Nick Johnson's 18. The Wildcats hit nine of their 27 three-point attempts, while the Buffs were 5-of-12 from beyond the arc and finished 20-of-28 from the free throw line.

The Buffs took their only lead of the game on the first possession, getting a dunk from Dinwiddie on a baseline

drive. From there, the afternoon looked as if it belonged to Arizona. The first half's last half minute providing a snapshot of the Buffs' early deficiencies. After closing to within eight (36-28) on a put-back by Roberson, CU forced a turnover and had possession with 23.8 seconds left before the break.

But Sabatino Chen couldn't in-bound the ball in the allotted five seconds and Arizona regained possession. The Wildcats worked the clock to five seconds before Solomon Hill drove the lane for a layup. Roberson fouled him and Hill converted the three-point play, saddling CU with its second-worst (11 points) halftime deficit of the season.

The worst was 19 at Kansas, and that game didn't end well for CU - a 90-54 smack down in Allen Fieldhouse.

CU's bench, which was outscored 18-4 in the first half, took a hit when 6-11 Shane Harris-Tunks was hit in the head with 12:45 left before the break. He went to the locker room for evaluation and was not cleared to play in the second half. It didn't sit well with Boyle.

Asked afterward about Harris-Tunks' condition, he said, "Let me say this about Shane: We've had two blatant no-calls that have led to concussions on our basketball team (Josh Scott was the other) and I'm really disappointed about it."

Harris-Tunks' departure and two early fouls on the 6-10 Scott resulted in five rare first-half minutes for 7-0 junior Ben Mills, who had one point and two rebounds in that time. Boyle said he was "proud of him for doing it tonight in a very tough environment."

With 12:24 remaining, a three-pointer from the left corner by Jordin Mayes pushed the Wildcats ahead 54-40. If the Buffs couldn't see trouble ahead, they weren't looking. But maybe that was a good thing.

Down by 14 after Mayes' trey, Dinwiddie hit a pair of free throws, Xavier Talton scored a layup on a fast break, and Dinwiddie knocked down a three in transition.

Suddenly, Arizona's 14-point led had been cut in half (56-47) with 10 minutes to play. The Buffs pulled to within four three times in the final 3:13, the last time on a Booker three with 1:50 remaining. After an Arizona turnover 30 seconds later, Boyle - with his team trailing 71-67 - called a timeout.

Roberson was fouled on a drive to the hoop and his two foul shots made it a two-point game, but that was as close as the Buffs could get.

Arizona coach Sean Miller said the Wildcats "beat an excellent basketball team . . . we needed to play extremely hard to beat a team like Colorado. You think about Colorado being seeded fifth, it really shows the depth and quality of our conference from top to bottom."

Boyle and the Buffs hope the NCAA Selection Committee sees it that way, but they'll have to wait to find out.

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SHOW MENU



No. 18 Arizona beats Colorado 79-69 at Pac-12

By JOHN MARSHALL AP Basketball Writer News Fuze

Posted:

lcsun-news.com

LAS VEGAS—Nick Johnson scored 18 points and hit a contested shot with 34 seconds left, helping No. 18 Arizona beat Colorado 79-69 in the Pac-12 tournament quarterfinals on Thursday.

Arizona (25-6) led by 14 in the second half, but had trouble shaking the desperate Buffaloes (21-11).

Johnson hit his shot between three defenders to put the Wildcats up four and followed teammate Mark Lyons' two free throws by swatting Askia Booker's 3-point attempt into Colorado's bench.

Lyons had 14 points and Solomon Hill 13 for Arizona, which moves on to face No. 21 UCLA in Friday's semifinals.

Colorado won last year's conference tournament with four wins in four days and opened this year's tournament with a six-point victory over Oregon State.

Now the Buffaloes will have to wait for the selection committee to make its decision to see if they'll get into the NCAA tournament after the close loss to Arizona.

Spencer Dinwiddie led fifth-seeded Colorado with 18 points and Andre Roberson added 15 points and 11 rebounds.

The Wildcats and Buffaloes played a couple of memorable games during the regular season.

Arizona won in overtime in Tucson on Jan. 3, when a disputed 3-point shot by Sabatino Chen was waved off after a video review. Colorado got payback in a big way in Boulder with a 71-58 win, Arizona's worst loss in two years.

Heading into the rubber match, Arizona was pretty much a lock for an NCAA tournament berth, while Colorado was trying to win the tournament for the second straight year or at least boost its resume to get an at-large bid.

The Wildcats also were trying to get their defensive groove back.

