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CU coach Tad Boyle says defending the perimeter against Illinois is critical Friday.

Photo Courtesy: Nelson Chenault-USA TODAY Sports



Brooks: Buffs' Length Could Stymie Illini's Long Shots

Release: 03/21/2013 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

AUSTIN, Texas – Illinois' strength is the long ball, Colorado's antidote is long limbs.

The Buffaloes believe the physical length of 6-7 Andre Roberson and 6-6 Spencer Dinwiddie will deter the long-range marksmanship of the Illini's Brandon Paul and D.J. Richardson in Friday's second round of the NCAA Tournament at the Erwin Center (2:40 MDT, TNT).

Roberson, the Pac-12 Conference's Defensive Player of The Year, will match up first with the gifted Paul, a 6-4 senior who leads Illinois in scoring (16.6 ppg). Dinwiddie will check the 6-3 Richardson, who leads his team in three-pointers attempted (237) and made (78). But Dinwiddie also likely will take a turn or two on Paul.

The Illini are wild about the three-pointer, and Paul and Richardson are the wildest of the gunners. Illinois' 815 trey attempts this season were the most in the Big Ten Conference, and Paul (223) and Richardson (237) accounted for more than half of those.

The Illini made 265 of their trey attempts, slotting them at No. 9 in the conference in three-point field

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percentage (32.5). But their 7.8 made treys per game tops the conference, and they've hit 10 or more treys in 10 games.

Roberson's defensive plan for Paul is simple and straightforward: "Try not to give him any breathing room, dictate where he goes – not where he wants to go," 'Dre' said at Thursday's news conference. "Try not to let him get shots off because he's a dangerous player and he likes the three ball."

Paul's rebuttal for Roberson: "I know he's real athletic, so it's going to be a challenge. But we put ourselves in position to be successful. And I know my teammates are going to do a good job of getting me in positions to score."

Dinwiddie, who has proven his defensive value time and again this season, said when Illinois is mentioned he instantly thinks "three-point shooting and Brandon Paul. Those are the two things that come to your mind instantly. The third thing would be D.J. Richardson. Those are the three things you want to stop."

For CU coach Tad Boyle, who unknowingly took on a new identity in Thursday's news conference quote transcript (Coach Thomason), the critical issue for Roberson, Dinwiddie and whoever else in checking Paul is to never lose touch with him.

"You have to be there when he catches it," Boyle said. "He's got deep range, he's got the green light. He'll let it fly when he catches it . . . the one thing Andre's got is great length, he's got great athleticism."

But Boyle knows Roberson's athleticism won't be enough by itself. Toughness in fighting through screens is a must. "He's going to have to get through a lot of screens," Boyle cautioned. "He'll have some bumps and bruises tomorrow, but using his length and athleticism to be there on the catch and play Brandon's shot high is the key."

Paul, a third-team All-Big Ten selection, said he and his teammates were not "real concerned" about the overall length of Roberson and his CU teammates. "We're a pretty athletic team," Paul said. "We got guys, (even) if our guys are smaller, they make up with the athleticism. (CU) is a team that has a lot of balanced scoring and a lot of size. But as long as we play our game, I think we'll be in good shape."

While the Roberson-Paul matchup might be pivotal, first-year Illinois coach John Groce said he wanted to "make one thing crystal clear: It's not Roberson versus Paul (Friday), it's Illinois versus Colorado. I think Brandon, as our oldest player, understands that. Obviously he's an important part of what we do, just like Roberson is an important part of what Colorado does. So we'll take that for what it's worth."

CU (21-11, No. 10 seed) is making its second NCAA Tournament appearance in as many seasons while Illinois (22-12, No. 7 seed) is in the Big Dance for the first time since 2011. Groce said he and his team were relieved to finally be free of the cannibalistic Big Ten for an NCAA Tournament game.

"No question," said Groce, whose team finished 8-10 in conference play. "Obviously it was a lot of fun though. It was tremendous challenge all 18 games plus the Big Ten Tournament. I think you learn a lot playing the competition we played against, the venues where we played, different styles that we played, the different coaching philosophies and coaching styles as well . . . it was great. We learned a lot about our team."

But Boyle did too in the Buffs' trek through the Pac-12. Last season's NCAA team was heavy on senior leadership – starters Nate Tomlinson, Carlon Brown, Andre Dufault – but this season's NCAA entry featured a lone upperclassman – Sabatino Chen.

