



# CU men's preview

By Ryan Thorburn  
Sunday, December 28, 2008

**TONIGHT** -- Colorado plays Coppin State in the first round of the Rainbow Classic at 10:30 p.m.

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

**STORYLINE** -- The Buffs are looking to extend a three-game win streak after posting a 6-3 record with eight of their first nine games in Boulder. ... The Eagles (1-8) have lost eight consecutive games since winning their opener against Division II Wilmington.

**KEY STAT** -- During CU's three-game win streak Cory Higgins is averaging 21.7 points, 7.0 rebounds and 2.7 assists while shooting 58.3 percent (21-for-36) from the field.

**COACHES** -- Jeff Bzdelik is 18-23 in his second season at CU. Ron Mitchell is 586-355 in his 30th season at Coppin State.

## PROBABLE STARTERS

**CU** -- G Nate Tomlinson, 6-2, freshman, 8.6 ppg, 3.1 rpg, G Cory Higgins, 6-5, sophomore, 17.9 ppg, 6.3 rpg, G Dwight Thorne, 6-2, junior, 12.3 ppg, 3.8 rpg, F Austin Dufault, 6-8, freshman, 11.1 ppg, 3.2 rpg, F/C Jermyl Jackson-Wilson, 6-6, senior, 4.8 ppg, 4.4 rpg.

**Coppin State** -- G Chuka Iloegbu, 6-3, senior, 6.4 ppg, 3.9 rpg, G Tywain McKee, 6-2, senior, 20.6 ppg, 4.9 rpg, G Jordan Lee, 6-4, freshman, 9.9 ppg, 3.1 rpg, F Brian Chesnut, 6-7, senior, 4.7 ppg, 3.4 rpg, C Ceslovas Kucinskas, 6-8, sophomore, 2.8 ppg, 3.2 rpg.

**SERIES** -- The Buffs lead 1-0, a 91-63 victory on Jan. 2, 2001, in Boulder. CU is 5-0 against the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference.

**UP NEXT** -- The Buffs will face either Buffalo or Pepperdine in the second round of the Rainbow Classic on Monday. CU will play at 5 p.m. if it beats Coppin State and TBA if it loses.



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# Bufs head over to the Rainbow

By Ryan Thorburn

Saturday, December 27, 2008

Colorado is the only team from a BCS conference competing in the eight-team Rainbow Classic in Honolulu.

But the young Bufs — who are riding a three-game win streak into Waikiki Beach — don't necessarily view themselves as the favorites.

Not after escaping with a 65-62 victory over Louisiana-Monroe on Tuesday night at the Coors Events Center.

"The bottom line is: Who are we?" CU head coach Jeff Bzdelik said after his team was out-rebounded 45-22 by the 3-8 Warhawks of the Sun Belt Conference. "We're just a young aspiring basketball team. We better play up to our highest level every time we step on the court and keep getting better because we have a long ways to go."

The Bufs (6-3) open the tournament against Coppin State at 10:30 p.m. today at the Stan Sheriff Center.

The Eagles (1-8) have lost eight consecutive games, all on the road, including games at Purdue, Kansas, Wisconsin and Syracuse.

Tywain McKee scored 31 points on 12-for-24 shooting for Coppin State during its 82-71 loss to No. 11 Syracuse on Monday. Andy Rautins was 9-for-16 from behind the arc with 29 points for the Orange.

"Everybody looks at their record, but it took a special effort by a Syracuse player to hit nine threes and beat them by 12 points," Bzdelik said. "It's like coach (Mike) Shanahan said after the Broncos game, 'This is the NFL, everybody can play.'

"This is Division I basketball, everyone can play."

The Bufs will face either Buffalo (5-4) or Pepperdine (1-11) in the second round on Monday. CU appears to be on the weaker side of the bracket opposite host Hawaii, Vermont, George Washington and Colorado State.

"We're going there to win, definitely," CU sophomore guard Cory Higgins said. "I don't want to go out there and think we're the favorites and they're just going to give it to us.

