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Better Buffs?

Coach sees improvement in win, but more work lies on horizon

*By Justin Williams
 Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — Well, this time, there was no need for a dramatic second-half rally. But beating teams the Buffs were presumably supposed to easily handle is becoming less and less of a presumption these days.

Although there were signs of progression Tuesday night, even if they did come against a Patriot League team predicted to finish dead last in its conference.

The Buffs sustained a single-digit lead most of the way and pulled away in the final 8 minutes to get past Lafayette, 73-59, at the Coors Events Center. It was CU's second straight win following last week's loss to Montana State. Colorado (3-1) needed a furious comeback to beat Harvard over the weekend.

Buffaloes coach Jeff Bzdelik said he saw a lot of good things. Cory Higgins' career-high 24 points were a bright spot, and the overall 51-percent shooting effort from the floor was nice. Also, the defensive performance was adequate.

But it wasn't all peachy.

"The areas we need to improve upon (are) defensive rebounding and not turning the ball over 19 times," Bzdelik said. "Defensive rebounding and turnovers are two areas that affect the game in a big way, positively or negatively. We need to get better in both those areas."

For the third time in four games, the Buffs were out-rebounded — this time, 35-30 — and Colorado hit a season-high in the turnover department with 19.

Still, CU never trailed in the game. The Buffs stretched a seven-point halftime lead to 19 points with about 5 minutes left in the game.

They also held Heritage High School product Andrew Brown in check in the second half. The Lafayette senior guard, who was Colorado's player of the year in 2005, scored 13 first-half points Tuesday but was held scoreless in the final 20 minutes.

"When you play teams like Lafayette and Harvard, they make you play defense," Bzdelik said. "They cut hard, and you have to be rock solid. I don't care who you are, you have to be rock solid because they do cut so hard."

Before the season began, common perception was the Buffs would likely head to the season's first road game — Saturday at Stanford — with a perfect 4-0



Colorado's Cory Higgins pushes past Lafayette's Darion Benbow in the first half Tuesday at the Coors Events Center. Below: Jermyl Jackson-Wilson goes up for two points against Lafayette's J. D. Pelham, left, and Jim Mower. **Jill P. Mott/Times-Call**

COLORADO 73, LAFAYETTE 59

LAFAYETTE (2-3)

Benbow 1-4 0-0 2, Koltun 1-1 0-0 2, Brown 3-12 5-6 13, Wheeler 2-2 0-0 5, Kari 3-8 2-4 9, Moore 1-3 0-0 2, Willen 2-8 1-2 6, Mower 0-4 2-2 2, Delaney 1-3 0-0 2, Petkovich 1-3 0-0 2, Mintz 4-7 2-4 10, Orchowski 1-2 2-2 4, Pelham 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 20-57 14-20 59.

COLORADO (2-0)

Jackson-Wilson 2-4 2-2 6, Dufault 3-5 4-5 11, Tomlinson 2-5 5-6 10, Higgins 7-11 8-10 24, Thorne II 5-7 3-5 14, Coney 0-2 0-0 0, Knutson 0-1 0-0 0, Crawford 1-4 0-0 2, Zehnder 0-0 0-0 0, Eckloff 2-2 1-2 6. Totals 22-43 23-30 73.

Halftime — Colorado 34-27. 3-point goals — Lafayette 5-21 (Brown 2-5, Wheeler 1-1, Kari 1-3, Willen 1-5); Colorado 6-14 (Higgins 2-3, Dufault

record, and with a soft schedule the rest of the way, there was the potential for an undefeated start heading into Big 12 action. The Cardinal was supposed to be CU's only real test.

But Colorado has hardly been a world-beater to start 2008-09, although Bzdelik continues to profess the team is headed in the right direction. The progressions might be small, but they're evident, he says.

1-1, Tomlinson 1-2, Thorne II 1-3, Ecloff 1-1). Fouled Out – None. Rebounds – Lafayette 35 (Willen 7, Orchowski 6, Koltun 5); Colorado 30 (Jackson-Wilson 11, Tomlinson 4). Assists – Lafayette 11 (Brown 6); Colorado 13 (Tomlinson 3, Knutson 3). Total Fouls – Lafayette 25; Colorado 20. A — 2,095.

"You look at where we want to be in the future, you can kind of visualize our vision," said Bzdelik, who started two freshmen and a sophomore Tuesday. "Right now, we're extremely young and very inexperienced. It's going to be a challenging year, but it's where we want to get to and how we want to develop these young players."

