



COLORADO BUFFALOES

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Andre Roberson (21) could have a big day on the boards against Illinois.

Photo Courtesy: Joel Broida



Brooks: Noting The Buffs Before Tripping To Texas

Release: 03/19/2013 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER - It's Big Dance week and for the second consecutive March - the first time that's happened in 50 years - the Buffaloes appear on the NCAA dance card. Colorado is stepping out in Texas (Austin) on Friday afternoon against Illinois. Time to take note(s):

BUFFALO EXTRAS



Game Notes vs. Illinois

GET ON BOARD(S): In junior forward Andre Roberson, the Buffs have the nation's No. 2 rebounder. "Dre" trails Siena's O.D. Anosike 11.3 to 11.4. You won't find any Illini players on the leader board.

Illinois' top board man is 6-11 Nanna Egu, who checks in at 4.6 rebounds a game. The Illini are averaging 33.5 rebounds a game, 10th in the Big Ten Conference, the Buffs and Roberson are second in the Pac-12 (37.2) in rebounding offense and fourth (+3.4) in rebounding margin.

On paper, it's advantage Buffs. But paper rarely translates to the hardwood and unfortunately points aren't directly awarded for rebounds. Still, if CU adheres to coach Tad Boyle's pair of iron-clad fundamentals - rebounding and defense - what looks good on the stat sheet should benefit the Buffs in the NCAA Tournament.

"We've got the best rebounder in the nation in Andre and two freshmen - me and Josh (Scott) - and Spencer (Dinwiddie) can get any board he wants," said Xavier Johnson. "We're a tall team; we'll be good on the boards."

(Roberson is 6-7, Scott 6-10, Johnson 6-6, Dinwiddie is a 6-6 guard.)

Boyle says the Illini "kind of rebound by committee," and along with Egwu, a couple of other players are above four boards a game. Usually those are long boards (not a surfing term), because Illinois loves the three ball and that can contribute to caroms heading in all directions.

How fond is Illinois of firing from behind the arc? Compared to the Buffs' 498 trey attempts (173 made, 34.5 percent), the Illini attempted 815 (265 made, 32.5 percent). Illinois leads the Big Ten in threes made per game (7.8), but is eighth in three-point field goal percentage.

Boyle's take: "We've got to guard the three-point line and guard the ball as well. We always talk defensively about not giving up layups, that's going to be important. But in addition to that, we have to guard them at the three-point line. They're very capable. If they get hot . . . they remind me a lot of UNLV last year. They shoot a lot of threes and if they're making them, boy, you're in a tussle. If they're not, we've got to get the rebound and make them work a little bit."

NAME TO REMEMBER: On Monday afternoon, before CU players had watched tape of Illinois, there was one Illini player the Buffs already were familiar with. That would be guard Brandon Paul, Illinois' leading scorer (16.6 ppg, fourth in Big Ten).

Trailing him in scoring in a three-guard offense are D.J. Richardson (12.4 ppg) and Tracy Abrams (10.4 ppg). But the guy on the Buffs' minds before and after watching tape is Paul, a 6-4 senior whose 15-foot buzzer beater took out Minnesota 51-49 in the first round of the Big Ten Tournament.

Boyle says Paul reminds him of Dinwiddie, who likely will be matched up with Paul on Friday: "He can put it on floor, come off ball screens, he's a very explosive player."

BIG DANCE RECRUITING BENEFITS: A second trip to the NCAA Tournament in as many years has put CU on the national radar - and you know what that means in recruiting terms.

Being in the NAAs in consecutive years, said Boyle, "helps us a lot. It's one thing to talk about getting our program on a national scale, it's another thing to do it. We've done it; we're not done doing it. We've got to continue to grow and improve our program.

"I heard Andre make a comment the first time we talked and I recruited him . . . I talked about trying to make Colorado a national level program. We're in the process of doing that. We still have work to do but we're on our way."

Then there's this year's first-round site for the Buffs . . . Texas continues to be a target for Boyle and his staff. "We signed Dustin Thomas from Texarkana (and) he's actually going to come to the game," Boyle said. "We're always going to recruit Texas . . . Andre is from 45 minutes away in San Antonio. It's a great opportunity for him to go home, but also to showcase our program to the state of Texas, which is something we want to do."

