



Bufs fall in overtime to Bobcats

By Ryan Thorburn

Tuesday, November 18, 2008

Montana State 85, Colorado 82.

In overtime.

Perhaps someday Jeff Bzdelik will be able to laugh about Tuesday night's loss to the Bobcats from the Big Sky at the Coors Events Center with Dan Hawkins.

But right now CU's second-year head coach is focused on making sure his young players learn from this humbling defeat.

"Give Montana State a lot of credit. We were very soft defensively, we were very soft on the boards," Bzdelik said. "We learned a lesson from this in terms of the intensity level that needs to be exerted at all times on the defensive end and on the boards."

The Buffs -- who allowed the Bobcats to shoot 55 percent from the 3-point line and were out-rebounded 37-30 -- trailed by as many as 15 points while Montana State was grabbing 13 offensive rebounds and making 16 shots from behind the arc.

"We gave a team life and confidence coming in here thinking they could win," Bzdelik said.

Despite all of the lackluster play, Levi Knutson was one second away from being the hero.

CU's sophomore shooting guard completed what would have been a comeback for the ages with a clutch basket to give the Buffs a 72-70 lead with 15.4 seconds remaining in a game they trailed by 11 points with 4:27 remaining and nine points with less than 3:30 remaining.

But with 1.0 left on the clock, Bobby Howard -- a lock for Big Sky freshman of the week after dropping a game-high 24 points on CU -- tied the score with a field goal and was fouled by Jermeyl Jackson-Wilson.

Howard, who was 1-for-7 at the foul line and 5-for-7 from 3-point range, missed the ensuing free throw to give the Buffs five more minutes of life.

Dwight Thorne, who made a key 3-pointer during CU's 13-4 run at the end of regulation, opened the OT with another make from behind the new line to give the home team its largest lead of the game at 75-72.

"You go into overtime and try and knock them in the mouth as soon as possible," said Thorne, who finished with a career-high 21 points. "We missed some free throws and that might be the difference in the game right there."

The Buffs were 22-for-26 (84.6 percent) in regulation and 3-for-8 (37.5 percent) in overtime. Thorne and freshman point guard Nate Tomlinson each missed a pair, and Cory Higgins was 3-for-4.

"I don't know what happened with the free throws in overtime," Knutson said. "I have complete confidence in my guys. They just didn't go down today. We have to step up and knock them down and finish a game like that. In the future I think you can count on everyone on our team knocking them down."

Knutson made a shot with 1:12 remaining to tie the score 80-80 but the Bobcats answered with a 4-0 run.

Higgins cut the deficit in half with a layup and then stole the in-bounds pass and nearly the game.

But Austin Dufault had the ball stripped going up for a tying score in the paint to all but seal the win for Montana State. The crowd of 2,058 thought the freshman earned a foul call.

"A game like that shouldn't come down to a call like that," Dufault said after scoring 11 points in 37 minutes on 5-for-10 shooting. "You have to be strong with the ball and you can't rely on a call to bail you out."

After Dufault lost possession the Buffs had to foul Will Bynum, who made only one of two free throws with 3.7 seconds left.

Knutson's long, off-balance 3-pointer at the buzzer -- like CU's performance -- was just a little off.

"Obviously you never want to be down 15 or whatever it was," Knutson said. "But the good thing we have to take from this is that there is no quit in this team and we can always come back and it's not over until the horn sounds."

After a basket by Divaldo Mbunga gave the Bobcats a 51-36 lead early in the second half, CU rattled off the next 14 points during an encouraging run that included Trey Eckloff's first career 3-pointer, a rim-rattling dunk by Higgins and a steal and layup by Knutson off the full-court press.

The Buffs cut the deficit to 51-50 with 12:33 remaining but the better team regained its composure and eventually finished a well-earned road victory.

"We learned we have to come out and play all 40 minutes," Thorne said. "And I think rebounding is going to be something we have to work on every single game because we're a smaller team."

CU trailed 37-30 at the intermission after allowing Howard to score 13 points in 15 minutes.

And then things got even more ominous when Casey Crawford -- who led the Buffs with 14 points in the season-opening victory over Arkansas-Pine Bluff -- sprained his right ankle during a layup drill at halftime.

The Bobcats have bragging rights in football after winning 19-10 at Folsom Field to spoil Hawkins' debut in 2006. Same story now in hoops where Montana State leads the all-time series with CU 6-1.

