



Bufs begin Big 12 slate with trip to Mizzou

CU has not won conference road game since 2006

By Ryan Thorburn
Wednesday, January 14, 2009

COLUMBIA, Mo. -- Opposing coaches and players will never admit it, but if there is a win already circled on the Big 12 schedule it's against Colorado.

Especially when the Bufs are coming to town.

CU has not won a conference road game in almost three years -- an 80-78 overtime victory at Oklahoma State on Jan. 21, 2006. The program's losing streak on the road stands at 21 consecutive games entering tonight's Big 12 opener at Missouri (7 p.m., ESPN).

The Bufs, despite a disappointing 8-6 record during non-conference play, believe they can walk off the court at Mizzou Arena with a victory tonight.

They might be the only ones.

"I remember it," senior Jermyl Jackson-Wilson said of CU's win at Stillwater. "But it seems like it was a long time ago. It was a long time ago. ... We need one of those bad. A couple road wins would be great, but the first one would be excellent."

Jackson-Wilson is the only current CU player who has ever experienced a Big 12 road victory. Well, sort of. The 6-6 forward was redshirting three years ago and watched the Bufs take down the Cowboys on television before celebrating with his teammates upon their return to Boulder.

Jeff Bzdelik is confident that if his young Bufs don't win tonight they will start experiencing their share of success in the Big 12 at some point.

"There is no shortcut to consistent success unless you're going to compromise the integrity of the university. And then it's usually just a flash in the pan," Bzdelik said. "If we want to build this thing right you build it from the ground up with young players. They're going to have ups and they're going to have downs."

CU's best win so far this season was against Harvard. Losses to Montana State, Buffalo, Vermont and Southern Methodist added up to an RPI of 252 entering Big 12 play.

Bzdelik points out that a team's fortunes can change dramatically when conference play begins. After all, North Carolina is currently in last place in the ACC.

"Would their confidence level be a little bit different right now if they were 13-1 as opposed to 8-6?"

Maybe," Bzdelik said when asked about his team's mental state entering the Big 12 grind. "But the reality is when that ball is thrown up you still have to have the talent and perseverance to play that game. We see Harvard beat Boston College who just had beaten North Carolina. All of a sudden North Carolina is 0-2 in the ACC. A week ago didn't Jay Bilas or somebody say, 'Who's going to beat them?'

"Well heck, they're in last place in the ACC. That's who's going to beat them. And I don't know who they've got next but it ain't going to be a walk in the park."

The Buffs have had a week to prepare for tonight's game and the focus has been on two things: Avoiding bad turnovers and rebounding.

Bzdelik said 51 percent of Missouri's points in its two wins against CU last season came off turnovers and second-chance points.

"We understand and know we have to take care of the ball," Bzdelik said. "We know we have to be patient on offense. They will get lost in their switches if we do that."

CU is 0-2 in true road games this season and 1-4 outside of Boulder. Mizzou, which will be without suspended forward Leo Lyons (14.2 ppg, 6.2 rpg), is 10-0 at home.

"If you want to have an opportunity to compete for a championship you have to protect your home court and steal some games on the road," Tigers head coach Mike Anderson said. "If we can put two halves together we're going to do real well. I know we're going to do real well in conference play."



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CU men's preview: at Missouri

TONIGHT: Colorado opens Big 12 play at 7 p.m. against Missouri at Mizzou Arena (15,061).

BROADCAST: Television: ESPNU with Doug Bell (play-by-play) and Jon Sundvold (color); **Radio:** KVCU (1190 AM) with Mark Johnson (play-by-play) and Charles Johnson (color)

STORYLINES: The Buffs are the only team in the Big 12 that hasn't played a conference game yet. Jeff Bzdelik's team finished 8-6 during non-conference play and had a week to prepare for this conference opener. ... The Tigers are 13-3 overall and 0-1 in conference after scoring a season-low 51 points during a loss in their opener at Nebraska. Senior forward Leo Lyons, who averages 14.6 points and 6.2 rebounds, has been suspended for this game due to an arrest over several driving incidents.

KEY STAT: The Buffs have not won a road game in the Big 12 since Jan. 21, 2006, when they beat Oklahoma State 80-78 in overtime. The losing streak is at 21 games entering this conference season.

COACHES: Jeff Bzdelik is 20-26 in his second season at CU. Mike Anderson is 47-31 in his third season at Missouri.

PROBABLE STARTERS:

CU -- G Nate Tomlinson, 6-2, freshman, 9.3 ppg, 2.7 rpg, G Cory Higgins, 6-5, sophomore, 17.9 ppg, 6.5 rpg, G Dwight Thorne, 6-2, junior, 11.9 ppg, 3.5 rpg, F Austin Dufault, 6-8, freshman, 9.6 ppg, 3.7 rpg, F/C Jermyl Jackson-Wilson, 6-6, senior, 5.5 ppg, 4.4 rpg.

Missouri -- G J.T. Tiller, 6-3, junior, 7.3 ppg, 3.1 rpg, G Zaire Taylor, 6-4, junior, 4.8 ppg, 2.8 rpg, G Matt Lawrence, 6-7, senior, 9.6 ppg, 2.3 rpg, F DeMarre Carroll, 6-8, senior, 16.1 ppg, 6.6 rpg, Keith Ramsey, 6-9, junior, 3.9 ppg, 3.5 rpg.

SERIES: Missouri leads 94-52, including a 54-11 advantage in Columbia.

UP NEXT: The Buffs host Kansas on Saturday at the Coors Events Center (1:30 p.m., ABC).