PEAKING AT THE RIGHT TIME? The Buffs went into last season's NCAA Tournament having generated momentum by winning four games in four days to claim the inaugural Pac-12 Tournament championship.

This season brings a different scenario. Their record this March is 2-2, with wins over Oregon and Oregon State (Pac-12 tourney) and losses to Oregon State and Arizona (Pac-12 tourney).

Boyle seemed reluctant to say the Buffs currently were playing their best, but added, "I think we're capable of it. Obviously, last year winning four games in four days (but) I think all that stuff's overrated. It's a new season; this is season number four - preseason, non-conference, league and Pac-12 Tournament and now the NCAA Tournament. It's a new season.

"Last year we lost three out of four going into the Pac-12 Tournament and won it . . . (now) it's win or go home. Hopefully we're not one and done, but with the next loss it's over."

Of course, his players don't have to be reminded. Said Scott on his and his teammates' singular focus: "I get the feeling from our team right now that it's like Charleston. We're going there to win, but do it one game at a time.

Now it's Illinois and we're not looking forward any further than that. I think that's a good recipe. That won us the Charleston Classic . . . I think if we had looked forward to the NCAA Tournament we wouldn't be in it now."

In other words, if the focus is on going deep into the tournament, they won't get there.

MORE ON THE POST-CONCUSSION SCOTT: After missing two games with a concussion suffered against Arizona State on Feb. 16, Scott returned to the lineup for the final three regular-season games and the pair of Pac-12 tourney games.

His self-assessment since his return: "I'm pretty hard on myself. I'd say that defensively and rebounding, I think I've done a pretty good job. But offensively, I'm just trying to find the rhythm ever since that happened. It's been frustrating, but I'm working through it."

In the five games since returning, he's averaged 4.3 points and 7.3 rebounds.

CONCUSSION POSTSCRIPT: If 6-11 junior Shane Harris-Tunks hasn't been cleared from a concussion suffered against Arizona, 7-0 junior Ben Mills likely will get minutes off the bench in relief of Scott. Mills logged five first-half minutes against Arizona, making one of two free throws and grabbing two rebounds.

GET READY TO GRIND: Boyle on the Illini defense: "Illinois is battle-tested. They've played against better offensive teams than Colorado in their league. It's going to be a good game, a good test . . . they're in the gaps, they make you work. On the other hand, we're going to have to make shots. It's going to be a hard game to score."

ON THE PAC-12 AND NCAA RESPECT: CU's new league placed five teams in the Big Dance - Oregon, UCLA, Cal, Arizona and CU. But the Ducks, despite winning the Pac-12 Tournament, got no better than a No. 12 seed, as did Cal. UCLA and Arizona were sixth seeds, CU a tenth.

Boyle said the NCAA Selection Committee showed the Pac-12 some love with five teams being included - the most since seven Pac-10 teams in 2009. But in terms of seeding, he added, "We still have room for growth and improvement. But it's one step at a time."

On Oregon as a No. 12 seed, Boyle said, "From the little that I've looked at it - and I haven't looked at in depth - it's a result of non-conference schedules. That's what got us in the tournament - our non-conference schedule and our ten wins in the league, which isn't overly impressive.

"But our non-conference schedule, our strength of schedule, going on the road (all) meant something. Oregon had a lot of home games, so maybe that worked against them. That's the only thing I can surmise . . . I don't know. I wasn't in the room."

Oregon went 9-2 through its non-conference schedule and played 19 home games (17-2, with one of the losses to CU).

Boyle said if the Buffs' inclusion in the NCAAs in consecutive years comes as a mild surprise, his expectations when he took the job were to be a regular participant.

"I expect to get better every day," he said. "If you do that success is going to come. I didn't know when it would come. I didn't know we would be going to three postseason tournaments in three years. That wasn't part of my master plan or expectations. We're a day-to-day program trying to get better as players, as coaches and as a team."