"It's been a work in progress," Boyle said of the evolution of this year's leadership. Chen, said his coach, was "kind of our leader by default early." Also, Chen began his final college season as a silent type, but has grown out of that. And Roberson's voice is being heard more, as well as Dinwiddie's.

"But it's been a work in progress and there have been some bumps in the road," Boyle said.

The Big Ten placed seven teams in the NAAs – one less than the Big East – while the Pac-12 got five in. All season, and with good reason, the Buffs have heard about the Big Ten's top-to-bottom power. But they believe the Pac-12 has teams – CU included – that can play with any conference.

Yes, there is a pride factor in play here.

"Definitely," Roberson said. "With the Big Ten being talked about all the time, I feel like our conference has grown a lot since last year . . . I feel like we're definitely going to show it when we play. A couple of us are matched up with a couple of Big Ten teams. So I think we're going to show what we got."

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Men's basketball: CU Buffs, Pac-12 banding together

By Ryan Thorburn [Buffzone.com](http://buffzone.com) Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

DailyCamera.com

AUSTIN, Texas -- Ben Howland might be on the hot seat at UCLA, but the embattled Bruins head coach is still prideful about the Pac-12 this postseason.

Sixth-seeded UCLA is an underdog against No. 11 Minnesota in a South Region game in the NCAA Tournament here on Friday at the Erwin Center.

"Well, I'm really pleased to announce, as I walked out here, that Oregon's winning, who I thought would win," Howland said at a press conference on Thursday. "I think Cal's going to win (Thursday), I think Arizona's going to win. I think our league's really good."

Howland didn't mention Colorado, but the 10th-seeded Buffs will just assume he would like to see them defeat No. 7 Illinois in another Pac-12 vs. Big Ten matchup on Friday in Big 12 territory.

The Illini (22-12) are one of seven teams from the Big Ten that made the 68-team field.

Despite having a losing record (8-10) in conference play, Illinois has the better seed and is considered a slight favorite to beat the Pac-12's fifth-place finisher on a neutral court.

"I think you learn a lot playing against the competition that we played against, the venues where we played, different styles that we played, the different coaching philosophies and coaching styles as well," Illinois head coach John Groce said. "But we've moved on and now our focus is on Colorado."

The Buffs (21-11) were the only Pac-12 team to win an NCAA Tournament game last March. This time they're not carrying the conference banner alone.

"You have actually the best conference in the country and a conference that has been maligned very recently and has gained traction, I mean we want to prove that we're as good as a lot of people think we are and that we play good basketball on the West Coast," CU point guard Spencer Dinwiddie said. "Yeah, we're rooting for each other. I want UCLA to win their game, California, Oregon, Arizona to win theirs, even though we're conference foes."

"But in the NCAA Tournament you kind of root for your conference to do well."

Pacific heights

The CU-Illinois survivor will advance to play the No. 2 Miami vs. No. 15 Pacific winner.

Bob Thomason, the winningest coach in Big West Conference history (436 wins in 25 seasons at Pacific), will retire after the Tigers' next loss.

"We're trying to make a better script," Thomason said. "I think our guys are pretty happy about going to the NCAA Tournament, and now we have to refocus on making sure that we are locked into Miami. Because if you don't get locked into the team you're playing, if you play an NCAA game, you have no chance."

Hurricanes coach Jim Larranaga knows what it's like to star in a Cinderella story. His 2006 George Mason team made it to the Final Four.

"That George Mason team was not even supposed to make the NCAA Tournament, according to the experts," Larranaga said. "This Miami team won not only the regular season but the ACC Tournament and has got a high seed."

CU at UT

Athletic director Mike Bohn said the 25 most loyal members of the C-Unit will be flown to Austin on Friday to cheer on the Buffs.

Another 50 students are expected to make the trip on their own dime and CU was on track to sell out its allotment of 500 tickets.

"It's not really driving distance like Albuquerque was. I'm not sure we'll have the same numbers," said CU head coach Tad Boyle, whose fans showed up at the Pit in droves for last year's NCAA Tournament. "But I do know this about Colorado fans, the ones that are here will be heard. They're very boisterous, they're very lively, and we're just trying to build every year.

"You never know where they're going to send you. Hopefully our fans, as we continue to develop this program, will start keeping this weekend open for travel."

With no Texas schools in this year's NCAA Tournament, all eight teams here are hoping Longhorns fans will jump on their bandwagon.

"I went out and took a bank loan out and went and bought a bunch of T-shirts," Northwestern State head coach Mike McConathy said. "It might be me standing out passing them out (on Friday)."

