



COLORADO BUFFALOES

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CU freshman Josh Scott (40) battles for position against Arizona.

Photo Courtesy: Casey Sapio-USA TODAY Sports



Brooks: Scott, Buffs Face Crucial Hoops Weekend

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BOULDER - The fog has lifted for Josh Scott and the clearing comes at a fine time for Colorado hoops. The basketball no longer feels like an enlarged cantaloupe in his hands. His low-post footwork is nearly back to normal and not to be mistaken for bad line dancing.

For a couple of weeks, the Buffaloes' gifted 6-10 freshman center had a rough go of it. On Feb. 16, an elbow belonging to Arizona State's 7-2, 250-pound Jordan Bachynski caught Scott squarely in the head. There was some conjecture in the Coors Events Center as to whether Scott's head also bounced off the floor when he went sprawling in the lane, but no confirmation will come from the bouncer.

"I don't remember anything about the play, nothing at all," Scott said.

But this much he does remember: CU lost the game 63-62 in overtime and he was lost for the next two games with a concussion. Because of the ASU game's physicality, CU coach Tad Boyle likened it to football on hardwood.

Of the early possession that resulted in his injury, Scott says he was "just trying to compete" and that Bachynski

BUFFALO EXTRAS



Game Notes vs. Oregon

"didn't try to hurt me; I know that much. He was frustrated and that kind of stuff happens. It sucks, but it happens."

After about two weeks, the symptoms subsided, he passed the requisite tests for clearance and he was able to return last weekend at California.

But by his admission he was not all the way back.

"The ball felt really foreign," Scott said. "I could always tell when I hadn't picked up a basketball (in a while) because it just felt really weird. I was glad I had the two days (of practice) before, but it was still really weird."

In CU's 62-46 loss to Cal, Scott played 29 minutes, scoring four points and grabbing 11 rebounds. The four points were just under seven below his overall scoring average, the 11 boards were just over six above his seasonal mark.

"It was really difficult trying to come back and fit in offensively," Scott said, adding that when he recognized he was not going to be an immediate fit in CU's offensive sets he made up his mind to try and influence the game in another way. "And that's where those 11 rebounds came in."

Scott said the Buffs, who shot only 23 percent against the Bears, "had played two games without me and done a really great job. So I didn't really add anything offensively . . . the first time I had picked up a basketball was a couple of days before and that was the first time in two weeks."

Making his return in Berkeley at sea level "helped, but I definitely was not up to speed," he said. "It was a little bit of a problem trying to get my wind back. I just tried to compete and do my best."

The upside for the Buffs is that Scott has gotten progressively better in both conditioning and his normal post play. "I got my wind back, but I'm still improving with that," he said. "And I'm getting more shots up."

CU will need him at full-go for its final pair of regular-season games against No. 19 Oregon (Thursday, 7 p.m., ESPN2) and Oregon State (Saturday, 2:30 p.m., Pac-12 Network). The Buffs are eyeing a sweep of both teams, having defeated the then-No. 19 Ducks, 48-47, and the Beavers two nights later, 72-68.

The win last month in Eugene represented CU's third win in four meetings against Oregon - all of the 'W's by one point. The others: 72-71 last season in Boulder and 63-62 in last season's Pac-12 Conference tournament. The only recent "runaway" was CU's 90-81 loss in Eugene on the last weekend of regular-season play last season.

In explaining CU's trio of one-point wins, Boyle said, "I don't know if it's matchups (or) style of play. I just think they're a tough, disciplined team, we're a tough, disciplined team. Sometimes it comes down to those games. They're a tough team to get away from because they're tough-minded and disciplined and well-coached."

After stressing mental toughness to his team all season, Boyle said the need is magnified this week: "When you play Oregon it's critical." Thursday's game "is going to come down to a box out here or a made shot there. Or taking a charge . . . we have to play with supreme mental toughness to beat Oregon. We were able to do that at their gym, at the Pac-12 tournament and here last year. The game at their place (CU's 90-81 loss), they got away from us a little bit. I've got a lot of respect for them."

