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Buff's set table for visit to Air Force

By Patrick Ridgell
Longmont Times-Call

DENVER — Consider Tuesday night at the University of Denver something like a warm-up act for the Colorado men's basketball team.

The Buffs won an ugly game, 54-44, before 5,035 mostly bored fans at Magness Arena. Facing an opponent that uses a similar style of play, CU pressed well, forcing 15 turnovers, and dropped into a zone defense in the half court that the Pioneers struggled to beat. Denver shot 35 percent from the field, rarely enjoying an open shot.

Now things for CU figure to get interesting.

Thursday at the Air Force Academy (7 p.m., the mtn), coach Jeff Bzdelik goes back to where he worked the past two years before leaving last spring for Boulder.

CU will face another opponent that employs similar philosophies on both ends of the floor. And the two programs will be even more familiar with one another than the Buffs and Pioneers — coached by Bzdelik's old friend, Joe Scott — were Tuesday.

But the true angst Thursday concerns Bzdelik returning to his former stomping ground at Clune Arena, where he had great success the previous two years before he bolted for Boulder.

At CU, he says he's excited by the chance to build a program that's lacked tradition. Plus he's cashing a paycheck that might be twice what it was before — his base salary at CU is in the \$750,000 annual range.

But the coach and his new players expect his departure left some around Colorado Springs harboring hard feelings. And for CU, a season that, from the outside, has appeared calm and placid is about to get a jolt.

"I'm sure he's prepared for what's going to happen down there," said CU's Richard Roby, who scored 15 points Tuesday. "The crowd is probably going to have a field day with him, but I'm sure he'll be professional about it."

Bzdelik answered only a few questions about Tuesday's ugly win before he had to discuss what awaits Thursday. He said there's nothing special about returning to Air Force, and called it just "another game." But he anticipates a rowdy reception.

"I'm sure there'll be a certain number of people upset with me, and the Air Force players will be all jacked up, and that's understandable," Bzdelik said. "There's going to be a certain segment of people who know exactly what happened and why, and there are certain people who don't know the truth so they're upset, and so on and so forth."

Bzdelik declined to elaborate on what happened.

COLORADO 54, DENVER 44

COLORADO (4-2)

Jackson-Wilson 2-4 0-0 4, Hall 5-10, 6-7 18, Higgins 1-3 4-4 6, Silas 1-9 5-8 7, Roby 7-11, 0-0 15, Thorne II 1-3 0-0 2, Patterson 0-1 0-0 0, Knutson 1-4, 0-0 2, King-Stockton 0-0 0-0 0.
Totals 18-45 15-19 54.

DENVER (2-3)

Kummer 4-12 4-4 15, Tanner 0-2 1-2 1, Bullock 2-6 0-0 6, Lewis 2-8, 0-0 4, Rohnert 1-3 0-0 2, Lewis 1-2 0-0 2, Jackson 3-6 0-0 7, McNally 2-4 0-0 5.
Totals 15-43 6-8 44.

Halftime—Colorado 25-17. 3-Point Goals—Colorado 3-13 (Hall 2-5, Roby 1-2, Silas 0-2, Thorne 0-2, Knutson 0-2), Denver 8-25 (Kummer 3-8, Bullock 2-3, Lewis 2-8, Jackson 1-4, Rohnert 0-1, McNally 0-1). Fouled Out—McNally. Rebounds—Colorado 35 (Roby 9), Denver 24 (Kummer 6). Assists—Colorado 11 (Hall 3, Roby 3), Denver 13 (Bullock 5). Total Fouls—Colorado 8, Denver 16. Technical—None. A—5,035.

As for Tuesday, CU took the lead on Marcus Hall's jumper with 15 minutes, 45 seconds left in the first half, and never trailed again. Hall led the Buffs with 18 points. CU eventually opened a 13-point advantage late while it sank 10 straight free throws in the final 72 seconds.

The Buffs (4-2) wanted to create chaos on Denver's offensive end, and did. But neither team found much rhythm offensively. It was simply one of those nights.

