

CU Buffs' Askia Booker bold with the basketball

By Nick Groke The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

This time last year, Askia Booker was something closer to a wide-eyed freshman, playing in the first true road game of his college career. The University of Colorado guard had never played at Air Force's Clune Arena — and he'd never known an NCAA overtime game.

Then, with less than two minutes left, he stroked a 3-pointer from the right corner to put the Buffaloes ahead and out of reach in a 76-73 overtime victory over the Falcons. It might have been the shot to propel the Buffs to a 10-2 stretch through January that put them in the thick of national contention. They went on to win the Pac-12 Tournament title and go 1-1 in the NCAA Tournament.

Now (and still only) a sophomore, Booker is back with gusto. And he's about to face Air Force again. Only now, he's more than a green, first-year guy. He leads Colorado in scoring, averaging 17.8 points per game this season.

The Buffs are home this weekend for just the second game in Boulder this season. Colorado hosts Air Force on Sunday at the Coors Events Center, the game tipping off at 6 p.m.

"I'm just taking full advantage of it," Booker recently told The Associated Press about his directive from coach Tad Boyle to be more bold with the ball.

Booker's career-high 23 points led the Buffs over Murray State last weekend to win the Charleston Classic. He scored 58 points in three tournament games in South Carolina.

"Coach believes in me and I believe in myself," Booker said.

The Buffs (4-0) entered AP's top-25 poll this week at No. 23. It's the first time CU has been ranked since 1997.

"We can't get overconfident," Boyle said. "I said in the locker room if we started 0-4 instead of 4-0, our mantra wouldn't change. We're going to keep getting better every day."

CU also hosts Texas Southern, on Tuesday, before going back-to-back against more Front Range rivals.

The Buffs travel to play Wyoming on Dec. 1, then host Colorado State on Dec. 5 — the biggest game in the CU-CSU series in recent memory (and certainly bigger than the fizzled football matchup).

The Rams (3-0) on Wednesday took to the road for the first time this season, going all the way to Denver to beat the DU Pioneers 60-53 at Magness Arena.

The Rams of first-year coach Larry Eustachy play Saturday at Washington and return to Moby Arena for home games against Northern Colorado (Nov. 26) and Evansville (Dec. 1).

Front Range action

The Colorado and Colorado State men's basketball teams meet Dec. 5 in Boulder. Before that collision, the

Buffaloes and Rams will play other big games that include:

Colorado

Sunday: vs. Air Force, in Boulder, 6 p.m.

Colorado State

Saturday: at Washington, 5:30 p.m.

Monday: vs. Northern Colorado, in Fort Collins, 7 p.m.