Buff's junior Dwight Thorne said he's seen the progress.

"I think the younger guys are starting to gain confidence," he said. "You can see it in practice as well. They're just more comfortable out there."

And the challenge that awaits in Palo Alto, Calif., looms large for the young squad.

"To consider yourself a good basketball team, you've got to play against quality basketball teams, and I think Stanford is a pretty good team," Thorne said.

Added Bzdelik: "Ready or not, here we come. I'm looking forward to it. It will be a great challenge and will give us a really good gauge as to where we're at."

TIP-INS: Colorado's Casey Crawford, who scored a career-high 18 points against Harvard, was held to two points Tuesday. ... Four players scored in double figures for the Buffs, who shot better than 50 percent for the third time this season. ... Jermyn Jackson-Wilson grabbed 11 rebounds, all on the defensive end.

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Rebounding remains issue for Bzdelik's Buffs despite win

Leopards beat Buffs 35-30 on boards

By Ryan Thorburn

Wednesday, November 26, 2008

Jermyl Jackson-Wilson is tired of hearing about Colorado's rebounding issues.

But it's a talking (screaming?) point Jeff Bzdelik is going to be focusing on in practice all season.

Despite Jackson-Wilson's determined effort on the glass, the Buffs were beaten on the boards 35-30 on Tuesday night by a Patriot League team during an otherwise impressive 73-59 victory over Lafayette at the Coors Events Center.

Through four games, CU has been balanced on offense, stingy on defense, but still a little soft in the paint.

"I had been slacking on the boards," admitted Jackson-Wilson, who had a total of 15 rebounds in the first three games of the season and 11 against Lafayette. "I just tried to get every ball I could."

Cory Higgins, the team's leading rebounder entering the game (7.3 rpg), only had two rebounds against the Leopards.

But the sophomore guard more than made up for it with a career-high 24 points on 7-for-11 shooting.

"He scored in a variety of ways," Bzdelik said. "And again, you're looking at a young player."

Higgins also held Lafayette's Andrew Brown without a point (0-for-5 shooting) in the second half after he had scored 13 points before the intermission.

The Leopards (2-3) shot 35.1 percent from the field with two players scoring in double figures while the Buffs (3-1) shot 51.2 percent with four players scoring in double figures.

Dwight Thorne (14 points), Austin Dufault (11) and Nate Tomlinson (10) were a combined 10-for-17 from the floor.

"It's always fun when you feel like you're more involved," Thorne said.

Casey Crawford, who was averaging 11.3 points through the first three games, scored only two points in 14 minutes.

Jackson-Wilson got the start over Crawford for the second consecutive game and had six points, two blocks and two steals in 21 minutes. "Jermyn is a beast on the boards," Higgins said. "He can do that every night."

True freshman Trey Eckloff impressed Bzdelik with his play, chipping in with six points and three rebounds in 15 minutes.

CU led 34-27 at halftime after shooting 52.2 percent from the field and holding the visitors to 34.6 percent. Higgins led the way with 12 points at the break on 4-for-6 shooting (2-for-3 from behind the arc).

The Buffs enjoyed a 20-9 cushion after a 3-pointer by Higgins with 13:25 remaining before the Leopards answered with a 10-0 run.

Brown, a Littleton native who led Horizon to a Class 5A championship at the Coors Events Center during the 2004-05 season as a high school senior, scored all of his points in the first half to keep Lafayette within striking distance.

"We wanted to get Andrew home to play out here," Lafayette head coach Fran O'Hanlon said. "We played a Big 12 team. We are a pretty good team. If we keep working I know we can play against a team like this."

Lafayette cut its deficit to 36-33 on a basket by Jeff Kari with 17:57 remaining but the Buffs embarked on a quick 7-0 burst capped with a 3-pointer by Dufault to take a 43-33 lead and cruised from there.

"There was a lot of good," Bzdelik said. "But I think we need to improve our defensive rebounding and turnovers. They affect the game in a big way. We need to get better in both those areas."

CU had 19 turnovers that led to 20 Lafayette points but the visitors had 20 turnovers that led to 18 points.

"I think we just need to focus on rebounding a little bit. Like Coach says, it's just a will and a want to," Jackson-Wilson said. "People want to go on fast breaks and everything like that but sometimes you need to grab a guy and say, 'Come on, let's rebound.'"

