



Plenty of ups, downs so far for Bzdelik's Buffs

Consistency hasn't been a CU staple

By Ryan Thorburn

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We're 10 games into the Jeff Bzdelik era at Colorado and the Buffs, coming off a 7-20 season, have been mediocre at best during a 5-5 start.

Here's a look at some of the highs, lows, pleasant surprises and disappointments so far:

Best win

That would be CU's last win, a 60-50 victory at Air Force on Nov. 29, in Bzdelik's emotional return to the Academy. The Buffs snapped AFA's 38-game win streak against noncon-ference opponents at Clune Arena and were 5-2 on the bus ride home. Richard Roby and Marcus Hall, the only Buffs averaging double figures in scoring, played inspired games, combining for 39 points. Roby (14.8 ppg) also leads the team with 6.0 rebounds per game while Hall (13.6 ppg) is playing 36.1 minutes per game.

Worst loss

The Buffs have been blown out by a couple of pretty good teams from BCS conferences, Wisconsin (78-52) and Stanford (67-43), but last Wednesday's 67-65 loss to New Orleans brought out the worst in this team.

CU battled back and took the lead in the final seconds before a defensive breakdown allowed the Privateers to leave Boulder with the win. Roby and Hall, who are both seniors hoping to end disappointing careers on a high note, suggested after the frustrating defeat that some players on the team weren't getting the job done. It will be important for Bzdelik to get the upper classmen and young talents on the same page this week.

Good trend

The Buffs, who produced only one road victory last season, have already had four wins outside of Boulder. CU handled Florida A&M and Savannah State on a neutral court and picked up true road wins at Denver and Air Force. Not exactly the same atmosphere or competition as what the Buffs will face Lawrence or Stillwater, but still progress for this program.

Bad trend

Bzdelik's team is 1-3 at the Coors Events Center. Despite the best efforts of the athletic department — from the "pack the house" promotion for the opener to moving the students closer to the court to scheduling some solid programs — the Buffs still do not enjoy a homecourt advantage.

CU can build some momentum before the Big 12 season with home games against Grambling State, SMU and Tulsa. But once again it looks like the only chance for a sellout this season will be when Kansas and its fans come to town on Feb. 2.

On the rise

Two true freshmen, Cory Higgins and Levi Knutson, have been solid contributors who have shown an ability to take and knock down big shots. Both should have bright futures in Bzdelik's program. Caleb Patterson, a 6-11 freshman, is raw talent who is going to struggle for most of the season as he adjusts to playing at a Big 12 level.

On the decline

Xavier Silas figured to be one of the players who would benefit the most from the coaching change, but so far the talented sophomore's season has been a disappointment. The 6-foot-5 guard is averaging 9.4 points per game but only grabbing 2.7 rebounds. When Roby said after the New Orleans game that "you can't have four guys ready to go and one guy not doing what it takes or being in the wrong position" he was obviously referring to Silas.

Memorable moments

Hall losing two teeth against Savannah State and returning to the game. ... Bzdelik walking off the floor at Clune Arena a winner. ... Higgins calmly draining a couple of clutch 3-pointers to give the Buffs a chance to beat New Orleans.

Regrettable moments

The Buffs weren't ready for the curtain to open, mustering only 47 points in a loss to New Mexico in front of a crowd of 8,372 at the Coors Events Center. ... CU forgetting to show up for the first half at Wyoming, trailing 40-20 at the break in a 73-64 loss. ... A former first-team All-Big 12 player throwing a sophomore under the bus after a last-second loss to a Sun Belt team.

The next 10

Bzdelik's team has a chance to improve its record over the next 10 games, starting with Saturday's trip to Colorado State. The Buffs also host Nebraska, Kansas State and Missouri in January.



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