A top-5 team after opening the season with 14 straight wins, Arizona faltered late in the Pac-12 season, mostly because of a defense that had taken a step back instead of getting better. The Wildcats got some of their swagger back in a lopsided win over rival Arizona State to close the season and hoped they would keep up in the conference tournament.

Arizona, the tournament's fourth seed, got off to a good defensive start against Colorado, forcing 10 first-half turnovers that led to 15 points while limiting Colorado to two 3-point attempts.

Johnson provided the spark.

He broke out of a mini funk against Arizona State and was active against Colorado, hounding whoever he was guarding while scoring at the rim and from the arc at the other end.

Johnson had eight points in the first half and charged up the crowd early in the second, hitting a 3-pointer, scoring on an underhanded shot for a three-point play and feeding Lyons for a layup that put the Wildcats up 49-36.

Colorado whittled the lead down to seven on a 3-pointer by Dinwiddie, but Kaleb Tarczewski hit a jump hook and Kevin Parrom dropped in a 3-pointer as Johnson waved his arms at the crowd—he knew it was going in—that made it 59-47 and started a chant of U-of-A! from Wildcats fans.

The Buffaloes made another run after that, cutting the lead to 3 when Dinwiddie scored on an acrobatic scoop shot and kept Colorado in reach with some big shots.

Lyons hit a turnaround 3-pointer from the corner as the clock expired with about 2 minutes left, but Booker answered quickly with a 3 in transition to pull the Buffaloes within 71-67.

Lyons lost his dribble for a turnover on Arizona's next possession and Roberson hit two free throws at the other end to make it a 2-point game, but the Buffaloes didn't score again.

Men's basketball: No. 18 Arizona knocks CU Buffs out of Pac-12 Tournament

By Ryan Thorburn *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

Posted:

Buffzone.com

LAS VEGAS -- Tad Boyle and the Buffs will be waiting and watching as the NCAA Tournament bracket is unveiled line by excruciating line on live television Sunday.

But this time the team probably won't be doing the viewing on the couch in the coach's living room surrounded by the media and boosters.

Colorado's fate is now in a selection committee's hands after the Buffs' 79-69 loss to No. 18 Arizona in the quarterfinals of the Pac-12 Tournament on Thursday at the MGM Grand Garden Arena.

Two years ago, Boyle had to console the Cory Higgins- and Alec Burks-led Buffs in his basement after the program was snubbed with the cameras rolling and the champagne on ice.

Based on a fifth-place finish in an improved power conference, the nation's 19th-strongest schedule, an RPI of 34 and four wins over ranked opponents, Boyle is hopeful CU will be invited to the Big Dance.

"Our situation is totally different. I feel better," Boyle said. "But (what happened) two years ago leaves me a little gun shy as a coach."

CU's run at another automatic bid was derailed by Mark Lyons.

With the Wildcats clinging to a four-point lead, Xavier Johnson kicked the ball out of bounds with one second left on the shot clock.

Lyons raced to the corner, grabbed an in-bounds pass, and calmly drilled a difficult 3-pointer to give Arizona a 71-64 lead with 2:04 remaining.

"That was the play of the game and it was our breakdown," Boyle lamented. "It was a great shot, but it was our breakdown that led to him getting that shot open with nobody guarding him."

The Buffs (21-11) had trailed 54-40 after a 3-pointer by Jordin Mayes with 12:25 remaining before mounting a valiant comeback attempt.

Spencer Dinwiddie capped a 7-0 spurt with a 3-pointer, but after a timeout by Sean Miller the Wildcats regained momentary control with five unanswered points.

A beautiful finger roll by Dinwiddie (59-53) and a clutch 3-pointer by Jeremy Adams (66-60) kept the No. 5 seeds within two possessions in crunch time.

A Johnson basket (66-62) and two free throws by Dinwiddie (68-64) got the Buffs within four points before Lyons' heroics.

"It seems like every time we get together with them, we play these very physical, tough games," Miller said. "Today was no different."

Askia Booker answered Lyons' shot with a deep ball on the other end, and after a steal by Andre Roberson the 6-7 junior made two free throws to make the score 71-69 with 1:03 left.

CU did not score again.

Nick Johnson finished a tough field goal between two defenders on the other end and then drew a questionable over-the-back call on Roberson with 28.1 seconds left.

The Wildcats (25-6) made six consecutive free throws in the final 23.6 seconds to close out the game.

"It definitely wasn't a foul, I was just going for the ball," Roberson said. "It was a high-level environment out there and at the end of the game it's nitty-gritty time and everyone is just going for the ball. It should be a no call."