"We'll get it together."

Notable

CU is 3-0 when shooting over 50 percent (the team shot 48.1 percent in the loss to Montana State). ... Dufault has scored in double figures in all four games. ... Higgins has started all 36 games of his career. ... Thorne also had two steals, two assists and two turnovers. ... Attendance was 2,095.

Colorado 73, Lafayette 59

LAFAYETTE (59)

min fg-fga ft-fta rb ast pf tp

Benbow 13 1-4 0-0 0 0 4 2

Koltun 9 1-1 0-0 5 0 4 2

Brown 32 3-12 5-6 2 6 2 13

Wheeler 15 2-2 0-0 1 3 4 5

Kari 25 3-8 2-4 3 0 0 9

Moore 7 1-3 0-0 1 0 1 2

Willen 24 2-8 1-2 7 1 1 6

Mower 21 0-4 2-2 1 1 2 2

Delaney 9 1-3 0-0 1 0 2 2

Petkovich 11 1-3 0-0 0 0 1 2

Mintz 21 4-7 2-4 4 0 1 10

Orchowski 10 1-2 22 6 0 2 4

Pelham 3 0-0 0-0 1 0 1 0

Totals: 200 20-57 14-20 35 11 25 59

COLORADO (73)

min fg-fga ft-fta rb ast pf tp

Jcksn-Wlsn 21 2-4 2-2 11 0 1 6

Dufault 25 3-5 4-5 2 1 3 11

Tomlinson 36 2-5 5-6 4 3 2 10

Higgins 31 7-11 8-10 2 1 3 24

Thorne 25 5-7 3-5 2 2 3 14

Kelley 5 0-2 0-0 1 0 0 0

Coney 11 0-2 0-0 0 1 1 0

Veal 2 0-0 0-0 0 0 0 0

Knutson 13 0-1 0-0 2 3 2 0

Zehnder 2 0-0 0-0 0 0 1 0

Crawford 14 1-4 0-0 2 1 1 2

Eckloff 15 2-2 1-2 3 1 3 6

Totals: 200 22-43 23-30 30 13 20 73

Score by halves:

Lafayette 27 32 -- 59

Colorado 34 39 -- 73

3-point field goals -- Lafayette (5-21): Brown 2-5, Wheeler 1-1, Kari 1-3, Willen 1-5, Benbow 0-1, Moore 0-1, Mower 0-3, Delaney 0-1, Petkovich 0-1. Colorado (6-14): Higgins 2-3, Dufault 1-1, Tomlinson 1-2, Thorne 1-3, Eckloff 1-1, Kelley 0-1, Coney 0-1, Knutson 0-1, Crawford 0-1.

Officials --John Higgins, John Moore, Winston Stith.

Technical fouls -- None.

Attendance -- 2,095.

STEALS

Lafayette (4):Brown 2, Willen, Petkovich.

Colorado (11):Higgins 3, Jackson-Wilson 2, Tomlinson 2, Thorne 2, Crawford, Eckloff.

BLOCKED SHOTS

Lafayette (0):None.

Colorado (4):Jackson-Wilson 2, Zehnder, Eckloff.

TURNOVERS

Lafayette (20):Brown 4, Koltun 3, Kari 3, Mintz 2, Orchowski 2, Benbow, Wheeler, Moore, Willen, Petkovich, Team.

Colorado (19):Tomlinson 3, Eckloff 3, Dufault 2, Higgins 2, Thorne 2, Jackson-Wilson, Coney, Knutson, Team 4.



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area college basketball

Higgins, Thorne spark CU

By The Associated Press

Updated: 11/25/2008 11:25:40 PM MST

BOULDER — Cory Higgins scored 24 points and had three steals and Dwight Thorne added 14 points to lead Colorado to a 73-59 victory over Lafayette on Tuesday.

"I think the adjustment period is gone away and pretty much past," Higgins said of CU (3-1), which has five freshmen and five sophomores. "We should know what to expect of everybody and have everybody show up for every game."

Andrew Brown led Lafayette (2-3) with 13 points.

"It was just a good night for us," Buffs coach Jeff Bzdelik said. "Now, ready or not, we're going on the road."

CU plays its first road game Saturday at Stanford.

Women

Wyoming 62, Boise State 55

LARAMIE — Emma Langford scored 21 points as Wyoming (3-2) rallied from a 15-point deficit to down Boise State (2-3).

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