Scott said the Ducks "compete and are really well-coached - just like us. They've got that same mental focus on defense. It's a grudge match almost."

Added sophomore guard Spender Dinwiddie: "I think it's just two hardnosed defensive teams playing each other, and that's the kind of game it produces. I don't think many of the games have been particularly high scoring. Each team has a will to win and we just fight every game."

In their first meeting with the Buffs last month, the Ducks were without freshman point guard Dominic Artis (foot injury). After missing nine games - Oregon went 6-0 with him in Pac-12 play, 5-4 without him - Artis returned last Thursday against Oregon State, scoring six points in 12 minutes off the bench.

Coach Dana Altman plans to work Artis back in slowly, possibly targeting next week's Pac-12 tournament in Las Vegas to shift him back into the starting lineup. Jonathan Lloyd replaced Artis at the point, but Lloyd missed Tuesday's practice with what Altman said he hoped "was a 24-hour deal."

Boyle said Artis "makes a huge difference; he gives them an extra shooter on the floor that stretches your defense. He's a good player. You just look at their offensive numbers and their record with him and without him - it's pretty significant."

Thursday night's game is crucial for the Buffs as well as the Ducks. Oregon is 12-4 in league play (23-6 overall) and tied with UCLA for the Pac-12 lead. CU is 9-7 (19-9 overall) and tied with Southern California for fifth place. A No. 4 seed/first-day tourney bye is still within reach for the Buffs, but they'll need help to achieve it. The first step is theirs - defeating Oregon and OSU - then Arizona State needs to win at Arizona on Saturday.

Boyle said the Ducks are "coming in playing for a league title, we're playing for pride and seeding. That shouldn't matter; when the ball's tipped up it's time to hook it up, whether it's Oregon, Oregon State or whoever we're playing. It shouldn't be any different."

Despite the loss at Cal, CU's RPI remains in the No. 27-29 range, which helps keep the Buffs in consideration for an at-large NCAA Tournament bid. But as Boyle & Co. found out two seasons ago, there are no guarantees. A sweep this weekend would help solidify their NCAA resume, as would at least one win in the conference tournament.

But Dinwiddie said the Buffs' focus is nowhere near Vegas. Rather, it's on "just winning the next game and what it means for our program to produce that type of consistency. That's really where our focus is now."

Boyle knows if it's anywhere else, things can unravel quickly.

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SHOW MENU



Men's basketball: Chen wants to end CU career in NCAA Tournament

By Ryan Thorburn *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

Posted:

DailyCamera.com

Tad Boyle warned the Buffs this week that the 2012-13 season will be ending too soon if they don't get refocused and re-energized.

There might not be a sense of urgency for many of the players on the roster who have a lot of college basketball ahead of them in the years to come.

But it's a different story for Sabatino Chen, who is almost out of eligibility.

Colorado's soft-spoken senior isn't going to bark at the team the way Nate Tomlinson did at this time last year or dominate the Pac-12 Tournament like Carlon Brown.

Chen, like a determined Austin Dufault last March, just wants to lead by example and do whatever it takes to finish his career in the NCAA Tournament.

CU's last home stand of the season begins Thursday against No. 19 Oregon at the Coors Events Center (7 p.m., ESPN2).

"The seniors last year wouldn't make any excuses and they knew it was up to them and they made sure they had an impact on how their last games went," Chen said. "I'm not satisfied yet because this team has a lot of potential and we could go a long way if we play the way we can play."

The Buffs (19-9, 9-7) played their worst offensive game of the season last Saturday during a 62-46 loss at Cal. The visitors shot a joyless 23.1 percent from the field and were out-rebounded 46-36.

"There's two things I look at: Did we get good shots and were the right guys taking those shots? The answer to both of those is yes," Boyle said of CU's 15-for-65 performance from the field.