TIP-INS: Boyle expects reserve Jeremy Adams to play a key role in Austin, particularly in perimeter defense. He credits Adams' improvement over the past month to his playing with more aggressiveness and confidence. "He's not afraid to make mistakes and is letting the game come to him," Boyle said. "He can guard on the perimeter. He's got a good strong body and can keep guys in front of him - and he's made some shots, which always helps." . . . Boyle hasn't met first-year Illinois coach John Groce, but says he respects his previous work at Ohio University and his work this season . . . The Illini are No. 5 in the Big Ten in scoring (69.1 ppg), No. 11 in scoring defense (65.3 ppg) and No. 1 in turnover margin (+2.91) . . . The Buffs will leave for Austin via charter on Wednesday afternoon.

Men's basketball: CU Buffs' Ben Mills could see minutes in NCAA Tournament

By Ryan Thorburn *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

Posted:

DailyCamera.com

Ben Mills has had the best seat in the house for some of the greatest moments in Colorado basketball history.

The seldom-used but wildly popular 7-foot center has experienced the NIT at Madison Square Garden, winning the Pac-12 Tournament at Staples Center, and upsetting UNLV in the NCAA Tournament at the Pit.

Mostly from the end of the bench or during the postgame celebrations.

But when 10th-seeded CU takes on No. 7 Illinois on Friday in the East Region bracket in Austin, Texas, there is a chance Mills will be called on to play some meaningful minutes on college basketball's greatest stage.

Shane Harris-Tunks who usually relieves starting big man Josh Scott, suffered a concussion a week ago against Arizona. The 6-11 junior has not yet been cleared to play in the Buffs' NCAA Tournament game.

"Any experience is helpful. If Shane isn't ready to go, I certainly will be," Mills said after Tuesday's practice. "And look forward to doing it."

The C-Unit chants often chants his name at the Coors Events Center, but Mills' two biggest fans are head coach Tad Boyle and star forward Andre Roberson.

"I'm not sure I've ever been more proud of a young man and how he has handled not playing," Boyle said of Mills, who has logged a total of 23 minutes this season. "How he's handled coming here on scholarship, being recruited, and not having maybe the basketball part of his experience work out at Colorado like he expected it to work out, or how we expected as coaches for it to work out."

"The way he has handled that tells me that Ben Mills is going to be successful with whatever he decides to do."

When Harris-Tunks was injured during the first half of the Pac-12 Tournament quarterfinal game against Arizona in Las Vegas, Mills gave CU five inspiring minutes.

Mills -- who had only been on the floor for a total of three minutes during the conference's regular season -- grabbed two rebounds, drew a foul and made a free throw in the intense grudge match with the physical Wildcats.

"That's one thing about Ben I respect. He's a great guy and he does what's best for this team, not just individually," Roberson said. "I tip my hat to him for that. And when it's time to shine, like against Arizona, he showed what he can do. He did a great job for us."

Shortly after taking the CU job in April 2010, Boyle was able to recruit both Roberson and Mills during the late signing period in May.

Roberson, the Pac-12 defensive player of the year, is averaging 11.3 rebounds per game (second nationally) while Mills has 12 rebounds all season.

Their statistics might be in stark contrast, but the old freshmen roommates are very close off the court.

"They've kind of grown up together at Colorado," Boyle said. "It's pretty special."

Mills' offensive highlights this season were on Jan. 24 when he made field goals in the final minute against Stanford.

After the victory, the Buffs knew what was coming in the locker room.

"He's a big-time Taylor Swift guy," Roberson said with a laugh.

In addition to having an eclectic taste with his postgame music selections, Mills is also the reluctant star of CU's version of the "Harlem Shake" video.

No matter how long CU's run in this NCAA Tournament last's, The Mills Shake will live on as its own shining moment on Youtube.

"I had no idea I was going to be doing that. It was just after practice one day they told me I was going to be the center of the Mills Shake thing," Mills said. "So I wasn't prepared for that at all. I was a little ashamed of my performance."

Ironically, Mills is partially responsible for the significant upgrade in talent on the roster that keeps him on the pine.

