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## Ready for the real thing

*By Patrick Ridgell  
Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — Shoulders sagged, tone despondent, new Colorado men's basketball coach Jeff Bzdelik made a candid admission Tuesday night.

He said his team had yet to work against a 1-3-1 zone defense, which was somewhat evident gauging how his Buffs went against Regis' in their final exhibition. While the numbers indicate nothing alarming — CU hit seven of 20 3-pointers and won the game, 64-42 — the coach sounded sort of sad that an opponent would use one in an exhibition game, especially after Brock University in CU's first exhibition last Thursday went basically 2-1-2 zone all night.

Tuesday, the Buffs had to adjust as they went along.

"Offensively, we have not worked against 1-3-1 zone at all," Bzdelik said. "We were making stuff up, really, and doing some things you shouldn't be doing against the 1-3-1. But we did it anyway. We've seen very little man to man. ... Someday we'll get a test."

Probably Friday. Ready or not, the season starts that night when New Mexico visits, and CU takes a swing at avenging last year's 106-65 loss to the Lobos in The Pit. Considering CU's coaching change and the new style Bzdelik wants to employ, who knows what New Mexico will try? But Bzdelik declared his team ready, though he sounded more curious than confident.

"I think the players will agree it's time," he said. "It's time to throw it up for real and see. That's the fun part of it."

Bzdelik said he has no idea how much zone to expect from opponents this season, and senior swingman Richard Roby said that if teams try to defend the Buffs that way, CU has the shooters to make others pay.

We'll see.

Meanwhile, Bzdelik said CU's defense is playing solid right now. The Buffs forced 24 turnovers in a slow-paced game and held Regis to 35 percent from the floor, 17 percent on 3s.

Bzdelik added that the rotation appears set. CU started four players listed as guards: Roby, Marcus Hall, Xavier Silas and freshman Cory Higgins, to go along with 6-foot-6 forward Jermyl Jackson-Wilson. Guards Dwight Thorne and Levi Knutson and forward Marcus King-Stockton took most of the minutes off the bench.

Until forward Jeremy Williams returns — the hope is he'll be through with his academic suspension in time to play Jan. 4 against SMU — the Buffs will be small. Make that tiny. And their 36-31 rebounding advantage against an unathletic Regis bunch didn't inspire much hope.

Higgins scored a team-high 20 points on 6-for-8 shooting, including 4-for-5 on 3s, and provided a spark.

"You saw what kind of special player he has the potential to be," Bzdelik said.

The coach voiced concern over his team's problems finishing at the rim, but said winning even a game like Tuesday's matters for a team that'll need heaps of confidence Friday and beyond.

"I think we got the jitters out," Roby said about CU's two exhibition games. "Things could be a lot smoother on both ends. We're not playing our best basketball right now. But we'll be ready for New Mexico on Friday."



# Buffaloes gear up with rout of Regis

## Season begins for real Friday vs. New Mexico

By Ryan Thorburn

Wednesday, November 7, 2007

The scores didn't count on these BCS conference team's permanent records, but the finals did raise eyebrows with the boosters.

Findlay 70, Ohio State 68 ... Grand Valley State 85, Michigan State 82, 2OT ... Tarleton State 95, Baylor 85.

Jeff Bzdelik and the Buffs are happy to have the exhibition portion of the schedule in the rear-view mirror to be sure, but Colorado's 64-42 victory over Regis on Tuesday night at the Coors Events Center did have some meaning for the program.

Despite the new coaching staff and attitude, this is a team that only walked off the court smiling seven times last season.

"Winning does matter," Bzdelik said. "It matters whenever you do anything. You could be in practice just doing a competitive shooting drill and winning matters."

Lonnie Porter's Rangers — who lost exhibition games at Colorado State (81-74) and Wyoming (88-62) before their trip to Boulder — tried to stay in the game using a 1-3-1 zone defense.

CU would have preferred to execute the offense against man-to-man defense and finished 7-for-20 from behind the arc. Promising freshman Cory Higgins was the bright spot, finishing 4-for-5 on 3-pointers en route to a game-high 20 points in his first start.

"If he plays like he did tonight," Richard Roby said of his talented new teammate, "he's going to be all right."

The Buffs — who trailed Brock University at halftime before winning the exhibition opener 70-56 — got off to another sluggish start and trailed 11-10 after a 3-pointer by James Bulluck with 10:30 remaining in the first half.