"Coach is always putting his focus on defense, because if you can hold teams under 60 points, on average you'll have a chance to win no matter how you shoot the ball," Hall said.

It wasn't aesthetically pleasing basketball to watch Tuesday. But Thursday at Air Force might be pretty ugly, too.

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Buffs shake free of Denver

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 11/28/2007 01:26:08 AM MST

Colorado senior guard Marcus Hall must have felt like he was playing in front of a mirror Tuesday night in the Buffaloes' 54-44 win over the University of Denver at Magness Arena.

Each time Hall made a move, a Pioneers defender moved along with him.

Should anybody have expected anything else? It was Air Force coaches alumni day, with Colorado's Jeff Bzdelik and DU's Joe Scott running many of the same patterns in their variations of the Princeton-like offense.

Both teams played a form of me-and-my-shadow all evening. It was tough to shake loose.

"We'd call a play, and they'd call it right out," said Hall, who led all scorers with 18 points. "The good thing about this offense, though, is there are a lot of counters."

CU Basketball

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[Visit Tom Kensler's All Things Buffs blog for a behind-the-scenes look at CU sports](#)

Colorado (4-2) countered better than Denver (2-3) countered. The Buffs, earning their first true road victory under Bzdelik after two wins on a neutral court in Madison, Wis., trailed only once in the game. But after a 3-pointer by DU senior forward David Kummer made it 7-6, Colorado regained the lead on a jumper by Hall from the left wing.

Hall then bagged a 3-pointer, also from the left side, that highlighted an 8-2 run. That's not exactly a runaway. But in a low-scoring game, a six-point differential can be huge.

It proved too much for Denver to overcome. The Pioneers trailed 25-17 at halftime.

"The first half cost us the game," Scott said.

Neither team shot well and both made far too many turnovers to suit their new coaches. The defenses deserved some credit.

"(Denver) runs their stuff extremely well," Bzdelik said. "Our game plan was to try to get them to be a little chaotic. They're a well-coached team."

Bzdelik should know. He took over Air Force in 2005 after Scott left for Princeton after the 2003-04 season. Both coaches led Air Force to an NCAA Tournament. Chris Mooney coached the Falcons in 2004-05.

This was like two chess masters matching each other move for move, only each is missing a few pieces. The game didn't have much flow, which wasn't surprising. Both teams are learning an entirely different system than

DU Basketball

what they had been recruited to play.

The backdoor layups will come in time. CU could see plenty on Thursday night when Bzdelik returns for a game at Air Force but this time wearing a Buffaloes logo.

"This was two teams in the same backyard competing," Bzdelik said, disappointed that his squad missed six first-half layups. "We're not big. We're young at spots. We need to dig out about every game. That's who we are."

A trio of 3-pointers by Kummer provided more than half of the Pioneers' offense before halftime. But Colorado couldn't pull away until late in the game, when a jumper by Xavier Silas with 2:38 to go kick-started an 8-0 run.

"Coach (Bzdelik) tells us that if we hold a team under 60 points, we're going to win most of the time, no matter what our offense does," Hall said.

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[Visit the DU Stats Page for men's boxscores, Sun Belt standings, team leaders and more](#)

[Visit the DU Stats Page for women's boxscores, Sun Belt standings, player pages and more](#)



Bufs keep Pioneers in check

CU stymies DU for first true road win of season

By Ryan Thorburn

Wednesday, November 28, 2007

DENVER — First one to 50 wins.

What did you expect in the Front Range matchup between the two ex-Air Force coaches who took the Falcons to new heights?

Colorado picked up its first true road victory of the season on Tuesday night as Jeff Bzdelik's Bufs headed south for a 54-44 victory over Joe Scott's Denver Pioneers in front of 5,035 witnesses at Magness Arena.

CU will play at Air Force on Thursday night in what should be an even more intense game.