No. 15 Northwestern State takes on No. 3 Florida in the UCLA-Minnesota bracket.

Follow Ryan on Twitter: @RyanThorburn

Buff, Illini combined 8-2 on neutral courts and each won early season tournaments

By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

DailyCamera.com

AUSTIN, Texas -- Brandon Paul and Andre Roberson received most of the media attention here on Thursday.

Paul is statistically one of the best players in Illini history and his team's leading scorer.

Roberson, who is from nearby San Antonio, is the Pac-12 defensive player of the year and the nation's second-leading rebounder.

And Tad Boyle made it know that he plans to start Roberson out on Paul defensively when No. 10 Colorado plays No. 7 Illinois in the East Region bracket of the NCAA Tournament on Friday at the Erwin Center (approximately 2:40 p.m., TNT).

"I want to make one thing crystal clear," first-year Illinois head coach John Groce said. "It's not Roberson versus Paul and Paul versus Roberson, it's Illinois versus Colorado. I think that Brandon, as an older player, understands that. Obviously he's an important part of what we do, just like Roberson is an important part of what Colorado does. So we'll take that for what it's worth."

Paul, a 6-4 senior shooting guard, is averaging 16.6 points this season with backcourt mates D.J. Richardson (12.4 ppg) and Tracy Adams (10.6 ppg) also scoring in double figures.

The Illini (22-12) led the Big Ten in made 3-pointers (7.8 per game) but was eighth in 3-point field goal percentage (.325).

"They live and die by the three," CU senior guard Sabatino Chen said. "So if they get hot they can be really dangerous."

Neither team should be intimidated by the other.

The Buffs (21-11) won the Charleston Classic in November and defeated NCAA Tournament teams Arizona, Cal, Colorado State and Oregon during the season.

Illinois started the season 12-0 after winning the Maui Invitational and beating Gonzaga on the road before knocking off No. 1 Indiana during a grueling Big Ten slate.

These two teams are a combined 23-3 against non-conference opponents and 8-2 on neutral courts this season.

"We have played some great teams this year and took some tough losses that might have taken us out of the top 25," CU sophomore guard Askia Booker said. "But we made it to the NCAA Tournament. Ever since I've been here we've made it and we haven't let down the program yet. Hopefully we don't."

Illinois did not get into the Big Dance last season, which led to a coaching change that has worked out for both sides (Bruce Weber led Kansas State to a co-Big 12 regular-season championship, and Groce brought the

March Madness back to Champaign).

During last year's NCAA Tournament, Groce guided Ohio, a No. 13 seed, into the Sweet 16.

"It just shows us that if we listen to him and we execute the game plan that he provides for us, it gives us a good opportunity to win," Illinois forward Sam McLaurin said. "He's won with lesser talent and we have the talent to win games in this tournament."

Last year's victory over UNLV in Albuquerque, N.M., was CU's first NCAA Tournament win in 15 years. Boyle is the first coach to guide the program to consecutive appearances in the tournament since Sox Walseth 50 years ago.

"It's just awesome to see where this program has come in such a short period of time," said CU junior center Shane Harris-Tunks, who practiced on Thursday and is medically cleared to play against Illinois after suffering a concussion at the Pac-12 Tournament. "From not even making the postseason my freshman year to going to back-to-back NAAs is just a testament to how hard people have worked in this program."

Returning players like Roberson, Booker and Spencer Dinwiddie have said the goal is not just to beat Illinois, but to extend the season into next week's East Regional semifinals round in Washington D.C.

"We definitely have a vision for that," Roberson said. "That is what we are building upon and trying to take the next step forward. ... I feel like we can make it to the Sweet 16 and maybe even further."

The Roberson vs. Paul matchup will be important, but the best team will survive and advance.

Follow Ryan on Twitter: @RyanThorburn

CU men's hoops preview

FRIDAY: The No. 10 Colorado Buffaloes (21-11) play the No. 7 Illinois Illini (22-12) in a second-round East Region game at approximately 2:40 p.m. at the Erwin Center in Austin, Texas.

BROADCAST: Television on TNT with Tim Brando (play-by-play) and Mike Gminski (analyst). Radio on KKZN (760 AM) with Mark Johnson (play-by-play) and Jeb Putzier (color). Follow on Twitter: @RyanThorburn.