Roberson played an inspired game, finishing with 15 points, 11 rebounds, two steals, two blocks and an assist in 34 minutes. Dinwiddie (18 points) and Booker (12 points) also scored in double figures but were a combined 8-for-22 from the field.

"They just played solid defense, it wasn't nothing special," said Dinwiddie, who was blanketed by Johnson most of the game. "They did a great job of team defense the whole game."

The Buffs trailed 39-28 at the intermission after missing seven free throws and allowing Arizona to score 15 points off 10 turnovers.

Johnson made a 3-pointer to give the Wildcats an early lead, and Josh Scott was called for his second foul on the next possession with 14:53 remaining in the half.

Shane Harris-Tunks hit his head on the floor after getting tangled up with Grant Jerrett in front of Arizona's bench. The 6-11 center did not return for CU due to a concussion.

The officials allowed play to go on and the Wildcats converted a 5-on-4 power play of sorts. Moments later, Brandon Ashley capped a 7-0 run that put CU in a 20-11 hole.

"It never helps when your bigs get in foul trouble, especially in a physical game," Boyle said. "That was a high-level basketball game out there by both teams. ... But I thought (Scott) played through it in the second half and gave us some good minutes.

On the final possession of the half, Sabatino Chen was unable to get the ball in bounds under the CU basket in under five seconds.

Solomon Hill scored and was fouled by Chen with three seconds left. The 6-7 senior made the free throw to give the Wildcats an 11-point cushion at the break.

"Every loose ball means everything in a game like that," Hill said after scoring 13 points and seven rebounds in his physical clash with Roberson. "It's a possession game and you want to be able to scramble for it."

Since starting Pac-12 play 1-4 after the controversial 92-83 overtime loss on Jan. 3 in Tucson, the Buffs are

10-5.

CU split the regular-season series with Arizona after 71-58 victory on Feb. 14 at the Coors Events Center.

"I think they respect our program, we certainly respect their program. You have to have that to have a healthy rivalry," Boyle said. "They've always got Arizona State, I don't know if they'll ever admit to Colorado being their rival. But we've had some very good games against their team and I expect that to continue."

The Buffs, who won four games to win the Pac-12 Tournament an automatic NCAA Tournament invitation last year, are now 4-1 on neutral courts this season having won the Charleston Classic in November and ending Oregon State's season in the opening round on Wednesday.

CU is 4-3 against ranked opponents this season with two of the losses coming against the Wildcats, who will face top-seeded UCLA in the semifinals on Friday.

"Yes," Boyle said when asked if the Buffs were deserving of one of the 37 at-large berths into the NCAA Tournament.

When asked why, the third-year CU head coach pointed out that Roberson -- who missed the final two games of the regular season with a viral illness -- is back and the Buffs challenged themselves with three true road games and three neutral-court games during a 12-game non-conference slate.

"We had 15 home games. That is fewest of anybody in the Pac-12," Boyle said. "So we went on the road, played a good schedule and we weren't perfect. We're one of the top 37 at-large (teams) in my mind.

"But that's not for us to decide. That's all I'm going to say about it."

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

Fast break

What went right

Andre Roberson showed the NCAA Selection Committee that he's healthy with 15 points, 11 rebounds, two blocks, two steals and an assist.

What went wrong

The Buffs missed eight free throws -- seven in the first half -- and had only six assists.

Star of the game

Do we need to repeat Roberson's line?

What's next?

The Buffs play the waiting game. There's no question they'll be playing again, but they're hoping for a spot in the NCAA Tournament, not the other one.

No. 18 Arizona 79, Colorado 69

COLORADO

FG FT Reb

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

Booker 26 4-10 2-2 1-1 0 3 12

Johnson 30 3-5 4-7 2-2 1 4 11

Roberson 34 6-13 3-5 6-11 1 1 15

Dinwiddie 34 4-12 9-10 0-0 2 2 18

Scott 22 1-1 0-0 1-3 0 3 2

Talton 10 2-3 0-0 0-4 2 2 4

Stalzer 3 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Harris-Tunks 2 0-2 0-0 1-2 0 0 0

Chen 11 1-1 0-0 0-0 0 1 2

Adams 23 1-4 1-2 0-2 0 2 4

Mills 5 0-0 1-2 0-2 0 0 1

Totals 200 22-51 20-28 13-33 6 18 69

Percentages: FG .431, FT .714.

3-Point Goals: 5-12, .417 (Booker 2-5, Johnson 1-1, Adams 1-1, Dinwiddie 1-4, Roberson 0-1).

Team Rebounds: 6.

Blocked Shots: 3 (Roberson 2, Scott).

Turnovers: 13 (Chen 4, Booker 3, Dinwiddie 2, Roberson, Scott, Johnson, Adams).