"Like Coach says, everyone can play. Coppin State almost beat Syracuse at Syracuse. We just have to be ready to take care of business."

Bzdelik's team flew to Honolulu on Wednesday and started practicing on Christmas. The Bufs were planning on visiting Pearl Harbor and taking in other sights.

"I think it's a great opportunity for these players to bond together. That's part of the educational process of college basketball is to go see different parts of this great nation of ours," Bzdelik said. "We'll take them to Pearl Harbor and

they'll have a great understanding of what took place there."

Most of the players had never been to Hawaii before.

"I've never seen the ocean," said freshman forward Austin Dufault, who is from Killdeer, N.D.



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## Buffaloes hope to find themselves in Hawaii

CU opens play in Rainbow Classic tonight against Coppin State

*By Patrick Ridgell  
Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — The Colorado men's basketball team, always in search of confidence and knowledge, plays the first of three games in three days tonight in Oahu, Hawaii, in the Rainbow Classic wondering what it'll learn next.

Its first opponent is 1-8 Coppin State, a Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference program that's lost eight in a row since opening the season with a win over a Division II program. Of course, one of those losses came Monday at No. 17 Syracuse, 82-71, a game in which the Orangemen needed a program-record nine 3-pointers from guard Andy Rautins to beat Coppin State.

CU coach Jeff Bzdelik can cite any from a cupboard full of reasons why his Buffs (6-3) shouldn't look down their noses at anyone. One includes their Big 12-worst minus-6.3 rebounding margin, a statistic his players should know well after they were outrebounded, 45-22, Tuesday by Louisiana-Monroe. Another would be humbling home losses to teams like Montana State and TCU, which are 5-5 and 7-5.

The coach insists his team will take nothing for granted.

"The bottom line is, who are we?" Bzdelik said. "We're just a young, aspiring basketball team. We had better play up to our highest level every time we step on the court. We have a long ways to go. I've been frank with all of you about that."

The rest of the tournament's eight-team field includes Buffalo and Pepperdine, one of whom CU will face Monday, depending on today's results. The other bracket includes Colorado State, Vermont, George Washington and Hawaii.

No one in the Rainbow Classic is ranked, or even close to ranked. This field will lack the luster of next year's Maui Classic, in which CU is expected to find itself in a tournament that'll include the likes of North Carolina.

Most of the players, and Bzdelik too, say they've never been to Hawaii. Freshman forward Austin Dufault said he has never seen an ocean. Bzdelik said he planned a visit to Pearl Harbor, so they'd have a "great understanding of what took place there." Plans for some sort of a luau were also being made before the Buffs left Boulder.

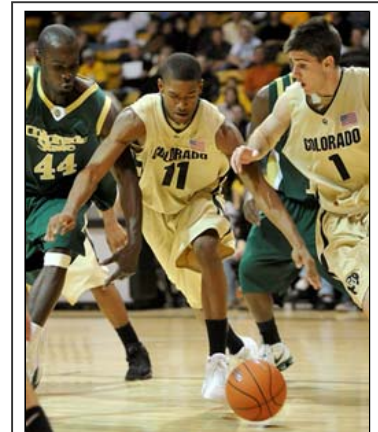
A rematch is possible with CSU, which the Buffs beat, 75-56, on Dec. 10. Guard Cory Higgins said that chance might be in the back of their minds, but it's not something with which they're very concerned.

"We're going there to win, definitely," Higgins said. "I don't want to go in there thinking we're favorites, like they're just going to give it to us. Like coach said, everybody can play."

Said forward Casey Crawford: "They all Division I players; no one is a pushover. We have to realize that a lot more. We can't rely on doing whatever we do and we'll just come out there and beat teams like that.

"This is a learning experience."

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Colorado guards Cory Higgins, center, and Nate Tomlinson open play tonight in the Rainbow Classic in Oahu, Hawaii, against Coppin State. CU will play three games in three days in the tournament. **Lewis Geyer/Times-Call**