



Bufs open Rainbow Classic with win

Camera staff report

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HONOLULU -- The Colorado men's basketball team opened the Rainbow Classic with an easy 80-63 victory over Coppin State here late Sunday local-time and early Monday morning Mountain time at the Stan Sheriff Center.

The Buffs (7-3) will face Buffalo in the semifinals at 8 p.m. Monday, Mountain time. The Bulls (6-4) defeated Pepperdine 72-71 in overtime on Monday.

In a game that didn't start until 11 p.m. Sunday Mountain time, Cory Higgins led CU with 21 points and 10 rebounds. The sophomore shooting guard was 12-for-12 at the line and has made 28 consecutive foul shots this season.

"Anytime you can get to the free throw line it's an easy bucket," Higgins said during the KKZN radio postgame show.

Nate Tomlinson finished with a career-high six assists for the Buffs -- who won their fourth consecutive game -- but the team allowed the Eagles to score 36 of their points on offensive rebounds or off turnovers.

"Those two areas are concerns and we've got to do a better job," CU head coach Jeff Bzdelik said. "But we out-rebounded someone. That's a good start."

CU won the battle of the boards 33-24. Bzdelik's team also shot 55.3 percent while holding the Eagles (1-9) to 42.1 percent from the field.

"It could be a lot cleaner but I think we're getting better every game," Higgins said. "We need to clean up on the defensive end and rebound more and get stops. And we have to clean up these turnovers because 18 is way too many."

After a 3-pointer by Higgins, who was 4-for-5 from the field, the Buffs led 41-25 with 18 minutes remaining. Coppin State would cut its deficit to 10 points with about seven minutes left but a Tomlinson 3-pointer started a 19-12 run to end the game.

Casey Crawford (12 points), Dwight Thorne (11) and Jermyl Jackson-Wilson (10) also scored in double figures for CU. Tomlinson and Levi Knutson each added nine points.

The Buffs led 36-24 at halftime behind 10 points from Crawford off the bench. The 6-foot-9 forward made two 3-pointers and gave CU its 12-point cushion with a transition layup just before the break.

Knutson also played well off the bench and capped a 7-0 run early in the game with a hoop to give the Buffs a 17-8 lead.

Coppin State star Tywain McKee -- who entered the game averaging 20.6 points and scored 31 points in a loss at No. 11 Syracuse last week -- picked up two fouls in the first five minutes and did not score in the first half while watching most of it from the bench. He finished with nine points on 2-for-8 shooting.

"In the second half when he did play we did a good job on him," Bzdelik said. "Our game plan was solid."

CU shot 54.2 percent from the field in the first half with Crawford making 4-of-6 shots. The Eagles shot 41.4 percent but were 0-for-7 on 3-pointers.

"We let their pressure bother us a little bit, but once we figured that out we blew buy it and got some easy baskets," Higgins said.



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