



Bzdelik not disappointed by performance in Hawaii

Bufs lost two of three in tourney

By Ryan Thorburn
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The Colorado men's basketball team dreamed about returning home from the Rainbow Classic with a six-game win streak, a 9-3 record and the tournament championship.

Reality bit the Bufs during a painful morning practice on New Year's Day.

After an easy win over Coppin State in the opener, CU lost to Buffalo on a last-second shot and was blown out by Vermont in the third-place game.

Buffalo went on to beat Colorado State -- a team the Bufs handled by 19 points earlier this season -- to capture the Rainbow Classic.

Jeff Bzdelik believes his young team is getting close to figuring out how to win consistently.

"We were one bounce away from being in the championship game and it's such a fine line. It is," Bzdelik said. "That's another thing I think we learned from this experience. Two less bad turnovers and we're in the championship game. But we didn't do that."

If only this were horseshoes.

Cory Higgins, who has carried the Bufs all season as a true sophomore, was named to the Rainbow Classic all-tournament team after averaging 18 points and six rebounds over three games.

The coaching staff believes true freshmen Nate Tomlinson (9.3 ppg) and Austin Dufault (9.8 ppg) are capable of improving over the next year like Higgins did from his freshman season to now.

So despite a disappointing 7-5 record and an RPI that was 238th on Saturday -- one spot behind IPFW and one spot ahead of Alabama A&M -- the Bufs still believe the program's future is a bright one.

"We're so blasted young and we're playing against teams that have juniors and seniors," Bzdelik said. "I'm not disappointed, I'm just realistic. This is kind of where I thought we would be with such a young team."

The Bufs play at Southern Methodist on Monday and host Western State on Wednesday before the Big 12 grind begins Jan. 14 at Missouri.



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