CU slapped on a full-court press and ended the half on a 15-1 run over the final 3:32. Higgins hit three consecutive 3-pointers, and Roby got loose for a pair of dunks during the decisive spurt.

Higgins had 15 points in 17 minutes to lead all scorers at the intermission. Marcus Hall, playing without protection on his surgically repaired thumb, had five assists and five turnovers at the break.

Regis was 5-for-17 (29.4 percent) from the field in the first half, including 1-for-6 from behind the arc (16.7 percent).

"That's where we're going to have to hang our hat all the time," Bzdelik said. "We always preach that defense is a constant and offense is a variable."

The Buffs opened up the second half with a layup drill and led 41-17 after an 8-0 run. Gary Street finally ended a scoring drought of 6:11 for the Rangers with a hoop.

In addition to the 13 missed 3-pointers, CU also failed to convert a number of shots in the paint and finished 9-for-16

from the line (56.3 percent).

"We didn't finish very well and that's a concern. We have to finish when we get to the rim," Bzdelik said. "Defensively, we did some good things. We experimented with some different types of defenses and overall it wasn't bad from a defensive standpoint."

Starting Friday against New Mexico, the scores will count. And the Buffs, at least the ones who were here last season, will no doubt use their 106-65 loss to the Lobos at "The Pit" as motivation.

"Everybody loves to win. It always helps your confidence. In anything you do success always brings confidence," Roby said after scoring a combined 40 points and grabbing 23 rebounds in the two exhibition games.

### **Notable**

Hall was called for carrying the ball twice in the first half but did not have a turnover in the second half. ... Jermyl Jackson-Wilson was 2-for-8 from the floor but led the Buffs with 10 rebounds. ... Caleb Patterson, Trent Beckley, Andrew Zehnder and Javon Coney played the final two minutes for their first action of the season. ... Roby (No. 20) and Higgins (No. 22) wore the retired numbers of Cliff Meely (No. 20 from 1968-71) and Burdette Haldorson (No. 22 from 1952-55) for the second consecutive game. The current Buffs stars will change to No. 23 and No. 11, respectively, for the regular-season opener on Friday.



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# Roby eager to cap off CU career on a high note

## Senior coming off a season he'd rather forget

By Neill Woelk

Wednesday, November 7, 2007

Richard Roby has a few simple goals this season.

Win some games, have fun and prove that last year was an aberration, not the beginning of a trend.

The Colorado senior, who considered leaving school after his sophomore year for a shot at the NBA, returned last season only to endure his worst season in three years as a Buff. A coach who resigned before the season ever started, a 7-20 record and a long list of blowout losses left a sour taste in Roby's mouth and an aching to prove himself in his final season as a Buff.

"It's fun again," Roby said after a 17-point, nine-rebound effort in CU's 64-42 exhibition win over Regis on Tuesday. "We know we have a system that's going to work. We know that if we work hard and do what we're supposed to do, good things can happen."

Last season, Roby became the CU coaching staff's fall guy, the player who was blamed the most for CU's struggles. Roby's play suffered, the team struggled and his confidence hit an all-time low.

New Buff coach Jeff Bzdelik, though, said he's been pleased not only with Roby's work ethic, but with that of every player on the team.

"There are things that separate players," Bzdelik said. "When their shot is not going down, what are they doing in terms of helping their teammates? Tonight, Rich got us nine rebounds, six of them defensive. He's working hard out there for us."

Roby admits he still has some lapses on the defensive end, a self-analysis that Bzdelik agrees with. But even there, Bzdelik said, Roby is working hard to improve his game.

"There's always room for improvement, no matter who you're talking about," Bzdelik said. "But Rich is working hard. They're all working hard."

The Buffs open the season for real on Friday, when they play host to New Mexico. The Lobos dealt the Buffs their worst loss of the season a year ago, handing Colorado a 106-65 loss in Albuquerque.

"We're ready to play," Roby said. "It's hard to simulate everything you might see in a game in practice. These exhibition games are good, but when the games count, it's just a different feeling out there."

Friday's season opener will be the Buffs' first of four nonconference contests against Mountain West foes. Along with New Mexico, Colorado will also play Wyoming, Colorado State and Air Force. Colorado went 0-4 against that MWC lineup a year ago.

"There are a lot of revenge games ahead of us," Roby said. "But I think the big thing is that we just have a bunch of guys who want to win more than anything else. We believe in this system. It doesn't matter who gets the shots, because that's going to change every night."

"What matters is that we work hard. If we do that, we'll get open guys."



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