



COLORADO BUFFALOES

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Cliff Meely rises, shoots in Balch Fieldhouse.

Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



Brooks: CU Hoops Family Has Lost A True Legend

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BOULDER – Cliff Meely could never be described as a stranger to Colorado basketball, but as the Buffaloes' recent ascent began three years ago Meely became a more frequent visitor to practice.

Having retired last spring from his post-basketball work of instructing and counseling in the Denver Public Schools system, Meely appeared at Tad Boyle's practices "at least once a month," CU's coach recalled on Wednesday.

Moreover, Meely, who lived in Boulder and was a passionate season ticket holder, rarely missed a game.

Next season will be different; Meely won't be there.

The CU icon – arguably the best basketball player the school has produced – died on Tuesday night. He would have celebrated his 66th birthday on July 10.

I never saw Meely play, and neither did Boyle. But those who were treated to any of his minutes in a CU uniform (1968-71) swear there were none better before Meely or since.

BUFFALO EXTRAS



CU Great Cliff Meely Passes Away

Meely was aware of the debate, but never immersed himself in it. "Whatever I did, I did it so our team could win," he told *The Denver Post* in one of his last interviews. "They retired my uniform (one of only two at CU), and that was a great honor. I don't decide how good I was compared to others. Somebody else will have to decide that."

I turned to Dan Creedon, the longtime former sports editor of the *Boulder Daily Camera* who told me Wednesday morning without reservation that Meely "is the greatest player CU ever had . . . he was such an unbelievable scorer and rebounder."

Boyle deferred to Creedon, as well as Meely's numbers: "I would trust Dan's judgment on that . . . he's seen more than most. I certainly wouldn't argue against that. I never had the opportunity to see Cliff play. But I look at the numbers and they're pretty eye-popping."

Eye-popping to the point of being nearly unreal. The 6-8, 215-pound Meely played before freshmen were eligible, so his career stats encompass his final three seasons. He still holds the top two single-season scoring averages in school history – 23.8 as a sophomore, 28.0 as a senior. His career scoring average of 24.3 points remains a school record. His career rebounding average: 12.1.

More Meely numbers of note: 54 double-doubles in his 80 career games. And in a 30-point blowout of Oklahoma in 1971, he punched up 47 points with 25 rebounds.

Said Boyle: "When you look at those numbers over a three-year period, they're even more impressive."

Ceal Barry had no problem weighing Meely's numbers and eventually nominating him for the Pac-12 Men's Basketball Hall of Honor – a duty she had as a CU associate athletics director overseeing basketball and SWA (senior women's administrator).

But until 2005, when she was doing color work for FSN at CU men's games, Barry had never met Meely.

"I kept seeing this big, tall guy sitting behind me in the front row (at the Coors Events Center) and he always got there early," said Barry, who now is serving as CU's interim athletics director. "We had to be there early too (for FSN) and during the course of this game, that game we started talking.

"Eventually, I go, 'Duh, that's Cliff Meely.' I started asking him what he thought about the night's game and we started to get to know each other. He was just delightful, an awesome guy."

When the paperwork crossed Barry's desk to nominate a CU alum for the Pac-12 Men's Basketball Hall of Honor, "Of course, I had to nominate my new best friend, Cliff Meely."

Boyle's introduction to Meely was less by chance, and Boyle said he got to know the former CU star "pretty well, although we never did anything together socially."

But Meely's place in CU basketball was never lost on Boyle. When Meely showed up at practice last season as the Buffs worked toward a second consecutive NCAA Tournament berth, "I always tried to make him feel welcome," Boyle said. "It was always good to see him."

As Boyle's young team searched for cohesion, unity and leadership, Boyle asked Meely to address the Buffs. "It wasn't about him, it was about us coming together and being a team, one unit," said assistant coach Rodney Billups.

Meely, said Boyle, also urged the Buffs to maximize their college careers: "He talked about how special a time this is in their lives, how they had to make the most of their opportunities as student-athletes and play for each other."

"Basketball is what I love, always have," Meely told the *Camera*. "One of the hardest things is when you can't play anymore. But I can go up to CU and see some of the best players in the country up close and personal, and also support the young men that attend school here at CU. I'm always very positive with them."

