



CU aims to build win streak

Bzdelik's Buffs vow not to overlook struggling Panthers

By Ryan Thorburn
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Aloha means goodbye final exams and hello Rainbow Classic.

But before the Colorado men's basketball team starts thinking about spending a week in Hawaii, the Buffs must focus on packing a three-game win streak with them for the trip.

CU (4-3) host Prairie View A&M at 8 p.m. tonight and Louisiana-Monroe on Tuesday at the Coors Events Center.

Having already suffered through humbling home losses to Montana State and Texas Christian, the young Buffs should be taking every team on the schedule very seriously.

"After that TCU game, I think I speak for everybody when I say we had an empty feeling inside," junior guard Dwight Thorne said. "Because nobody played hard like they could have or wanted to. I think now we understand that we have to leave it all on the floor, win or lose, in order to leave the locker room with our heads up. If we do that we'll be OK."

Head coach Jeff Bzdelik put the Buffs through some intense practices after the 16-point loss to the Horned Frogs and they responded with an impressive 75-56 victory over Colorado State.

That was nine days ago. Since that win the players have been focused on finishing their classroom work for the semester with the coaches scheduling practices around tests and study groups.

"Practices have been at different times and for different amount of times. We've kind of been all over the map," Bzdelik said after CU practiced at the campus recreation center on Thursday while the Coors Events Center was being used for final exams. "We're like anybody else at this time of the year. It's difficult to get continuity. You just try and keep them as sharp as you can."

Bzdelik does not anticipate any academic problems on this year's team, which did not miss one day of classes for games during the fall semester (the only road game was at Stanford over Thanksgiving break).

"We should be fine (academically)," Bzdelik said. "I think they've done a great job."

Things have also gone well in the training room for Casey Crawford. The 6-foot-9 sophomore was able to go through a complete practice for the first time in 13 days and is expected to be in the rotation tonight.

Crawford missed the CSU game with a right ankle injury. After a promising start to the season the Wake Forest transfer scored a total of five points in his last three games.

"Every season has got its ups and downs ... I'm on the way up on the roller coaster," Crawford said. "Hopefully I don't

come back down.”

Cory Higgins — CU’s leading scorer (18.4 ppg) and rebounder (6.0 ppg) — is the Big 12’s reigning player of the week after scoring 28 of his career-high 33 points in the second half against CSU.

Thorne (12.6 ppg) and Austin Dufault (10.9) are also scoring in double figures for the season and point guard Nate Tomlinson (9.9) will likely join the club after tonight.

The balanced Buffs lead the Big 12 in field goal percentage (.505) but are last in rebounding (28.6 rpg). They should make some progress on the boards against the Panthers, whose tallest starter is listed at 6-7.

Prairie View A&M is 3-7 overall and 0-6 on the road this season with losses at UCLA, Missouri, Wyoming, Hawaii, Baylor and New Mexico State.

“They’ve put themselves in position to win a lot of games,” Bzdelik said. “They just haven’t been able to complete them. We have great respect for their ability and their skill and their athleticism.”



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