Montana State 85, Colorado 82

MONTANA ST. (85)

min fg-fga ft-fta rb ast pf tp

Johnson 20 0-2 2-3 3 0 1 2

Mbunga 38 4-8 5-6 8 2 2 13

Navarre 27 1-3 3-4 1 6 4 5

Bynum 20 2-6 1-2 1 1 4 5

Rush 28 5-13 1-1 9 0 4 12

Brown 8 2-2 0-0 2 0 4 5

Hennessy 16 0-1 0-0 1 3 2 0

Howard 33 9-14 1-7 9 0 3 24

Piepoli 35 6-10 3-4 2 2 3 19

Totals: 200 29-59 16-27 37 14 27 85

COLORADO (82)

min fg-fga ft-fta rb ast pf tp

Dufault 37 5-10 0-0 3 2 4 11

Crawford 10 1-3 0-0 1 0 0 2

Tomlinson 38 2-8 0-2 5 4 4 4

Higgins 44 5-8 11-14 7 5 2 21

Thorne 37 6-10 6-8 5 3 4 21

Coney 0+ 0-0 0-0 0 0 0 0

Knutson 22 4-8 4-4 1 1 2 12

J-Wilson 28 2-4 3-4 5 1 5 7

Eckloff 9 1-3 1-2 2 0 1 4

Totals: 200 26-54 25-34 30 16 22 82

Score by halves:

Montana St. 37 35 13 -- 85

Colorado 30 42 10 -- 82

3-point field goals -- Montana State (11-20): Johnson 0-2, Navarre 0-1, Rush 1-3, Brown 1-1, Howard 5-7, Piepoli 4-5; Colorado (5-18): Dufault 1-3, Crawford 0-1, Tomlinson 0-2, Higgins 0-3, Thorne 3-5, Knutson 0-2, Eckloff 1-2.

Officials --Shows, Mathis, Randall.

Technical fouls -- None.

Attendance -- 2,058.

STEALS

Montana State (3):Johnson, Rush 2.

Colorado (9):Dufault 2, Crawford, Higgins 4, Thorne, Knutson.

BLOCKED SHOTS

Montana State (3):Mbunga 3.

Colorado (1):Jackson-Wilson.

TURNOVERS

Montana State (15):Johnson, Navarre 4, Rush, Hennessy 2, Howard 3, Piepoli 4.

Colorado (11):Dufault 2, Tomlinson 3, Higgins 5, Thorne 3, Knutson, Jackson-Wilson.



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Woelk: MSU loss necessary hard lesson for Buffs

By Neill Woelk

Wednesday, November 19, 2008

Memo to Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn: no more scheduling Montana State.

If the Bobcats are on the schedule anytime in the future -- in any sport -- buy it out now. Doesn't matter what it costs. Whatever the price, it will be worth it in terms of saving face down the line.

Granted, losing to Big Sky teams in basketball doesn't carry the same kind of shock value that it does in football. But anytime a Big 12 team loses to a Big Sky foe in any sport, the red-face factor is considerable.

There were a few red faces in the Coors Events Center on Tuesday. The CU men's basketball team that showed so much promise in an opening win over Arkansas-Pine Bluff took a rather large step in the wrong direction against the Bobcats.

The Buffs couldn't shoot, they did not play good defense and they acted as if they were allergic to rebounds.

Other than those minor details, it was a reasonably good outing.

No doubt, CU coach Jeff Bzdelik expected these kinds of nights with a starting lineup that includes three freshmen. But he didn't expect them so early in the season against a schedule designed to help his young team gain a little confidence. These kinds of evenings were supposed to come in the Big 12 portion of the schedule.

Instead, it came in the second game of the season against a team picked to finish near the bottom of a conference that traditionally gets only one nod when it comes to NCAA Tournament time.

That's not what you call a good sign.

If there existed a bright spot -- and we're looking carefully here -- it's that the Buffs didn't check it in after falling behind by 15 in the second half. They did come back and force overtime, and actually had a chance to win it. But five missed free throws in the extra five minutes sealed the deal for the Bobcats and left the young Buffs with a very harsh lesson to study over the next few days.

"Pat Riley used to talk about being scarred," Bzdelik said. "The only way you get experience is through experience."

Safe to say, the Buffs have a doozy of a gash this morning. CU's deficiencies were exposed all in one night -- actually in 20 minutes, the time it took MSU to hit the Buffs between the eyes with seven 3-pointers for a 37-30 halftime lead. Colorado, meanwhile, countered with a 1-for-8 effort from beyond the arc while being outrebounded 22-14.

But the key stat for the night? The Bobcats reaped 15 second-chance points, the buckets coaches love to call "effort baskets." The Buffs had just four.

"You're not going to shoot the ball well all the time," Bzdelik said. "Defense is a constant. Rebounding is a constant. Offense is a variable."

The Buffs were not constant anywhere.

In the big picture, it would be wrong to attach too much magnitude to an early season, nonconference loss for a team picked to finish dead last in its conference. But this was a game the Buffs were expected to win, one designed to give them a little momentum and confidence as they build toward the meat of their schedule.

How they come back in the near future should tell us a lot about what's to come over the next few months.

