



First-half run fuels win for Bzdelik's Buffs

Balanced scoring helps Colorado top SMU

By Ryan Thorburn
Saturday, January 5, 2008

Jeff Bzdelik has drawn up defenses to try and slow down everyone from Michael Jordan to Steve Nash.

So Colorado's head coach wasn't about to brag about any aspect of the Buffs' 63-52 victory over SMU on Friday night at the Coors Events Center.

Sixty-three points is a classic playoff game for No. 23 or a typical half of basketball for the Phoenix Suns.

But for a 2-minute stretch -- 1:53 to be more precise -- CU's offense was, well, kind of explosive.

After falling behind 19-11, the Buffs answered with an impressive 14-0 run to seize control of the game faster than you can say Ricardo who?

And the interesting part of it was that 12 of the points came from behind the arc, including back-to-back 3-pointers by Richard Roby to make the score 25-19 with 9:14 remaining in the first half.

"We know we can shoot the ball," said Marcus Hall, whose steal and layup tied the score 19-19 62 seconds after the Mustangs' took their largest lead. "There are going to be nights when we don't make those shots and night's when those shots make us look better than we are."

The Buffs (8-5) led 36-28 at the intermission after knocking down six 3-pointers and shooting 52 percent (13-for-25) from the field. Roby had 15 points at the break.

And then ... Thud. Brick. Clank.

"We are a team that scores in streaks," Bzdelik said after his team went 2-for-10 from behind the arc in the second half. "The way you sustain is to defend for 40 minutes."

Even in the opener, a disappointing 54-47 loss to New Mexico, CU showed up ready to defend. This time Bzdelik's team limited a much taller opponent to 35.8 percent shooting and matched the Mustangs on the boards (33 rebounds for each team).

"We wanted to get the ball inside and didn't do a great job of that," SMU head coach Matt Doherty said after his team was outscored 26-18 in the paint and gave up 20 points on 13 turnovers. "Both teams played a matchup zone and it was tough for both teams to get in a rhythm."

Roby got into foul trouble and did not score in the second half. But Hall (16 points), Xavier Silas (15)

and Levi Knutson (10) all finished in double figures as CU's offense stayed balanced for the third consecutive game.

"We're growing up, especially defensively," Hall said. "Last year is behind us. We're on a whole different chapter."

Bzdelik's Buffs exceeded last season's win total and will have one more chance to fine-tune things for Big 12 play when Tulsa visits Boulder on Monday night.

Colorado 63, SMU 52

SMU

FG FT Reb

Min M-A M-A O-T A PF PTS

Ritter 14 0-1 1-2 2-4 1 1 1

Dia 25 4-9 2-4 3-7 0 0 10

Killen 37 2-10 0-0 0-0 6 4 5

Roberts 35 2-11 0-0 2-5 1 4 5

Walker 26 1-2 0-0 0-2 1 2 3

Malone 17 4-8 2-2 2-4 1 0 11

Fall 20 4-8 3-3 2-6 0 3 11

Harp 26 2-4 0-0 0-5 2 0 6

Totals 200 19-53 8-11 11-33 12 14 52

Percentages: FG .358, FT .727.

3-Point Goals: 6-20, .300 (Harp 2-4, Walker 1-2, Malone 1-3, Killen 1-5, Roberts 1-6).

Team Rebounds: 0.

Blocked Shots: 0.

Turnovers: 13 (Malone 3, Roberts 3, Killen 3, Walker 2, Harp 2).

Steals: 6 (Killen 2, Harp, Dia, Ritter, Fall).

Technical Fouls: None.

COLORADO**FG FT Reb****Min M-A M-A O-T A PF PTS**

J-Wilson 19 0-3 1-2 3-6 2 3 1

Hall 37 6-12 2-2 2-5 6 3 16

Higgins 36 2-5 0-1 0-5 1 1 4

Silas 31 5-12 4-5 1-3 1 1 15

Roby 33 5-11 2-2 0-5 4 5 15

Knutson 23 4-6 0-0 0-4 2 0 10

K-Stcktn 21 1-1 0-2 2-4 0 1 2

Totals 200 23-50 9-14 8-33 16 14 63

Percentages: FG .460, FT .643.**3-Point Goals:** 8-23, .348 (Roby 3-6, Knutson 2-4, Hall 2-6, Silas 1-4, Higgins 0-3).**Team Rebounds:** 1.**Blocked Shots:** 4 (Roby 2, Higgins, Jackson-Wilson).**Turnovers:** 11 (Roby 4, Silas 3, Hall 2, Knutson, Jackson-Wilson).**Steals:** 7 (Jackson-Wilson 3, Hall 2, Higgins, Silas).**Technical Fouls:** None.**SMU 28 24--52****Colorado 36 27--63****A -- 4,286.****Officials --** Tom O'Neill, John Higgins, Steve Olson.

