

## Men's basketball: CU Buffs face pivotal game at Cal on Saturday

By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

DailyCamera.com

BERKELEY, Calif. -- The Buffs hope to welcome back their big man for what is arguably the biggest game of the season to date.

Josh Scott practiced on Thursday and Friday and is expected to play for Colorado against Cal on Saturday at Haas Pavilion (3 p.m., ESPN).

The 6-10 forward missed CU's victories over Utah and Stanford after suffering a concussion against Arizona State on Feb. 16.

"I'm ready to go. This has been a tough two weeks just sitting down watching," Scott said after showing well during a physical session with his teammates and then doing some extra conditioning work. "We're in the middle of the Pac-12 race and I couldn't do anything about it and I was not feeling real well. I'm glad to come back and try to help these guys win."

CU head coach Tad Boyle said athletic trainer Trae Tashiro will still need to officially clear Scott before the opening tip.

"Josh wants to come back. Mentally he's ready," Boyle said. "We just have to make sure that he doesn't have any more of the symptoms that come with concussions."

Scott was knocked out by an elbow to the head by Arizona State's 7-2 center Jordan Bachynski. CU's prize freshman was the one called for a foul and the rest of the 63-62 overtime loss to the Sun Devils is foggy.

"It was pretty bad the first couple days. I wasn't myself for almost four or five days. It was the weirdest thing I've ever had," Scott said. "I remember fighting around (Bachynski), getting hit in the head, other than that I don't really know. The whole night is a blur to be honest. I'm just glad I recovered and don't have any damage or anything like that."

The Buffs (19-8, 9-6) will try to end a six-game winning streak by the Bears (19-9, 11-5), which is CU's only option in order to stay in the race for a top-four finish and a bye at the Pac-12 Tournament.

After slow starts to the conference season both of these teams appear to be very dangerous now that the calendar has flipped to March.

Cal was 3-4 in Pac-12 play after suffering an 81-71 loss in Boulder on Jan. 27. The Bears are 8-1 since and exploded for a 21-0 run during their 64-46 victory over Utah on Thursday.

CU started 1-4 in conference but has rattled off eight wins in its last 10 games, including three consecutive road triumphs.

"We're both a little bit up, a little bit down throughout a game and throughout a season. They're playing well right now and so are we," Boyle said. "If we don't win the game we're not going to get the fourth seed."

Allen Crabbe, despite being the focal point of the Utes' physical defense, finished with 15 points and 11

rebounds.

Andre Roberson will try to hold Crabbe, the conference's leading scorer and player of the year candidate this season, in check.

The real key to Cal's resurgence has been the emergence of Justin Cobbs. The junior guard garnered his third conference player of the week award this season by averaging 16.0 points, 6.0 assists and 4.5 rebounds during the Bears' road sweep of Oregon and Oregon State.

"I just want to compete against guys that are going to talk mess later on when I go back to California and see them," Askia Booker, who played against the Bears backcourt growing up, said of the challenge. "It's fun playing against those guys. They're so talented, you want to show out against those type of players."

Cal, which wraps up the regular-season with another home game against rival Stanford next week, believes it can still catch Oregon (23-6, 12-4) for the Pac-12 title.

But, Mike Montgomery has lost his last three games against Boyle.

"We are going to have to be smoother offensively; we are going to have to execute better," Montgomery said after the Bears shot 40 percent from the field and 29.2 percent behind the arc against Utah. "They run the floor very well and they are aggressive at the point of attack. They will take it right at you and create foul situations with penetration. A lot of pick and rolls. They are very good defensively.

"It has been a tough matchup. It is tougher (in Boulder), they run you hard and try to get you tired. We had to bring everything we could to win last year."

The Buffs lost 57-50 in their last visit to Haas Pavilion on Jan. 12, 2012, but held eventual Pac-12 player of the year Jorge Gutierrez to five points on 2-for-17 shooting.

"Without a doubt this game is very critical," Booker said. "We want to win our fourth straight on the road. If we can do that we should be somewhere at the top of the conference at the end."

Follow Ryan on Twitter: @RyanThorburn

CU men's hoops preview

**SATURDAY:** The Colorado Buffaloes (19-8, 9-6) will play their final road game of the season against the Cal Bears (19-9, 11-5) at 3 p.m. at Haas Pavilion (11,877).

**BROADCAST:** Television on ESPNU with Dave Flemming (play-by-play) and Sean Farnham (analyst). Radio on KKZN (760 AM) with Mark Johnson (play-by-play) and Chad Brown (color). Follow on Twitter: @RyanThorburn.

**CU STORY LINES:** Josh Scott is expected to return for the first time since suffering a concussion on Feb. 16. ... The Buffs have won three consecutive road games and eight out of their last 10 games overall after a 65-63 victory on Wednesday at Stanford. ... Andre Roberson, despite having the flu, scored a career-high 24 points on 9-for-13 shooting against the Cardinal. ... Stanford's Josh Powell dunked the ball at the end of regulation, but not before time expired. CU improved to 7-1 in two-point games under Tad Boyle. ... Boyle is

currently tied with Bill Blair and Joe Harrington for fifth place on CU's all-time victories list with 67.

**CAL STORY LINES:** The Bears won their sixth consecutive game with a 64-46 battering of Utah on Thursday. ... Allen Crabbe, the front-runner for Pac-12 player of the year honors, had 15 points and 11 rebounds against the Utes. ... Cal, which opened conference play 3-4, is now within a game of first-place Oregon in the standings. ... The Bears haven't won seven straight conference games since opening the 2003 Pac-10 schedule 7-0. ... Cal is 13-0 when leading at halftime.

**KEY STAT:** A victory would give CU 20 wins for the third consecutive season, something that's never happened before in the program's history, and would be the first time the Buffs have won four consecutive conference road games since the 1996-97 season (at Missouri, Texas Tech, Baylor and Kansas State).

**COACHES:** Tad Boyle is 67-34 in his third season at CU. Mike Montgomery is 107-55 in his fifth season at Cal.

**SERIES:** Colorado leads 11-10 but is 1-8 all-time in Berkeley. The Buffs' only road win in the series was 63-60 on Dec. 7, 2004.

**PROBABLE STARTERS:** Colorado -- F Andre Roberson, 6-7, Jr., 10.8 ppg, 11.7 rpg; F Xavier Johnson, 6-6, Fr., 8.1 ppg, 4.7 rpg; F Josh Scott, 6-10, Fr., 11.4 ppg, 5.0 rpg; G Spencer Dinwiddie, 6-6, So., 15.4 ppg, 2.9 apg; G Askia Booker, 6-1, So., 13.0 ppg, 2.3 apg. Cal -- F Richard Solomon, 6-10, Jr., 8.5 ppg, 6.6 rpg; F David Kravish, 6-9, So., 8.0 ppg, 6.8 rpg; G Justin Cobbs, 6-3, Jr., 14.8 ppg, 4.7 apg; G Tyrone Wallace, 6-4, Fr., 7.2 ppg, 2.8 apg; G Allen Crabbe, 6-6, Jr., 18.8 ppg, 6.0 rpg.

**UP NEXT:** The Buffs host Oregon on Thursday at the Coors Events Center (7 p.m., ESPN2).