"The thing about Cal is their defense is so good you don't get as many open looks. When you do have them you've got to be able to knock them down, and we weren't able to do that."

The Ducks (23-6, 12-4), the Pac-12's best scoring defense (62.9 ppg), can earn at least a share of the Pac-12 regular-season championship and the No. 1 seed in Las Vegas if they beat CU and Utah on the road.

"They're coming here playing for a league title," Boyle said. "We're playing for pride."

Actually, CU still has a chance to nab the No. 4 seed and a bye at the conference tournament with a sweep of Oregon and Oregon State coupled with an Arizona loss to Arizona State.

And two quality wins over Oregon -- the Buffs escaped with a 48-47 win on Feb. 7 in Eugene -- would solidify CU's chances of earning an at-large berth into the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 1996-97.

It won't be easy.

Dana Altman will have starting point guard Dominic Artis available on a limited basis. Johnathan Loyd started

for the injured Artis in the first meeting and did not score on 0-for-7 shooting from the field.

"Those two in combination were pretty good. When we asked Johnny to play 38 minutes it was unfair to him," said Altman, whose team suffered three consecutive losses without Artis after beginning conference play 7-0. "Johnny played hard, he played well ... we just had three games that went the wrong direction."

Artis had six points off the bench in 12 minutes after returning to the lineup for Oregon's 85-75 victory over Oregon State a week ago.

CU has won the last three games in the series by one point each, including a 72-71 victory in Boulder last season and a 63-62 victory in the quarterfinals of the Pac-12 Tournament last postseason.

"I just think they're a tough, disciplined team and we're a tough, disciplined team. They're a tough team to get away from," Boyle said. "We have to play with supreme mental toughness to beat Oregon. We were able to do that in Eugene, we were able to do that in the Pac-12 Tournament and at our place last year."

A victory would give CU its seventh 20-win season in school history and the third under Boyle.

"It has been an up and down year," Chen said. "I think that's just because we're hard on ourselves and we expect a lot from ourselves. If you look back we've had a good season."

Boyle will need some of his underclassmen to play like seniors for the Buffs to make the most of this March.

THURSDAY: The Colorado Buffaloes (19-9, 9-7) will play the No. 19 Oregon Ducks (23-6, 12-4) at 7 p.m. at the Coors Events Center.

BROADCAST: Television on ESPN2 with Roxy Bernstein (play-by-play) and Miles Simon (analyst). Radio on KOA (AM 850) with Mark Johnson (play-by-play) and Chad Brown (color). Follow on Twitter: @RyanThorburn.

CU STORY LINES: The Buffs can still earn the No. 4 seed and a bye in the opening round of the Pac-12 Tournament with wins over Oregon and Oregon State coupled with an Arizona loss to Arizona State. ... CU is attempting to win 20 games for the seventh time in school history and third time under Tad Boyle. ... Andre Roberson (11.5 rpg) is still the nation's leading rebounder and still trying to get over the flu. ... This will be the final home stand of Sabatino Chen's career. The former Monarch High School standout is the only senior on CU's roster.

OREGON STORY LINES: The Ducks can win at least a share of the Pac-12 title and earn the No. 1 seed at the conference tournament with wins over CU and Utah. ... Oregon point guard Dominic Artis, who missed the first meeting due to a foot injury, will play limited minutes, according to Dana Altman. The starting point guard missed CU's win in Eugene. Backup Johnathan Loyd went 0-for-7 from the field and did not score. ... The Ducks lead the Pac-12 in scoring defense, giving up an average of 62.9 points per game.

KEY STAT: The Buffs are 3-2 against ranked teams this season, including a 48-47 win at Oregon on Feb. 7. The program hasn't had a winning record against ranked teams since the 1960-61 season (1-0).

COACHES: Tad Boyle is 67-35 in his third season at CU. Dana Altman is 68-34 in his third season at Oregon.