CU STORY LINES: The Buffs are making back-to-back NCAA Tournament appearances for the first time in 50 years (1961-62, 1962-63) after receiving the program's first at-large berth in 10 years (2002-03). ... This is the first time CU has ever won 20 or more games in three consecutive seasons and appeared in a postseason tournament three consecutive seasons. ... Shane Harris-Tunks (concussion) has been cleared to play and practiced on Thursday. ... The Buffs are 4-1 on neutral courts this season and 9-2 dating back to last year's Pac-12 Tournament. ... Andre Roberson will start out guarding Illinois star guard Brandon Paul.

ILLINOIS STORY LINES: The Illini won the Maui Invitational, defeated Gonzaga in Spokane and got off to a 12-0 start before finishing 8-10 in the grueling Big Ten and receiving an at-large berth. ... First-year Illinois coach John Groce guided Ohio to the Sweet 16 last year. ... This is Illinois' 11th NCAA Tournament appearance in the last 14 years. ... Paul and Mark Smith (1978-81) are the only two players in Illini history to reach career milestones of 1,600 points, 500 rebounds, 300 assists and 150 steals. ... The Illini are 7-1 in

games decided by five points or less.

KEY STAT: The Buffs and Illini are a combined 23-3 against non-conference opponents this year and 8-2 on neutral courts.

COACHES: Boyle is 69-37 in his third season at CU. Groce is 22-12 in his first season at Illinois.

SERIES: Illinois leads 3-1. CU's only victory over the Illini was 90-81 on Dec. 12, 1960, in Boulder. The programs have not met since 1987.

PROBABLE STARTERS: Colorado -- F Andre Roberson, 6-7, Jr., 10.9 ppg, 11.3 rpg; F Xavier Johnson, 6-6, Fr., 9.0 ppg, 4.8 rpg; F Josh Scott, 6-10, Fr., 10.3 ppg, 5.5 rpg; G Spencer Dinwiddie, 6-6, So., 15.6 ppg, 3.2 apg; G Askia Booker, 6-1, So., 12.4 ppg, 2.2 apg. Illinois -- G Tracy Abrams, 6-1, So., 10.6 ppg, 3.3 apg; G D.J. Richardson, 6-3, Sr., 12.4 ppg, 3.9 rpg; G Brandon Paul, 6-4, Sr., 16.6 ppg, 4.4 rpg; F Tyler Griffey, 6-9, Sr., 7.1 ppg, 3.3 rpg; F/C Nnanna Ekwu, 6-11, So., 6.4 ppg, 4.6 rpg.

UP NEXT: If the Buffs win they will play the winner of the No. 2 Miami/No. 15 Pacific game on Sunday at the Erwin Center. The game time will be determined by the television networks after Friday's games.

Colorado at Illinois

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AUSTIN, Texas (AP) - For 50 years, Colorado could usually be dismissed as a program floating around the backwaters of college basketball.

Since coach Tad Boyle arrived in 2010, Colorado sure looks like a program on the rise.

Boyle has led Colorado to the NCAA tournament in consecutive seasons for the first time since 1962-63, and the No. 10-seed Buffs (21-11) are a trendy early-round upset pick when they face No. 7 seed Illinois (22-12) on Friday in the East Regional.

"We're the pretty girl right now," Colorado forward Spencer Dinwiddie said Thursday. "Everybody wants to pick us."

Colorado wouldn't have been anyone's pick until Boyle arrived from Northern Colorado. Since then, the Buffaloes have averaged 23 wins. Last season they stormed through the Pac-12 tournament to win an automatic bid to the NCAA tournament, then snagged an opening-round win over UNLV. Energized by that experience, Colorado earned an at-large bid to this season's NCAA tournament after a solid 10-8 finish in the Pac-12.

Everything, Dinwiddie said, is going just like Boyle promised.

"When coach was recruiting me, he talked about wanting to build Colorado into a perennial Top 25 program. I think you see the strides that we're making toward that," Dinwiddie said. "And we are just going to get better."

Boyle, a former Kansas player, is building Colorado's foundation on players like Dinwiddie, a forward from California who led the team in scoring, and Texan Andre Roberson, the Pac-12 defensive player of the year who ranks second nationally in rebounds with 11.3 per game.

Roberson grew up in San Antonio, about 75 miles south of Austin, and was passed over by the major programs in the Lone Star State until he had already decided to take his game to the Rocky Mountains.

"I was kind of a late bloomer. The Texas schools didn't come in until late," Roberson said. "I took it as a sign of disrespect."

For Boyle, attracting talent like Roberson and Dinwiddie took making a hard sell on what Colorado could be, not what it had been. Colorado had been to the NCAA tournament just 10 times between 1940 and 2011.

"We sell the opportunity to come and make your mark on a program and leave your stamp on a program and build a legacy," Boyle said.