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Longmont, Colorado
Monday, January 07, 2008

TIMES-CALL

Publish Date: 1/5/2008

Improvement in evidence

Bufs dispatch Mustangs to top last season's win total

By Patrick Ridgell

Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Could the Colorado Buffaloes be starting to get it?

Maybe. Maybe Friday's 63-52 defeat of Southern Methodist at the Coors Events Center is nothing to be very excited about, seeing as how SMU isn't Kansas and the Buffs aren't, either. But in beating the Mustangs and notching their eighth win of 2007-08, which exceeded last year's win total and makes Jeff Bzdelik the fastest first-year CU coach to top the previous year's number of victories, the Buffs did some good things.

CU (8-5) matched a season low with 11 turnovers and tied a season high with eight 3-pointers, including six of 13 in the first half. Four of them came during a 14-0, first-half run that pushed CU past a 19-11 deficit.

The Buffs also grabbed as many rebounds as the taller Mustangs, 33, and had 16 assists on 23 field goals. CU won its third game in a row.

Of course, SMU (6-7) did not look very good. Coach Matt Doherty could be heard from far outside the Mustangs' locker room after the game ripping his players. Then he told reporters his team had played "dumb basketball" Friday night.

Still, the Buffs felt pretty good about themselves.

"There's a learning curve, and we're getting better all the time now," Bzdelik said. "This is the third game in a row where we've had at least four players in double digits. That means we're getting good shot distribution.

"I like the fact we're sharing the basketball. Our assist-to-turnover ratio is getting better. ... And even though (SMU) turned the ball over only 13 times, they were bad turnovers for SMU, because we were scoring off of them."

CU scored 20 points off those 13 turnovers and had 26 points in the paint to SMU's 18.

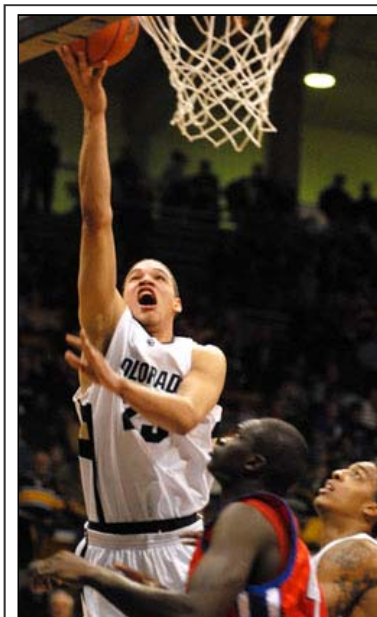
Marcus Hall had 16 to lead the Buffs. Richard Roby and Xavier Silas scored 15 apiece, and Levi Knutson had 10.

All of Roby's points came in the first half, leaving him a bit frustrated in the second. He fouled out with 1 minutes, 8 seconds to play.

"Players can't allow offensive struggles to affect other parts of their game," Bzdelik said. "That's an area we're trying to get better at on our team. But Richard gave us great life in the first half."

CU's 14-0 run in the first half was actually a 23-4 surge. It put the Buffs up 34-23 with 3:27 left before the break.

SMU pulled to within six points with 1:08 to play on a pair of free throws by Bamba Fall but never got closer. Hall and



Colorado's Richard Roby tips in a shot against SMU on Friday night at the Coors Events Center. **Jill P.**

Mott / Times-Call

Silas combined to make five of six free throws in the final minute, while SMU failed to score again.

CU has one more game, Monday at home against Tulsa (7 p.m., no TV), to polish things up before Big 12 play starts. The league in 2007-08 could be brutal on the Buffs, and winning many more than eight might not be possible. But there will be some nights when shots are falling, like Friday, and the Buffs will have a chance.

“We know we can shoot the ball,” Hall said. “There are going to be times when we don’t make those shots, and there are going to be times when those shots make us look better than we are. But different guys stepped up (Friday) and made shots, and we needed it.”