Steals: 4 (Dinwiddie 2, Roberson 2).

Technical Fouls: None.

ARIZONA

FG FT Reb

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

Lyons 34 4-13 4-4 0-2 3 1 14

Parrom 21 2-3 0-0 1-2 2 2 5

Johnson 35 6-7 4-5 0-1 3 1 18

Tarczewski 23 2-4 0-0 2-5 0 3 4

Hill 36 5-13 2-3 4-7 4 3 13

Mayes 11 3-7 0-0 1-1 0 2 8

Ashley 17 3-9 2-2 2-5 3 4 8

Chol 2 1-1 0-0 0-0 0 0 2

Jerrett 21 2-5 2-2 1-6 1 2 7

Totals 200 28-62 14-16 12-31 16 18 79

Percentages: FG .452, FT .875.

3-Point Goals: 9-27, .333 (Johnson 2-2, Mayes 2-3, Lyons 2-9, Parrom 1-2, Jerrett 1-4, Hill 1-7).

Team Rebounds: 2.

Blocked Shots: 7 (Jerrett 4, Ashley 2, Johnson).

Turnovers: 10 (Lyons 2, Johnson 2, Hill 2, Ashley, Jerrett, Mayes, Chol).

Steals: 7 (Jerrett 2, Parrom, Johnson, Ashley, Lyons, Hill).

Technical Fouls: None.

Colorado 28 41--69

Arizona 39 40--79

A -- 12,915.

Officials -- Michael Greenstein, Tony Padilla, Brett Nansel.

Men's basketball: Harris-Tunks suffers concussion in CU Buffs' loss

By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

LAS VEGAS -- Tad Boyle is tired of watching his tall timber hit the hardwood.

During Colorado's painful 63-62 overtime loss to Arizona State on Feb. 16 at the Coors Events Center, Josh Scott suffered a concussion after a violent dance in the paint with 7-2 center Jordan Bachynski.

The Buffs' 6-10 freshman forward was the one called for a foul on the play and missed the next two games.

During the first half of CU's 79-69 loss to No. 18 Arizona in the quarterfinals of the Pac-12 Tournament on Thursday at the MGM Grand Garden Arena, Shane Harris-Tunks hit the back of his head on the floor after getting tangled up with counterpart Grant Jerrett.

The Buffs' 6-11 junior center did not return after being diagnosed with a concussion.

"We've had two blatant no calls that have led to concussions on our basketball team and I'm really disappointed about it," Boyle said before the Buffs flew back to Boulder 48 hours earlier than they had hoped.

After Harris-Tunks' injury, Ben Mills entered the fray and chipped in with two rebounds and a made free throw in five minutes after having logged only three minutes during the entire Pac-12 regular season.

"Ben, I was more proud of him than anybody coming in," Boyle said. "When Shane did go down, he came in and played well and battled."

Jeremy Adams made a key 3-pointer and Xavier Talton added four points and two assists off the bench.

"Jeremy is coming into his own, playing extremely well. I feel very comfortable with him on the floor," Boyle said. "Xavier Talton, I thought in the second half when we made our run he had good minutes."

Arizona still had a 25-11 edge in bench points with Jordin Mayes (eight points) and Jerrett (eight points) making some big plays.

Mutual respect

The Buffs were 5-0 in the Pac-12 Tournament before falling to the Wildcats. That included a 53-51 victory over Arizona in the title game last year in Los Angeles.

The teams split their meetings in the regular season with CU blowing a 16-point lead in the controversial overtime loss in Tucson and avenging the defeat with a 13-point win in Boulder.

"I just know we respect them a great deal," Arizona coach Sean Miller said of Boyle and the Buffs. "They're very well-coached. We have similarities in terms of our style. They take a lot of pride in their man-to-man defense; we do as well. They have some really talented players, and obviously we do too. I think both teams play hard.

"When you have those similarities and qualities, and then you play really hard and play to win, many times the

game plays itself out like it did here today."

Notable

Arizona, the No. 4 seed, will face No. 1 UCLA in the semifinals on Friday. The Bruins swept the regular-season series and advanced with a win over Arizona State on Thursday. ... This is the third consecutive season the No. 4 seed has advanced to the semifinals of the conference tournament. ... All nine Arizona players that saw action scored, led by Nick Johnson (18 points, 6-for-7 shooting). ... Andre Roberson (15 points, 11 rebounds) posted his 12th double-double of the season.

Quotable

"Our guys battled in the second half and showed the heart of a Colorado Buffalo and what that's about. These guys have more basketball ahead of them this year with the job they've done this season," Boyle said.

