



Crawford's injury not as bad as feared

By Ryan Thorburn

Friday, December 12, 2008

Jody Bailey, the director of operations for the Colorado men's basketball team, was asked how things were going as the Buffs took the court for a practice on Friday afternoon.

"Good," Bailey said. "We just need to get that guy healthy."

He was looking at Casey Crawford.

The team received some good news on that front Friday evening when MRI results on Crawford's injured foot revealed a sprained deltoid ligament in his right ankle. The 6-9 forward will begin a rehab program Saturday and isn't expected to miss a significant amount of time.

"It depends on the rehab but it's not a long-term thing," Crawford told the Camera. "(The diagnosis) is very helpful. Now I know what the problem is."

The Buffs are 4-3 this season but 2-for-2 on MRI results.

A week earlier the team learned that point guard Nate Tomlinson only had a painful foot sprain and not a stress fracture, which would have sidelined him for six weeks. The freshman from Australia only missed the Texas Christian game and returned to the starting lineup for CU's 75-56 victory over Colorado State on Wednesday, scoring 11 points on 5-for-6 shooting.

Crawford did not suit up against the Rams and has been held out of practice all week while wearing a protective boot on the injured foot. Last season while sitting out after transferring from Wake Forest he had to stop practicing due to a stress fracture in his foot.

"I'm still not happy that I'm hurt," Crawford said. "But it could have been worse."

The coaching staff is counting on Crawford to knock down 3-pointers this season, which would open driving lanes for the guards in the paint. He scored 14 points in the opener against Arkansas-Pine Bluff on 6-for-8 shooting (2-for-3 from behind the arc) and 18 points against Harvard on 6-for-10 shooting (4-for-7 from behind the arc) but only scored a total of seven points on 3-for-10 shooting in his other four games.

"It's been bugging me for a while," Crawford said of the pain in his ankle. "We never knew what it was and I didn't want to sit out."

The win over the Rams was bittersweet for Crawford, who enjoyed watching Cory Higgins match CSU with 28 points in the second half but wished he could have been on the floor.

“The week of practice before that game was tough,” Crawford said. “And we came out and showed what we can do.”

The Buffs don’t play again until hosting Prairie View A&M on Dec. 19. That will give Crawford some extra time to heal but the coaches aren’t going to let him play until the ankle is 100 percent. Colorado coach Jeff Bzdelik is going to need Crawford’s size and skills for Big 12 play.

“They don’t want to rush me back,” he said.



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Higgins unlocks CU locker room

Sophomore guard helps Buffaloes bounce back from loss to TCU

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Jeff Bzdelik locked his team out of its posh new digs after last week's loss to Texas Christian.

But the Buffs were allowed to hang out and get dressed for practice in the comforts of their refurbished locker room again after the 75-56 victory over Colorado State on Wednesday night at the Coors Events Center.

Cory Higgins' teammates should grant him remote control privileges on the flat screens and unlimited turns on the gaming systems after the sophomore guard scored a career-high 33 points to silence the Rams.

"I've never really been a part of anything like that. Seeing a guy go off like he did in the second half was fun to watch," freshman forward Austin Dufault said before Thursday's practice. "And it wasn't like he was hogging the ball or anything like that. It was a team effort. We were looking for him because we knew he was hot and we were just trying to get him the ball and get out of his way."

Higgins scored 28 of his points after the intermission to match CSU's second-half total.

The Buffs closed the game with a 43-16 run after falling behind by eight points.

"It was fun for me," said Higgins, who was 11-for-16 from the field and 8-for-9 from the line. "This feeling should really make us want to play like this every night. That feeling we had against TCU ... we never want to have that again."

Dufault (12 points), Nate Tomlinson (11) and Dwight Thorne (10) also scored in double figures. CU had 16 assists on 28 field goals with only eight turnovers.

Casey Crawford did not play and results of an MRI on his injured right foot are expected to be released today.

"Casey is a great player and depending on how long he's out we're just going to have to step up and try and make up for what we're going to miss without him," Dufault said.

Dufault had five rebounds against CSU. Jermyl Jackson-Wilson had four boards, Trey Eckloff had 3 and Toby Veal added two as CU was out-rebounded 33-28.

The athletic Veal played a season-high 10 minutes and made his first career field goal.

"Toby is definitely starting to get it. He's working hard in practice and he's been working hard all year and it's starting to pay off for him," Dufault said. "I couldn't be happier for him and hopefully he continues to play more and more minutes. I think he can really help us this year."

Crawford is averaging 6.5 points and 2.3 rebounds this season. The coaching staff bragged about the transfer from Wake Forest's shooting prowess for a year, but in his first six games at CU the 6-9 forward was wildly inconsistent.

Higgins, however, has been rock steady and leads the team in minutes (37.0 mpg), scoring (18.4 ppg), rebounding (6.0 rpg) and steals (1.7 spg).

The Buffs will not play next week so they can concentrate on taking final exams. CU's next game is on Dec. 19 against Prairie View A&M at the Coors Events Center.



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