Comparing basketball pedigrees with Illinois isn't even close. The Illini have been to the NCAA tournament 30 times, 11 since 2000. Illinois missed last season's tournament but returns with a senior-laden lineup under first-year

Pac 12			Big Ten		
TEAM	CONF. W-L	TOT. W-L	TEAM	CONF. W-L	TOT. W-L
UCLA	13-5	25-10	Indiana	14-4	29-7
Arizona	12-6	27-8	Ohio St.	13-5	29-8
Oregon	12-6	28-9	Michigan St.	13-5	27-9
California	12-6	21-12	Michigan	12-6	30-7
Colorado	10-8	21-12	Wisconsin	12-6	23-12
Arizona St.	9-9	22-13	Iowa	9-9	25-13
Stanford	9-9	19-15	Illinois	8-10	23-13
Washington	9-9	18-16	Minnesota	8-10	21-13
USC	9-9	14-18	Purdue	8-10	16-18
Utah	5-13	15-18	Nebraska	5-13	15-18
Oregon St.	4-14	14-18	Northwestern	4-14	13-19
Wash. State	4-14	13-19	Penn St.	2-16	10-21
Expanded Standings			Expanded Standings		

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coach John Groce.

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The Illini burst through a 12-0 start that included winning the Maui Invitational and a win over Gonzaga, the team that entered the NCAA tournament at the top seed in the West Region and ranked No. 1.

The schedule got much tougher when the Big Ten season started in January. After a 2-7 start in league play, Illinois rallied to an 8-10 finish and enter the NCAA tournament having lost three of their last four games.

The mid-season slide brought out a lot of "doubters and haters," Groce said. "They stayed the course. I appreciate the way they fought."

With that kind of up-and-down season, Illinois players displayed little of the positive energy Colorado did during the teams' pregame NCAA news conferences Thursday.

Dinwiddie talked about the momentum surrounding the Colorado program and the chase to "win it all." Illinois guard D.J. Richardson noted Friday's game "could possibly be our last" and the team wants to "come out and fight and have fun."

While that could come across as a sense of doom from Illini players, it could also be a quiet confidence from a team that had to slug its way through the nation's toughest conference to get here.

"We know we can play with anybody in this tournament," Illinois forward Tyler Griffey said. "We have had some big moments and big games and big wins, but we have had some low points too. I think we have learned from all of those experiences and we are going to use them to our advantage."

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DUKE	73	Final	WISC	46	Final	NCST	72
UOP	49		CINCY	63		ISALLE	63
MIAMI	78	Final	CREIGH	67	Final	KSTATE	61
JMAD	62		FGC	78		IONA	70
IND	83	Final	GTOWN	68	Final	OHIOST	95
NOVA	71		NWST	47		OKLA	55
UNC	78	Final	FLA	79	Final	SDGST	70
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Armedaddan

Mar 21, 2013

Colorado's Andre Roberson vs. Illinois' Brandon Paul a marquee matchup for NCAA Tournament

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

Posted:

DenverPost.com

AUSTIN, Texas — Go ahead and call Andre Roberson vs. Brandon Paul one of the marquee individual matchups in the early rounds of the NCAA Tournament. That would not be an exaggeration.

Feeling no need to keep it secret, Colorado coach Tad Boyle acknowledged that Roberson, a 6-foot-7 junior forward, will check Illinois' Paul, a 6-4 senior guard, in Friday's East Regional opener at the Erwin Center.

That's the newly named Pac-12 defensive player of the year against Paul, who averages 16.6 points per game and often carries the Illini (22-12, 8-10 Big Ten).

"Brandon Paul is a big shot taker and he's a big shot maker," Boyle said.

Roberson, who feels comfortable checking players on the perimeter, usually draws the assignment of guarding the opponent's top scoring threat. In this case, that's Paul. And because the Illini employ a three-guard lineup, CU guards Spencer Didwiddie and Askia Booker will be manned up out front as well.

"I'm going to try to not give (Paul) any breathing room, dictate where he goes, not where he wants to go, just be aggressive with him," Roberson said Thursday. "I'm going to try not to let him get shots off because he's a dangerous player and he likes the 3-ball. We will have a great game plan for him, and I'll have to execute it."

Illinois is 7-4 when Paul scores 20 or more points. Perhaps more telling: The seventh-seeded Illini went 4-0 when he scored 25 or more, including a 35-point explosion by Paul on Dec. 8 at Gonzaga, the only home loss this season for the Zags, the top seed in the West Regional.