Boyle said Meely emphasized that the majority of CU's players wouldn't play at the next level and that they

should "take their time on this campus seriously and enjoy it."

Rodney Billups might have been more well-acquainted with Meely than most of CU's coaches. Meely steadfastly supported Rodney's older brother Chauncey – a verifiable contender with Meely for CU's top all-time player.

Chauncey, said Rodney, "was devastated" Tuesday night when he was informed about Meely's death. "Cliff always supported Chauncey's career," Rodney said. "Every time they saw each other they gave each other a big hug and laughed. He came to all the games, knew everybody by name . . . he was unbelievable."

Although Meely was from another generation of basketball, Boyle wanted his players to be aware of what Meely meant to CU. He said he believed the current Buffs respected Meely's accomplishments: "In today's game, if there's one thing about the players, it's incumbent on us as coaches to make sure they respect the history of the game.

"And Cliff Meely was a big part of the game of basketball and certainly Colorado basketball. I don't know if our players appreciated him as much as I did, or our coaching staff did, and the numbers he put up and the impact he had on this program. But I know true Buff fans, the fans who were around when Cliff played, certainly appreciated him and what he meant to this program."

Meely, who was born in Rosedale, Miss., was a first-round draftee (No. 7 pick) and played six years in the NBA (Houston, Los Angeles). Life after pro basketball toughened, with a battle against substance abuse presenting a difficult hurdle to overcome.

Meely, said Rodney Billups, "didn't talk about that to our guys . . . but I've heard through different sources that he came through a lot and prevailed."

And he didn't try to hide his past. In a 1985 interview with the *Post*, he said, "The game didn't put me in a position like this, but things that occurred during my life while I was involved in basketball had some cause and effect.

"In the pros I didn't achieve certain goals I had set for myself. Not obtaining those goals gave me sort of a bitter taste in my mouth about how I was dealt with in professional ball. I had a personal goal of being one of the best ballplayers to play the game. Coming out of college, I felt I had that capability. But circumstances and situations dictated otherwise."

In that interview, Meely's genuine love for basketball was evident.

"I never played basketball for money," he said. "Money wasn't the most important thing to me, and it's still not. The most important thing to me was basketball. There was an inner drive in me to perfect my basketball game. People sometimes think money solves all problems, but I never had any problems until I started making major money. I let the wrong people get up on me, for the wrong reasons. That's what happened with the cocaine. It cost me."

Rodney Billups called Meely "the epitome of a Buff for life . . . he brought himself to tears talking about his experience here and how he came here. He said (CU) was a family the day he got here and it's still a family."

Today, the family mourns.

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SHOW MENU



Men's basketball: Former CU Buff Cliff Meely dies

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

DailyCamera.com

The Colorado Buffaloes lost one of their all-time greats on Tuesday.

Cliff Meely, one of the greatest scorers in the history of CU basketball, died on Tuesday night at Boulder Community Hospital. CU said Meely, who was 65, died from complications from a blood infection.

A press release from CU said that Meely developed septic shock from the infection and died unexpectedly.

"It's shocking and extremely sad news to hear about Cliff," CU head coach Tad Boyle said. "He was certainly arguably the greatest player to ever play at the University of Colorado. He was a great man and he loved CU."

Meely played his freshmen year at Northeastern Junior College in Sterling and was named to the JUCO All-American team. He transferred to CU in 1968 and played his final three years for the Buffs. In those three years, he was a three-time member of the All-Big Eight team and was a first-team All-American as a senior in 1971.

His career scoring average of 24.3 points per game is still a CU record and he still holds the single-game scoring record, with 47 points against Oklahoma on Feb. 13, 1971. Currently, he ranks fourth in career points (1,940) and third in career rebounds (971).

"I never got a chance to see Cliff play, but I've looked at the numbers," Boyle said. "In the three years he was eligible to play, it was quite remarkable."

Meely's 28 points per game as a senior is the highest single-season scoring average in CU history, and his 23.8 average as a sophomore ranks second. He also averaged 12.1 rebounds per game during his career, the best average in CU history.

Meely was named in 1995-96 to the Associated Press' all-time Big Eight first team.