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No. 18 Arizona State ousts Colorado from Pac-12 Tournament

By Tom Kensler The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

LAS VEGAS — And now the excruciating wait begins for Colorado.

A 79-69 loss Thursday to fourth-seeded Arizona in a Pac-12 Tournament quarterfinal leaves Colorado with counting the hours until Sunday. That's "Selection Sunday" to college basketball fans, and the Buffaloes will know then if their name is called among 37 at-large invitations when the NCAA Tournament selection committee announces the 68-team bracket.

"We battled throughout the season," said CU junior forward Andre Roberson, who recorded a double-double of 15 points and 11 rebounds. "We took a couple of tough losses, but I feel we definitely have some quality wins under our belt. So, I feel like we did enough."

A year ago, Colorado knew securing the Pac-12's automatic bid by winning the conference tournament was its only path to the party, and the Buffs pulled off the rare feat of winning four games in four days at the Staples Center in Los Angeles.

As the No. 5 seed, Colorado couldn't turn that trick this time at the MGM Grand Garden Center. But the Buffs' body of work is more impressive than last year. And entering this week, "bracketologists" projected Colorado to be in the field.

Of course, if Colorado coaches and players had a vote, the Buffs will be packing their bags next week for a trip to a NCAA Tournament site. Colorado (21-11) began the day with a solid 34 RPI, compiled a 4-3 record against nationally ranked teams and went 9-9 vs. teams in the top 100 RPI. The RPI is a computer-based power ranking that is among a dozen or so "tools" used by the selection committee.

Colorado trailed 39-28 at halftime and had to play catch-up for much of the game. That's a tall order against an Arizona lineup (25-6) with perhaps the best blend of size and athleticism in the conference.

Getting 18 points from sophomore guard Spencer Dinwiddie, Colorado never gave up and pulled to within a basket, 71-69, with a minute to go.

"I think, when you look at it, our strength of schedule (ranked 19th among Division I teams), nonconference (results), and obviously, we played in a heck of a league," Colorado coach Tad Boyle said. "We came up a little bit short here in this tournament. But the way we battled back today ... we played a good schedule, and we weren't perfect. But we're one of the top 37 at-large (selections) in my mind. But that's not for us to decide."

Arizona, which was dominated 71-58 by Colorado in Boulder on Feb. 14, became the early aggressor this time. The 18th-ranked Wildcats converted four of Colorado's first five turnovers into baskets, most on transition fast breaks. By halftime, the Wildcats had already scored 15 points off turnovers compared with three for Colorado.

"(The Wildcats) were dialed in, you could tell that from the get-go," Boyle said.

Colorado struggled with matchups after 6-foot-10 freshman Josh Scott went to the bench with two personal fouls just five minutes into the game. Arizona's combinations mix and match four players 6-8 or taller, including towering freshmen Kaleb Tarczewski (7-0) and Grant Jerrett (6-10). And that doesn't include Arizona's best player, 6-7 senior forward Solomon Hill.

Colorado's options in the paint became more complicated when Scott's replacement, 6-11 senior Shane Harris-Tunks, went out after he became tangled up with Jerrett and suffered a concussion in a similar scenario as Scott's concussion last month against Arizona State.

"Let me say this about Shane," Boyle said during postgame interviews. "We've had two blatant no-calls that have led to concussions on our basketball team, and I'm really disappointed about it."

Boyle sent in seldom-used Ben Mills, a junior 7-footer who had played in only three of 18 Pac-12 games. Mills provided some decent minutes, but Colorado missed the scoring threat of Scott.

Scott's absence from the lineup for 13 of 20 minutes in the first half also adversely affected Colorado's defensive rotations. The Buffs appeared to be a half-step slow in trying to keep up with Arizona's inside-outside game.

Colorado trailed by as many as 14 points in the second half but chipped away at the deficit. The Buffs were down 68-64 and looked to get the ball back when the 35-second shot clock showed one tick left. But Arizona senior guard Mark Lyons wheeled around from the left corner and threw up a prayer that was answered for three points.

"Play of the game," Boyle said.

Lyons' backcourt mate, sophomore Nick Johnson, executed another huge play with 34 seconds remaining and the Wildcats clinging to a 71-69 lead. Johnson slashed between Askia Booker and Robinson for a strong layup along the baseline.

"We played good defense," Dinwiddie said, "but we weren't consistent with it."

Arizona answered with big-boy baskets every time Colorado appeared poised to go on a spurt.

"I couldn't be more proud of our team," Arizona coach Sean Miller said, "because we needed to play extremely hard to beat a team like Colorado."

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