SERIES: CU leads 6-3 after winning the previous three meetings by one point each time. The Buffs are 3-0 against Oregon in Boulder.

PROBABLE STARTERS: Colorado -- F Andre Roberson, 6-7, Jr., 10.8 ppg, 11.5 rpg; F Xavier Johnson, 6-6, Fr., 8.3 ppg, 4.8 rpg; F Josh Scott, 6-10, Fr., 11.2 ppg, 5.3 rpg; G Spencer Dinwiddie, 6-6, So., 15.2 ppg, 3.0 apg; G Askia Booker, 6-1, So., 12.8 ppg, 2.2 apg. Oregon -- C Tony Woods, 6-11, Sr., 9.4 ppg, 1.1 bpg; F Arsalan Kazemi, 6-7, Sr., 9.4 ppg, 9.9 rpg; F E.J. Singler, 11.5 ppg, 3.0 apg; G Jonathan Loyd, 5-8, Jr., 4.1 ppg, 2.8 apg; G Damyean Dotson, 6-5, Fr., 11.0 ppg, 3.9 rpg.

UP NEXT: The Buffs conclude the regular season against Oregon State on Saturday at the Coors Events Center (2:30 p.m., Pac-12 Network).

Follow Ryan on Twitter: @RyanThorburn

CU Buffs expect another thriller against 19th-ranked Oregon Ducks

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

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — The Colorado men's basketball team remains alive in its quest for a first-round bye at next week's Pac-12 Tournament in Las Vegas. But Buffaloes coach Tad Boyle said all he can think about is another heart-stopper against Oregon on Thursday night.

Since Colorado joined the Pac-12 before last season, the Buffs and Ducks have met four times. CU has won three, each by one point.

Colorado's 63-62 victory over Oregon in last year's conference tournament quarterfinals in Los Angeles kept CU's NCAA Tournament chances alive. The Buffs went on to win the Pac-12 Tournament. In CU's most recent meeting with Oregon, the Buffs came from behind for a 48-47 victory in Eugene a month ago.

Neither head coach could offer a clear explanation why the games have been so close.

"I don't know if it's matchups or style of play or whatever it is," Boyle said. "I just think Oregon is a tough, disciplined team. And we're a tough, disciplined team. ... They're a tough team to get away from (and build a lead)."

Said Oregon coach Dana Altman: "We've had good games with Colorado. We just haven't finished them. We anticipate another good game."

There is much on the line. The 19th-ranked Ducks (23-6, 12-4 Pac-12) are battling for the top spot in the conference. Colorado (19-9, 9-7) is attempting to move from fifth to fourth place, and get a bye in the Pac-12 Tournament, as well as boost its standing in the eyes of the NCAA Tournament. CU can get the fourth seed if it beats Oregon on Thursday and Oregon State on Saturday and if Arizona loses at home Saturday to Arizona State.

"We know what these games mean," CU freshman forward Josh Scott said.

The 6-foot-10 Scott returned to the court Saturday in the Buffs' 62-46 loss at California. He missed two games after suffering a concussion Feb. 16 against Arizona State. Scott played 29 minutes but hit only 2-of-10 shots. He did have a team-best 11 rebounds.

Scott had returned to practice only two days before the game against California.

"I definitely was not up to speed," he said. "(The offensive struggles) were a little bit trying to get my wind back. I just tried to compete and do my best. I definitely felt rusty. I'm looking to play better Thursday night."

Oregon also is easing a talented freshman back in its lineup. Point guard Dominic Artis returned to play 12 minutes last week in a win over Oregon State after having missed nine games — including Colorado's win in Eugene — with a foot injury. Altman said Artis likely won't build up to 20 minutes per game until next week's conference tournament.

However, his presence, even in an abbreviated role, could be huge. The 6-1 Artis is a better shooter than 5-8

junior Johnathan Lloyd.

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