"He is the most complete player I have ever coached," his coach Sox Walseth once said. "He was just outstanding for three straight years. He wasn't just a great scorer, but he was a great defensive player and rebounder, too."

Meely's No. 20 jersey is one of just two retired by the Buffs.

After finishing his career at CU, Meely was a first-round draft pick of the NBA's Houston Rockets in 1971. (Meely was also a first-round pick of the ABA's Denver Nuggets in 1971, but signed with Houston). He played six seasons in the NBA, mostly for the Rockets. He also played 20 games for the Los Angeles Lakers during the 1975-76 season.

Boyle said he will miss Meely, who was an inspiration to the current Buffs.

"We told the story of Cliff Meely a lot to many of our recruits, on how he came to the University of Colorado from Chicago and then ended up staying here and making this his home," Boyle said. "I had him speak to our team this year after one of our practices. He would come to practice about once a month. I loved being

around him and I loved for him to be around our team.

"He was a true gentleman and anyone that knew him loved him. It's just a sad, sad day for Colorado basketball."

Follow Brian on Twitter: @BrianHowell33.



Mason Crosby is prepared to compete

Posted May 29, 2013



Mike Spofford
packers.com staff writer

Veteran kicker hasn't faced head-to-head battle for his job since rookie season



GREEN BAY—After what he endured in 2012, **Mason Crosby** didn't need the Packers to bring in another kicker to sharpen his focus or get him dialed in for 2013.

But as long as competition at his position is present, Crosby plans to use it for any benefits it may provide along those lines.

"For me, it's good to see that guy next to you," Crosby said, referring to **Giorgio Tavecchio**, the first kicker with whom Crosby will have to compete head-to-head for a job since his rookie season of 2007.

"It definitely puts a little added competitive juice in there. I feel like it's been good for me. I've been hitting the ball well and competing, and from top to bottom on this team, that's how we excel and how we get better."

Crosby has no choice but to embrace the competition, but he probably wouldn't have felt any different about it had a young prospect like Tavecchio been brought in a year ago, when Crosby was coming off his best season.

The veteran kicker remains as confident in his abilities now as then, when he converted a career-best 86 percent of his field goals (24 of 28) in 2011, including a franchise-record 58-yarder.

Following his rough 2012, low-lighted by 12 missed field goals in a span of 10 games, Crosby went through the same process this past offseason that he always does. He evaluated the film, studied what went right and what went wrong, and came back for workouts and OTAs ready to build on the positives and eliminate the negatives.

If that sounds trite and cliché, chalk it up to the nature of a specialist's preparation for a job that's equal parts mental and

mechanical.

Despite all of last season's struggles, which began with two long misses in the second half of a three-point loss at Indianapolis in Week 5, Crosby maintains that mentally there was no crisis of confidence. Mechanically, he wouldn't specify whether he made any discoveries during the offseason, but if he did, no good would come from talking about them anyway.

Instead, Crosby -- whose wife gave birth to the couple's second child last week -- is focused on his process. It's what got him through last season, and it's what will help him keep his job in 2013, which given his experience he is more than likely to do.

"I kept working hard, I kept my head down, kept striving to be the best I could be out there, and at the end of the season I came out of the funk, if you want to call it (that)," Crosby said.

"I felt good with how I just kept working. This organization sticking behind me kept building that confidence. For me, I never lost it. I never lost it in my head. I kept going out every day, trying to do the things I know best, work on those details, and I finished the season how I wanted to."

The strong finish featured a 6-for-6 streak over the final four games (two regular season, two playoffs), including two clutch efforts -- a 40-yarder early in the fourth quarter to tie the score at 27 at Minnesota in the regular-season finale, and a 31-yarder midway through the third quarter to tie San Francisco at 24 in the divisional playoff.

"I made some kicks down the stretch I needed to make, and I draw off of that," he said. "I was able to figure it out through that rough time and come out of it."

That, no disrespect to Tavecchio, will matter more for Crosby going forward than the upcoming competition in training camp that is sure to get plenty of attention.

The scrutiny of Crosby was bound to be heightened either way, and he sounds ready for it.

"Especially this offseason, practice, weight room, everything I'm doing, I'm focused in on being sharp, being in that moment and taking advantage of that opportunity," he said. "I think it's going to carry me a long way."