"Most importantly, this basketball team learned a lesson about the intensity that they need to exhibit on the defensive end and rebounding," Bzdelik said. "We fell short because we dug ourselves such a deep hole."

Maybe this young team had a false sense of confidence after a 20-point win in the opener. Maybe the Buffs actually believed they could show up and frighten Montana State.

If so, maybe they learned their lesson Tuesday night. Maybe they learned that nobody is going to be scared of CU -- certainly not this year.

But no matter what they were thinking before the game, one thing is certain -- they'll have a nasty scar to remind them should they ever begin to think that same way again.



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THE DENVER POST

cu men's basketball

"Soft" Buffs suffer OT loss at home

Montana St. 85, Colorado 82 (OT)

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Updated: 11/19/2008 12:24:50 AM MST

BOULDER — Colorado players could not have learned more about the game of basketball — and perhaps themselves — Tuesday night during the 85-82 overtime loss to Montana State if Buffaloes coach Jeff Bzdelik had wheeled out two blackboards and turned on a VCR.

"You're not going to shoot the ball well all the time," Bzdelik said afterward. "But defense is a constant and rebounding is a constant. That's a lesson they have to learn. . . . We were very soft."

Outplayed in the paint, Colorado (1-1) dug itself a 15-point deficit in the second half. Getting career highs of 21 points from guards Cory Higgins and Dwight Thorne, the Buffs managed to rally and force overtime.

But Montana State (1-1) maintained better composure during the extra period. The Bobcats are picked to finish near the bottom of the Big Sky Conference.

CU Basketball

Visit the CU Stats Page for men's boxscores, Big 12 standings, team leaders and more

- Visit the CU Stats Page for women's boxscores, Big 12 standings, player pages and more
- Visit Tom Kensler's All Things Buffs blog for a behind-the-scenes look at CU sports

Colorado, which started two freshmen and two sophomores, missed 5-of-8 free throws during the 5-minute OT. Montana State went 8-for-12 from the line, successfully drawing fouls by penetrating the lane.

"(The Bobcats) just wanted it more than us," said CU freshman Austin Dufault, a 6-foot-9 forward who scored 11 points but had three rebounds in 37 minutes.

Dufault had a chance to tie the game with 3.7 seconds left in overtime but lost control of the ball on a baseline drive. There appeared to be contact, but no foul was whistled.

"You have to be strong with the basketball," Dufault said. "You can't rely on a call."

Colorado had to play more than half the game without starting forward Casey Crawford. The 6-9 sophomore turned an ankle during warm-ups after halftime.

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Longmont, Colorado
Thursday, November 20,
2008

Publish Date: 11/19/2008

A rally, but no rescue

Bufs dig hole, can't find way to climb out

By Patrick Ridgell

Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Rallying from double-digit, second-half deficits to force overtime against Montana State might mask some blemishes the Colorado men's basketball team displayed Tuesday night.

Not many, though.

In the end, the Buffs lost, 85-82, when Levi Knutson's long 3-pointer bounced off the rim as the final buzzer sounded.

His shot came seconds after the Buffs, trailing by two in the final 10 seconds, forced a turnover and got the ball to Austin Dufault in the lane. Montana State defenders stripped it from him as he jumped to shoot, and CU coaches and fans clamored for a foul. None came. With 3.7 seconds to go, CU had to foul Will Bynum, whose free throw accounted for the final margin and set up the Knutson's last try.

The exciting finish did not overshadow the fact that CU lost to a Big Sky team that's not expected to contend in its conference and, for most of the night, was superior. That realization might be why the Buffs didn't gripe over the last non-call.

"A game like that shouldn't come down to a call at the end," Dufault said. "There were a lot of things we could've done throughout the game that would've made up for that."

"It's college basketball. You have to be strong with the ball. You can't rely on a call to bail you out."

Said CU coach Jeff Bzdelik: "We're the ones that dug ourselves the hole, not the officials."

CU trailed 37-30 at halftime and 51-36 with 16:05 to play before it scored 14 straight points. It ended regulation on a 17-6 run that wouldn't have forced overtime had Montana State's Eric Rush hit his free throw with 1 second to play.

Rebounding remained a glaring weakness. Montana State grabbed 37 boards to CU's 30 but dominated the statistic in the first half, when it outrebounded CU, 22-14, including nine on the offensive end.