"When we have recruiting visits and kids visit our campus and I ask them at the end of the visit who resonated with them on the team, Ben's name comes up a lot," Boyle said. "He's a very outgoing, fun guy to be around. Great teammate. You can see that when the students react to him when he comes in the game."

"People love Ben Mills, and his coach feels the same way."

Boyle said the coaching staff was not in a position to redshirt Mills as a freshman after Harris-Tunks went down with a torn ACL in the first practice. Mills played in 19 games during the 2010-11 season, including three Big 12 games, averaging 1.4 points and 1.2 rebounds.

Cracking the lineup has been even more difficult on CU's first back-to-back NCAA Tournament teams in 50 years. Mills appeared in seven games as a sophomore and seven more this season.

"I think each year I've improved a bunch," Mills said. "From now to my freshman year I'm a completely different player in every aspect of the game."

Mills has added 30 pounds to his frame since high school and gets better every day in practice going against skilled big men like Scott and Wesley Gordon.

And sometimes the big man on campus takes the road less traveled in his development.

"I'm not giving up on Ben Mills now," Boyle said. "He's going to be a senior next year and the way he played against Arizona when Shane went out with his concussion, the way he has played every time we've given him an opportunity to get on the floor this year, that says a lot about his being ready when his number is called. That's not an easy thing to do."

Follow Ryan on Twitter:

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The Mills Shake

Name: Ben Mills

Year, position: Junior, center

Height: 7-foot

Wing span: 6-8 3/4

Weight: 225 pounds

Season highs: Eight minutes and five rebounds (Dec. 21, 2012, Northern Arizona), four points (Jan. 24, 2013, Stanford)

Career highs: Nine minutes and two blocks (Feb. 12, 2011, Kansas State, six points (Dec. 17, 2010, The Citadel), five rebounds (Dec. 21, 2012, Northern Arizona)

Personal: Born March 30, 1992. Father Patrick played basketball at St. Mary's and twin sisters (Amanda, East Carolina; Meghan, Mercer) also played college basketball. Averaged 17.1 points and 11.2 rebounds to lead Arrowhead High School (Hartland, Wis.) to WIAA Division 1 state championship as a senior.

Acupuncture puts Colorado's Jeremy Adams back in the game

By Tom Kensler The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — Among a Colorado basketball roster of lanky, wiry-built players, 6-foot-5, 220-pound Jeremy Adams and his muscles stand out.

"He's the strongest guy on the team, by far," sophomore Spencer Dinwiddie said. "It's ridiculous what Jeremy can do in the weight room. He looks like a football player. We've given him the nickname 'Jerry football.' He's a big help for our team."

Adams, a fourth-year junior, provides strength, experience, savvy and versatility as a reserve guard. Trouble was, problems with patella tendons in both knees limited Adams' playing time during much of the season. During one 12-game stretch after the holidays, Adams was able to log more than 10 minutes only three times.

Thanks to acupuncture, Adams is back in the game and looking forward to helping CU in the NCAA Tournament on Friday against Illinois in Austin, Texas. He began the procedure on his knees a month ago and the treatments have worked wonders. A diabetic, Adams has averaged 19 minutes over the past seven games, including a season-high 27 minutes at Stanford when the Mississippi native supplied eight points and four rebounds in an important road victory.

CU basketball trainer Trae Tashiro recommended acupuncture to Adams after other treatments failed to relieve the pain.

"At first, I didn't want to do it," Adams said. "But then I thought I'd give it a try. The day after I had the acupuncture done, I dunked (in practice) for the first time in a couple of months. My knees feel a lot better and I'm able to do more things out there."

Colorado coach Tad Boyle has, in effect, a new player to help supply depth, instant energy and even some scoring punch. Adams has contributed seven or more points in four of the past seven games. And he enjoys using his size and bulk on defense.

"Jeremy is playing aggressive, he's playing confident," Boyle said. "He's not afraid of making mistakes. He's kind of letting the game come to him. ... Jeremy is an extra perimeter defender for us. He's a big, strong body. He's got good size for his position. And he's making some shots."

A team's depth, or lack of it, often becomes magnified during the postseason.

"If you can get production from your bench, it's such a boost in the arm for you," Boyle said. "Our bench is going to be critical."

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