"Brandon is a big guard who can put the ball on the floor," Boyle said. "He can shoot the ball from deep, and they run a lot of screens for him. He'll let it fly when he catches it. Andre is going to have to get through a lot of screens. He'll get some bumps and bruises. But using his length and athleticism to be there on the catch and play Brandon's shot high is the key. (Paul) has a quick release. He's a very capable shooter of getting hot."

Paul isn't often guarded by an opponent taller than he is. But it doesn't appear that Paul has lost any sleep over the matchup against Roberson.

"I know he's real athletic, so it's going to be a challenge," Paul said. "But we put ourselves in position to be successful. And I know my teammates are going to do a good job of getting me in positions to score."

Illinois coach John Groce sounded as if he was weary of the Roberson vs. Paul talk.

"I want to make one thing crystal clear," Groce said during his interview session Thursday. "It's not Roberson vs. Paul, it's Illinois vs. Colorado. I think Brandon, as an older player, understands that."

No. 7 Illinois vs. No. 10 Colorado
2:40 p.m. Friday, TNT

Key matchup: CU's Andre Roberson vs. Illinois' Brandon Paul

Recently named Pac-12 defensive player of the year by the league's coaches, Roberson usually plays forward. But he has quick feet, and it's not unusual to see him guard perimeter players. The 6-foot-7 Roberson will have a size advantage over the 6-4 Paul, and for the Illini star it may feel awkward to face a taller player. "The thing I appreciated most watching Roberson (on film) is his intelligence. I think his IQ's tremendous," Illinois coach John Groce said. "I watch him on film and see how he anticipates, his vision. That makes him a great defender."

Up high: Look for Colorado's 6-6 sophomore point guard, Spencer Dinwiddie, to also get opportunities to help out on Paul. Otherwise, Dinwiddie will be on 6-3 D.J. Richardson, who ranks third on Illinois' career 3-point list and has made at least one 3-pointer in 40 consecutive games. That leaves Colorado's smallest guard, 6-2 Askia Booker, on 6-1 Tracy Adams, so the matchups, at least physically, look good for Colorado. But defenses have been trying to stop Illinois' guard-oriented attack all season and the Illini have been able to work free for open looks.

Down low: Colorado's 6-10 freshman center Josh Scott will have his hands full with Illinois' Nnanna Ekwu, a 6-11 sophomore. Ekwu hasn't produced big numbers (6.4 points per game, 4.6 rebounds), but provides tremendous energy. Scott must avoid getting into early foul trouble while trying to stay with such an active player. At forward, CU freshman Xavier Johnson will have to chase Illinois' 6-9 Tyler Griffey all over the court. Griffey has attempted 113 3-pointers and rarely sets up in the low post. On the flip side, CU's Johnson has a big advantage in athleticism and would do well to post up against Griffey.

Off the bench: It would appear Illinois has the edge here, although neither team depends heavily on its subs. The big difference is Illinois junior Joseph Bertrand, a 6-6 reserve guard who has scored in double figures nine times.

Coaching: Colorado's Tad Boyle can outcoach many of his colleagues, but first-year Illinois coach John Groce also has the reputation as a terrific strategist and motivator. Groce was a longtime assistant to Thad Matta (Butler, Xavier and Ohio State) before getting his break as a head coach with Ohio University. Groce led the Bobcats to a four-year record of 85-56 and won three NCAA Tournament games in two appearances. Tom Kensler, The Denver Post

**Alicia Jessop**, Contributor

I write about dollars and cents in the world of sports.

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A Move To The Pac-12 And Coaching Changes Brought Winning Back To University Of Colorado Basketball

The year was 1963. Songs like the Beach Boys' "Surfin' U.S.A." topped the charts. It would be another eight months before the president, John F. Kennedy, took a fateful drive through [Dallas](#). For [Colorado](#) sports fans, March 1963 marked the last time that the Colorado Buffaloes men's basketball team made back-to-back NCAA appearances. That is, until March 2013.

Over the last 50 years, the University of Colorado has achieved great success in many sports. However, many of these successes were achieved outside of its basketball program. Historically, the Buffaloes have won 24 national championships, the most memorable arguably being the football team's 1990 national championship. 27 conference championships were won by the Buffaloes during its years in the Big 12 conference. Yet, none were attained by the men's basketball team.

In large part, following its back-to-back NCAA tournament appearances in 1961-62 and 1962-63, Colorado's men's basketball team's success laid dormant. While the team made the NCAA tournament in 1997 and 2003, it wasn't until a slew of sweeping changes were kickstarted in 2010 that the team began traveling down the road to success it is on today.