"Coach is always putting his focus on defense," Marcus Hall said after scoring a game-high 18 points to pace the Bufs. "If you can hold teams under 60 points on average, you'll have a chance to win regardless of how you shoot the ball."

How about under 40 points? DU didn't break that barrier until the closing seconds of garbage time.

"Even better chance," Hall said.

The Pioneers (2-3) shot 34.9 percent (15-for-43) — including 32.0 percent (8-for-25) from 3-point territory — and turned the ball over 15 times.

Bzdelik's team did a nice job of executing a full-court press and forcing jump shots with a zone defense. David Kummer led DU with 15 points, but six of those came in the final 44.3 seconds when the outcome had already been decided.

"Our game plan was simply to try and get them to be a little chaotic and change it enough and trap them and get them out of their rhythm," Bzdelik said. "You've got two teams in the same backyard just competing and trying to do the best they can."

The Pioneers led the game for all of 51 seconds — 7-6 after a 3-pointer by Kummer early in the first half. The Bufs held the home team scoreless for 4:50 during one stretch in the second half and led by as many as 13 points.

Richard Roby had 15 points on 7-for-11 shooting and grabbed a game-high nine rebounds.

"We'll take it," Roby said. "DU is an under-rated team. They play really hard. We just had to match their

effort, and I think we did a good job of that."

The Bufs, who were shooting 50 percent from the field through their first five games, only shot 40 percent (18-for-45) against Scott's scrappy team.

Bzdelik knows his new team, which missed six layups in the first half and 10 of the 13 3-pointers it attempted in the game, will have to play better offensively to leave Clune Arena with a victory against his old team.

"They're very similar," Bzdelik said of DU and Air Force. "The prep will be pretty much the same, only Air Force has much more experience and at this point in time more talented players.

"And, of course, Air Force feels real good about themselves in Clune. It will be a very difficult and challenging game for us and we're looking forward to competing. That's what you're in this business for."



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Bzdelik doesn't expect friendly AFA reception

By Ryan Thorburn

Wednesday, November 28, 2007

DENVER — Jeff Bzdelik won 75.8 percent of his games at Air Force.

During his two seasons, the Falcons were a combined 50-16 with an appearance in the NCAA Tournament and an NIT Final Four run to Madison Square Garden.

But Bzdelik, who was hired by Colorado to replace Ricardo Patton on April 5, isn't expecting a standing ovation when he's introduced at Clune Arena this Thursday before the Buffs game against the Falcons.

More like, boooooo!

"I'm sure that there's going to be a certain number of people upset with me, and the Air Force players will be all jacked up," Bzdelik said after CU's 54-44 victory over Denver on Tuesday night at Magness Arena. "That's understandable. And rightly so, probably. When there's change there's going to be a certain segment of people who know exactly happened and why. And there are certain people who don't know the truth, so they're upset."

The Buffs believe facing the Pioneers, now coached by Joe Scott, another former Air Force head coach who runs a version of the Princeton-style offense, was perfect preparation for what's on tap.

"We called a play and they called it out right after we called it out," CU point guard Marcus Hall said. "The good thing about this offense is there are so many counters you can run. So that helped us out."

Rare road win

Tuesday's game wasn't pretty to watch as the team's combined for 31 turnovers. CU was 3-for-13 from behind the arc and DU was 15-for-43 from the field.

"A lot of our turnovers hurt us in the first half," Richard Roby said. "We could have got some easy buckets but we missed them. That's just the kind of game that it was."

But it counts as a true road win. And the Buffs only had one of those all of last season, a 60-59 victory at Utah on Nov. 21, 2006.

Notable

About half of the crowd of 5,035 at Magness Arena was rooting for the Buffs. ... Xavier Silas returned after missing the Colorado Christian game with a leg bruise. The sophomore started and finished with seven points on 1-for-7 shooting. ... Jermyl Jackson-Wilson had eight rebounds after getting back into the starting lineup in favor of freshman Caleb Patterson, who only played five minutes. ... Hall finished

with a career-high five steals.



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