Colorado's Cory Higgins tries to keep the ball in bounds as Montana State's Danny Piepoli defends at the Coors Events Center in Boulder on Tuesday. **Joshua Buck/Times-Call**

MONTANA STATE 85, COLORADO 82 (OT)

MONTANA STATE (1-1)

Johnson 0-2 2-3 2, Mbunga 4-8, 5-6 13, Navarre 1-3 3-4 5, Bynum 2-6 1-2 5, Rush 5-13 1-1 12, Brown 2-2 0-0 5, Hennessy 0-1 0-0 0, Howard 9-14 1-7 24, Piepoli 6-10 3-4 19. Totals 29-59 16-27 85

COLORADO (1-1)

Dufault 5-10 0-0 11, Crawford 1-3 0-0 2, Tomlinson 2-8 0-2 4, Higgins 5-8 11-14 21, Thorne 6-10 6-8 21, Coney 0-0 0-0 0, Knutson 4-8 4-4 12, Jackson-Wilson 2-4 3-4 7, Eckloff 1-3 1-2 4. Totals 26-54 25-34 82

Halftime—Montana State 37-30. 3-Point Goals—Montana State 11-20 (Howard 5-7, Piepoli 4-6, Rush 1-3, Brown 1-1, Johnson 0-2, Navarre 0-1), CU 5-18 (Thorne 3-5, Eckloff 1-2,

The Buffs were better in the second half, even without starting forward Casey Crawford, who hurt his right ankle during halftime warmups and didn't return until 16 seconds remained. Bzdelik said that when the Buffs started pressing and trapping full court, the matchup was not a good one for Crawford, so he sat.

There was no word on Crawford's availability for Saturday's game with Harvard. He has had ankle problems before.

Dufault 1-3, Higgins 0-3, Crawford 0-1, Tomlinson 0-2, Knutson 0-2). Fouled Out—Jackson-Wilson (CU). Rebounds—Montana State 37 (Rush 9, Howard 9), CU 30 (Higgins 7). Assists—Montana State 14 (Navarre 6), CU 16 (Higgins 5). Total Fouls—Montana State 27, CU 22. Technical—None. A—2,058.
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CU's Dwight Thorne and Cory Higgins each scored 21 points, career highs for both. Bzdelik also lauded his team for fighting back after looking so poor early. Otherwise, there wasn't much good to glean.

Bzdelik vowed he won't use youth and inexperience as an excuse in 2008-09, but he added that sometimes teams need to be "scarred" to grow. Losing to Montana State ought to leave a scar.

"We were very soft defensively," Bzdelik said. "We were very soft on the boards.

"The most important thing is this basketball team learned a lesson from this in terms of the intensity level that needs to be exhibited all the time at the defensive end and on the boards."

Patrick Ridgell can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.

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Rocky Mountain News

Buffaloes fall to Montana State in OT

Associated Press

Published November 19, 2008 at 12:07 a.m.

Bobby Howard scored 24 points, Marquis Navarre hit a shot late in overtime and Montana State held off Colorado for an 85-82 win Tuesday night.

Navarre's runner in the lane with 52.7 seconds remaining in the extra period broke a tie at 80-80, sending the Bobcats to their sixth straight win against the Buffaloes.

Colorado hasn't beaten the Bobcats since 1924.

"Give Montana State credit," CU coach Jeff Bzdelik said. "We gave them life and confidence that (they) could win here."

The Buffaloes trailed by as many as 15 points before rallying to tie it late in regulation.

Howard had a chance to win the game in regulation on a three-point play with 1 second left, but he bounced the free throw off the back of the rim.

He made a big three-pointer midway through overtime.

"Anytime you beat a Big 12 opponent in their gym, that's a quality win," Montana State coach

Brad Huse said.

Montana State 85, Colorado 82, OT

MONTANA STATE (1-1) - Johnson 0-2 2-3 2, Mbunga 4-8 5-6 13, Navarre 1-3 3-4 5, Bynum 2-6 1-2 5, Rush 5-13 1-1 12, Brown 2-2 0-0 5, Hennessy 0-1 0-0 0, Howard 9-14 1-7 24, Piepoli 6-10 3-4 19. Totals 29-59 16-27 85.

COLORADO (1-1) - Dufault 5-10 0-0 11, Crawford 1-3 0-0 2, Tomlinson 2-8 0-2 4, Higgins 5-8 11-14 21, Thorne II 6-10 6-8 21, Coney 0-0 0-0 0, Knutson 4-8 4-4 12, Jackson-Wilson 2-4 3-4 7, Eckloff 1-3 1-2 4. Totals 26-54 25-34 82.

Halftime - Montana State 37-30. **End of regulation** - Tied 72-72. **Three-point attempts** - Montana State 11-20 (Howard 5-7, Piepoli 4-6, Brown 1-1, Rush 1-3, Navarre 0-1, Johnson 0-2), Colorado 5-18 (Thorne II 3-5, Eckloff 1-2, Dufault 1-3, Crawford 0-1, Knutson 0-2, Tomlinson 0-2, Higgins 0-3). **Fouled out** - Jackson-Wilson. **Rebounds** - Montana State 37 (Howard, Rush 9), Colorado 30 (Higgins 7). **Assists** - Montana State 14 (Navarre 6), Colorado 16 (Higgins 5). **Total fouls** - Montana State 27, Colorado 22. **A** - 2,058.

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