2010 was a pivotal year for the Buffaloes. On June 10, 2010, Colorado accepted an invitation to join what would become the Pac-12 conference. It joined the conference in the 2011-12 season. Moving to the Pac-12 placed the Buffaloes amongst some of college basketball's elite teams. Collectively, Pac-12 teams have won 15 national championships in men's basketball. Coming into the conference, Colorado realized it needed to devote more energy into developing the success of its men's basketball team. According to Colorado's athletic director, Mike Bohn, "Moving into the Pac-12, we recognized we needed to make improvements in our men's basketball program." Part of this improvement effort included working to ensure the team's profitability. Bohn notes that eight years ago, the Buffaloes were the only men's basketball program in the Big 12 that wasn't breaking even. In transitioning to the Pac-12, Bohn says that Colorado "recognized it was important for us to have more

depth to our lineup” by ensuring the the financial and on-court success of the basketball team.

When Bohn took the job as athletics director in 2005, the basketball team’s offices were in the football stadium—which is three blocks away from Colorado’s basketball arena. When the team finished lifting weights, it would have to walk to a separate facility afterward to change clothes in a locker room. Seeing these things as detrimental to recruiting, Bohn insisted that the basketball program needed its own training facility. In early 2010, Colorado broke ground on a 43,000-square foot practice facility for its basketball and volleyball teams. The development of the new facility set Colorado on more equal recruiting ground to its opponents while making training more efficient for its student-athletes. This move, according to Bohn, facilitated the “synergy” the basketball program needed to rebuild its success and make its way back to the NCAA tournament.

Moving conferences and building a new facility as it turns out, wasn’t enough to create the synergy necessary for the Buffaloes’ basketball program to begin winning again. So, nearly two months before Colorado announced its move to the Pac-12, it hired a local basketball legend to serve as its 18th head men’s basketball coach. In Tad Boyle, who played high school basketball in Colorado—winning a state championship and being named the Colorado Player of the Year his senior season—Colorado found someone who could not only appeal to the local fan base, but knew what it takes to win at the collegiate level. As a member of the [Kansas](#) Jayhawks’ squad, Boyle played in back-to-back NCAA tournaments in 1984 and 1985. “With synergy, you need to have a leader. Whenever you have someone who has a sense about the community and can put all of that together, it starts with that. Tad’s integrity, competitive spirit, ability to attract recruits and ability to galvanize everybody to get on the same page couldn’t be more ideal,” Bohn said.

And galvanized he has. Most importantly, Boyle has galvanized the players that Colorado fans cheer on. For the first time in 50 years, Colorado is playing in back-to-back NCAA tournaments. Last year, the team made it to the Sweet 16, where it lost against Baylor. This year, it’s pitted in the first round against [Illinois](#). He has accomplished this all while assisting his team in achieving 1000 NCAA Academic Progress Rates, meaning that Boyle’s players all remained eligible and in school.

[Throughout the period, Bohn knew that success](#) on the court and galvanized players leads to an energized fan base. Bohn notes that in recent years, Colorado students and alumni have become more active in supporting the team. This year, Colorado’s basketball team enjoyed the second-highest attendance in the Pac-12, falling only below Arizona’s. Bohn notes that Colorado only fell behind Arizona, because Arizona has the largest arena in the conference. According to Bohn, the team enjoyed a 69 percent increase in season ticket sales and the student section was sold out for all games. The team is currently enjoying a record number of sellouts.

This increased fan support led to another important factor: An increased number of donations. Bohn points out that when Colorado joined the Pac-12, it found a conference with five-times the number of alumni in its footprint than in the Big 12. In part because of this and the athletic department’s success, donations are up. When Colorado was in the Big 12, 87 donors provided the athletic department with a gift of \$10,000 or more. Today, that number is at 117. Colorado’s total donor base has grown by 8 percent since

joining the Pac-12. “We recognize that basketball has been a key piece in putting this together,” Bohn said.

These donations in turn have allowed Colorado’s men’s basketball team to do something it hasn’t done in 112 years: turn a profit. According to Department of Education data, Colorado spent \$1,063,499 on its men’s basketball program last year. The program in turn generated revenue of \$4,490,779, leading to a positive net income of \$2,303,703.

