



# Higgins sets standard for Buffs

## CU men play host to Harvard today

By Ryan Thorburn

Saturday, November 22, 2008

Keep an eye on Cory Higgins.

That's what Colorado's freshmen are doing as they make the transition from high school to the Big 12.

Through two games, Higgins, who is only a sophomore, leads the Buffs (1-1) in scoring (16.5 ppg.), rebounding (6.5 rpg.), assists (5.5 apg.) and steals (2.5 spg.).

"He's kind of Mr. Everything," forward Austin Dufault said of Higgins. "He knows the offense so well and he gets in good spots to score and to make plays. And defensively he's our best defender. It's great having a guy like him on the team. He's kind of looked at as a veteran and he's only a sophomore. That speaks to how hard he has worked the last couple of years. ...

"It's definitely encouraging as a freshman to see how far he has advanced from last year to this year. It makes us want to work that much harder to improve as much as he did."

If the 2004 Denver Nuggets had the same work ethic as Higgins, there's a good chance Jeff Bzdelik's office would still be in the Pepsi Center.

For now, CU's head coach is focused on getting the most out of this year's Buffs while dreaming about how good they might be if some of these freshmen can improve the way Higgins has. Last year he averaged 8.3 points, 4.3 rebounds, 2.3 assists and 1.1 steals while starting all 32 games as a true freshman.

"Cory has worked at it," Bzdelik said. "Our job is just to get better every day. We just need to get better and not worry about winning and losing because that will take care of itself. That's where I come in. I've got to develop them and motivate them and encourage them, individually and collectively."

Bzdelik is eager to see how the Buffs respond to the motivation and encouragement they've been receiving in practice since Tuesday's 85-82 overtime loss to Montana State.

CU returns to action against Harvard today at the Coors Events Center (2 p.m., no television).

"We need to understand the urgency of playing all 40 minutes," Bzdelik said. "We learned a tough lesson the other night."

The Buffs fell behind by as many as 15 points in the second half before a furious rally forced the overtime. The home team missed five free throws in the extra five minutes, and the Bobcats celebrated

another victory for the Big Sky school in Boulder.

Higgins and Dwight Thorne led CU with 21 points each on a combined 11-for-18 shooting. Dufault added 11 points but only grabbed three rebounds in 37 minutes as MSU won the battle of the boards 37-30.

After leading the team with 14 points in the 76-56 victory against Arkansas-Pine Bluff to open the season, sophomore Casey Crawford sprained an ankle during the halftime warm-up drill and watched the second half against the Bobcats from the bench.

"You have to realize every Division I team can play," said Crawford, who practiced on Friday and expects to play today. "And you have to come out strong."

The Crimson (1-0) got off to a strong start to the season on Wednesday night with an 80-69 victory at New Hampshire in their opener. Former Duke great and ex-Michigan head coach Tommy Amaker is in his second season at Harvard and brought in a highly touted recruiting class that is the talk of the Ivy League.

"They play very hard, they shoot the ball very well, they're very confident," Bzdelik said. "It will be a very competitive game."

Harvard is 0-9 all-time against Big 12 programs, including an 81-48 loss to the Buffs 60 years ago in the only meeting between the schools.



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## CU men's preview: Nov. 22

**TONIGHT** -- Colorado hosts Harvard at the Coors Events Center. Tip-off is scheduled for 2 p.m.

**BROADCAST** -- Television: none; Radio: KKZN AM 760 with Mark Johnson (play-by-play) and Charles Johnson (color).

**STORYLINE** -- Jeff Bzdelik is anxious to see how his young team bounces back from a disappointing 85-82 overtime loss to Montana State on Tuesday. ... Through two games the Buffs have been out-rebounded 75-61, which is not good news considering the opponents they have faced also had small lineups compared to what will be awaiting CU in Big 12 play. ... Harvard is coming off an 80-69 victory at New Hampshire in its season opener on Wednesday.

**KEY STAT** -- Cory Higgins is the first CU men's player in the last 35 years to lead the team in both rebounds and assists the first two games of any season. The sophomore guard also leads the team in scoring (16.5 ppg.).

**COACHES** -- Jeff Bzdelik is 13-21 in his second season at CU. Tommy Amaker is 9-22 in his second season at Harvard.

### PROBABLE STARTERS:

**CU:** G Nate Tomlinson, 6-2, freshman, 8.0 ppg, 3.5 apg, G Cory Higgins, 6-5, sophomore, 16.5 ppg, 6.5 rpg, G Dwight Thorne, 6-2, junior, 14.5 ppg, 5.0 rpg, F Austin Dufault, 6-8, freshman, 12.0 ppg, 3.5 rpg, F/C Casey Crawford, 6-9, sophomore, 8.0 ppg, 1.5 rpg.