Fifty years after its last back-to-back NCAA appearances, Colorado has much to celebrate when it comes to its basketball program. This year, for the second year in a row, the athletics department paid for all expenses to send fifty Colorado students to the team’s first round game. The energy, support and expectations surrounding this Buffaloes program are as high as the mountains that surround the western edge of its campus. It’s to be seen, though, if they’re high enough for the program to do something its never done, and make its third-straight NCAA tournament appearance in 2014.

This article is available online at:

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/aliciajessop/2013/03/22/a-move-to-the-pac-12-and-coaching-changes-brought-winning-back-to-university-of-colorado-basketball/>

Ex-Wagner star wants to leave Austin a winner for once

Updated 11:34 pm, Thursday, March 21, 2013

AUSTIN — After dabbing his eyes with Kleenex following his last game here, Andre Roberson is intent on a different outcome Friday from Colorado's visit to the Erwin Center.

In his two previous games at the University of Texas' basketball home, Roberson's Wagner High School team lost in the Class 5A state semifinals.

And in his last game here in 2010 with the Thunderbirds, he particularly remembers a sad departure from the interview podium after losing to Garland Lakeview Centennial.

“I have some bad memories,” Roberson said. “Going to (the) press conference with tears in my eyes. I'm definitely not going to let that bother me this time.”

In his closest visit to his hometown in two years, Roberson and the Buffaloes meet seventh-seeded Illinois in the second round of the NCAA tournament Friday.

This time, he wants to leave with a smile.

His presence will be vitally important if the Buffaloes have any hope of claiming victories in back-to-back tournaments for the first time in 50 seasons.

Colorado is a trendy upset pick to topple the Illini. The national basketball hoopheads remember its opening-game victory over UNLV last year and the steady development coach Tad Boyle has fostered within the program in his three seasons.

The biggest reason for that growth has been the consistent play of Roberson, who was selected as the Pac-12 Defensive Player of the Year and led the conference in rebounding in the regular season.

Roberson could be playing in Austin on a regular basis. But he said he felt “disrespected” that the Longhorns and other Texas schools started recruiting him after his high school basketball career was over.

That sentiment, amazingly enough, came after his older sister Amber was a volleyball standout at UT.

As fans watch Friday's game, it wouldn't be hard to envision Andre Roberson in burnt orange. His unique skill set of rebounding and defense — which some scouts have compared to Hall of Famer Dennis Rodman — might have been enough to keep the Rick Barnes-led Horns' season going.

Instead, they will be watching the 6-foot-7 Roberson, who's finally healthy after a late-season viral infection that sidelined him for two games.

That late illness cost him a chance at being the top rebounder in the country. Roberson finished at 11.3 boards per game, just behind Siena's O.D. Anosike (11.4).

"I was leading the nation until the last game when it dropped a little bit," Roberson said. "I'm always playing one behind, and I don't think it matters with just one game. I still have a chance."

Rebounding will be only one task asked of Roberson, whose 7-foot wingspan will be matched against Illinois leading scorer Brandon Paul.

"Roberson's a real athletic kid," Paul said. "He lives on rebounding and he's like a double-digit kid every night. I know he's real athletic, so it will be a challenge."

Roberson only hopes he's leaving Austin this time with a different feeling than before.

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The New York Times**The Quad****The New York Times College Sports Blog**

MARCH 21, 2013, 11:59 PM

Back in Texas for a Little RevengeBy **TOM SPOUSTA**

AUSTIN, Tex. — Colorado's Andre Roberson still sounds jilted that he wasn't recruited seriously by any Texas colleges coming out of high school in San Antonio. The snub was made even sweeter for him when the Buffs landed here in Austin on the University of Texas' home court. And the fact no team from his home state was deemed worthy of an a tournament bid.

"The Texas schools, they started coming in late, after everybody else and Colorado came in," Roberson said. "And I kind of took that as disrespect. Since I'm in Texas and all, I just felt really disrespected. So I just felt like going to another Big 12 school and kind of getting back at them."

Roberson, a junior forward, was the nation's second-leading rebounder this season, averaging 11.3 per game. He's making his second consecutive tournament appearance with Colorado, the university he originally signed with before it shifted from the Big 12 to the Pac-12.

His sister, Arielle, also left Texas and landed in the N.C.A.A. tournament. She's a redshirt freshman for the Colorado women's team, which faces Kansas on Saturday in Boulder.

"It's just great that we both made it," Andre Roberson said. "Both programs are up and rising. I just kind of gave her a little tip of what we did last year, and she definitely took it well. It's pretty cool to have her in the N.C.A.A. as well."

The Buffs, seeded 10th, face No. 7 Illinois here Friday.

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