**HARVARD:** G Jeremy Lin, 6-2, junior, 15.0 ppg, 8.0 rpg, G Oliver McNally, 6-3, freshman, 4.0 ppg, 1.0 apg, G Max Kenyi, 6-5, freshman, 17.0 ppg, 4.0 rpg, F Doug Miller, 6-7, junior, 8.0 ppg, 3.0 rpg, F Keith Wright, 6-7, freshman, 15.0 ppg, 5.0 rpg.

**SERIES** -- CU leads 1-0. The Buffs won 81-48 at the Big Seven Christmas Tournament on Dec. 29, 1948, in Kansas City.

**UP NEXT** -- The Buffs will host Lafayette on Tuesday at 7 p.m. at the Coors Events Center.



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## Buff's hope to rebound

*By Patrick Ridgell*

*Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — What's most disturbing about the rebounding numbers the Colorado men's basketball team has posted through two games is this one thought:

Big 12 play hasn't even started yet.

But after facing not-so-burly Arkansas Pine-Bluff and Montana State, the Buffs are a minus-7 in rebounding margin. That's last in the Big 12. That's also worse than last year's minus-3.3 figure, which was 11th in the Big 12.

Coach Jeff Bzdelik doesn't need statistics to tell him the rebounding better improve today against Harvard, or his youthful Buffs could be embarrassed again like they were in Tuesday's loss to Montana State. He also doesn't need stats to tell him they'll be in major pain come Big 12 games if change doesn't come.

What bugs him most is what he found studying tape from Tuesday's loss, in which CU was outrebounded, 37-30. He counted 88 chances his players had to block opponents off. They did so only 46 times.

"We just don't block off. We don't," Bzdelik said.

Every coach worries about rebounding, especially those whose rosters are as raw as CU's, which has five freshman and five sophomores. Bzdelik said it has always been an area of emphasis and will continue to be.

Bzdelik gushed over Toby Veal's rebounding prowess in the preseason. Veal, a 6-foot-7 freshman forward, has played 2 minutes so far in 2008-09. More minutes for him might help, but Veal's shooting could hinder the offense.

What will the Buffs do? Aside from continuing to stress it in practice, Bzdelik offered no solutions.

"All I can do is continue to work on it, show it to them," he said. "I can't block off for them. It's not just one guy. It's everybody."

Forward Casey Crawford said he's well aware of what's going on. He said he knows points will come and shots will fall. This is another matter.

"If we would have rebounded better Tuesday night, the game would have been ours, we would have won," he said.

### Harvard (1-0) at Colorado men (1-1)

**When/Where:** 2 p.m. today, at the Coors Events Center in Boulder

**TV/Radio:** No TV/KKZN 760

**The series:** Today's meeting is the second between the schools, and their first since CU beat Harvard, 81-48, in 1948.

**Leading scorers:** Harvard — Max Kenyi (17 points in opener); CU — Cory Higgins (16.5 points per game)

**Notes:** CU's 21 turnovers through its first two games are the fewest to start a season since 1972, the first year that was recorded statistic. ... Higgins leads the Buffs in rebounding (6.5 per game). ... Harvard shot 61.4 percent in its 80-69, season-opening defeat of New Hampshire on Wednesday.

*Patrick Ridgell*

### Minnesota (3-0) at Colorado State men (2-0)

**When/Where:** 8 p.m., Moby Arena in Fort Collins.

**TV/Radio:** The mtn./560-AM.

**The series:** Minnesota leads, 3-1. CSU won the only meeting in Fort Collins, 80-61, on Dec. 5, 1987.

**Leading scorers:** Minnesota — Lawrence Westbrook (16.0 points per game); CSU — Andy Ogide (20.0).

**Notes:** CSU is averaging 85 points per game through its first two, and the Rams are shooting 48.3 percent from the floor. Minnesota is averaging 68 points while shooting 42.5 percent. ...

“With a team like Montana State, it was a little more difficult. They sent five guys to the boards every time. Teams don’t normally do that. But that’s still not a reason we didn’t rebound the ball like we would have liked to.”

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Agide has averaged 14.0 rebounds so far, while Marcus Walker has scored 17.0 points per game for the Rams.

*Brian Howell*

**Idaho (0-2) at Colorado State women (0-2)**

**When/Where:** 2 p.m., Moby Arena in Fort Collins

**TV/Radio:** No TV/1410-AM.

**The series:** Idaho leads, 3-2. The teams have split their meetings, 1-1, in Fort Collins.

**Leading scorers:** Idaho — Derisa Taleni (14.5 points per game); CSU — Bonnie Barbee (14.5) and Kandy Beemer (14.5).

**Notes:** This is the first of five consecutive home games for CSU. ... The Rams' Britney Minor is averaging 13.5 points per game. ... Alana Curtis, a graduate of Rocky Mountain High School in Fort Collins, is a sophomore guard for Idaho.

*Brian Howell*