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college basketball

Aussie makes mark at CU

Coach Bzdelik is mining quality players Down Under, with freshman Tomlinson taking a starting role at point.

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 01/14/2009 12:30:00 AM MST



Nate Tomlinson played on Australia's 19-under team and garnered international experience. (John Leyba, The Denver Post)

BOULDER — When Nate Tomlinson makes a bad pass, his Colorado teammates can tease him about Australians driving on the left side of the road.

The first Aussie in the program's history, Tomlinson directs traffic in CU's pass-happy offense. Whether the Buffaloes can show

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improvement in the Big 12 Conference this season could hinge on the freshman point guard's learning curve.

Colorado (8-6) begins its league schedule tonight at Missouri. The Buffs won only three regular-season conference games last season and have an even younger roster in coach Jeff Bzdelik's second season. Tomlinson is joined by forward Austin Dufault as freshman starters.

"Nate is a true floor leader," Bzdelik said. "We need him to continue to get better

CU Basketball

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- **Visit** the CU Stats Page for women's boxscores, Big 12 standings, player pages and more
- **Visit** Tom Kensler's All Things Buffs blog for a behind-the-scenes look at CU sports

in all areas of the game. His development is important to what we want to accomplish."

In trying to execute Bzdelik's variation of the Princeton offense, the fuzzy-cheeked Buffs can put on a coaching clinic during one possession and look lost the next. It's a wonder CU hasn't lost a player to a concussion because of running

into a teammate.

Bzdelik, who never considers patience his friend, can take comfort in knowing the play-making position will be in good hands for three years.

"If you're going to start building a team, you do it with a point guard," said Missouri coach Mike Anderson, who manned that position at Tulsa in the early 1980s for Nolan Richardson. "You have to have a head on the floor, a guy that knows what the coach is thinking."

Colorado is the only team in the Big 12 that relies exclusively on a freshman at the point. Tomlinson, averaging 9.3 points and 3.6 assists, was a find.

CU coaches discovered the 6-foot-2 Sydney native at Lee Academy in Maine, where Tomlinson played for two seasons after following his dream halfway around the world. The son of a basketball coach, Tomlinson still lists "graduating from a high school in another country" among his greatest moments.

Like most Australian players, Tomlinson knows the accomplishments of Aussie legend Andrew Bogut, who starred for the University of Utah and became the No. 1 pick in the 2005 NBA draft.

"People in Australia realize what Bogut did over here and what playing in the States did for him," Tomlinson said. "Just giving it a shot over here is what young Australian kids are thinking about these days."

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According to www.aussiehoopsamerica.com, 32 Australians are on NCAA Division I rosters this season. Another 30 are playing at Division II schools, including Colorado School of Mines, Metro State and Western State in Gunnison.

Tomlinson, who played on Australia's 19-under national team in 2007, will welcome a fellow countryman to Boulder next season. In November, Bzdelik signed 6-11 center Shane Harris-Tunks of Sydney's renowned Australian Institute of Sport. During the spring signing period in April, the Buffs hope to land another AIS player, 6-8 forward Cody Ellis, who is regarded as the most talented player on Australia's current 19-under national team.

Ellis visited CU in December and is also considering Wake Forest and Saint Louis University. The latter is coached by Rick Majerus, Bogut's mentor at Utah.

"Ever since I've known about college basketball, I've wanted to come to the States," said Ellis, who is a fan of the Nuggets' Carmelo Anthony.

Bzdelik said he is simply going after the best players who might be interested in CU. He scouted Australia for five days last spring.

"The world has gotten smaller, through the Internet and jet travel," Bzdelik said. "There are a lot of good players in Australia who are looking to come to the U.S. for an education. We want to make sure we get our share."

Bzdelik said Australians work hard, are

coachable and tend to be well-versed in fundamentals. That doesn't surprise Ellis' father, Mike Ellis, who is a basketball coach in Australia.

"Sports are very big in Australia, and kids grow up playing a number of sports," Mike Ellis said while accompanying his son during the December visit to Boulder. "So, by the time they choose a sport (to specialize in), they have different skill sets, and they can combine those. That's something different that I think Australians have."

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Other notable Australians in Division I

Aron Baynes : Washington State, 6-foot-10, Sr., C, Cairns

Carlin Hughes : Saint Mary's, 6-2, Sr., G, Perth (AIS)

Patrick Mills : Saint Mary's, 6-0, Soph., G, Canberra (AIS) Luke Nevill: Utah, 7-2, Sr., C, Perth

A.J. Ogilvy : Vanderbilt, 6-11, Soph., C, Sydney (AIS)

AIS: Australian Institute of Sport in Sydney

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Longmont, Colorado
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Buffs steel selves for conference play

Team stares down gloomy predictions as it faces Missouri

*By Patrick Ridgell
Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — Ready or not, conference season is here.

The Colorado men's basketball team might wish it could've taken a few mulligans from its 8-6 non-conference schedule. Rebounding remains its biggest problem. Others lurk. The coach keeps preaching patience. The players talk about "sneaking up on people."

That's where it stands as the team travels to Missouri to start Big 12 play tonight (7 p.m., ESPN).

If someone were to say the Buffs stood a snowball's chance at winning the Big 12, they'd be shipped to the funny farm faster than you can say babbling fool. Doesn't mean they aren't going to show up, though. Doesn't mean they won't reap something out of their next 16 games.

Doesn't mean this isn't all part of the plan, huh, coach?

"Gotta start somewhere," Jeff Bzdelik said Monday.

He went on.

"There is no short cut to consistent success, unless you're going to compromise the integrity of the university," Bzdelik said. "Then, usually, it's just a flash in the pan.

"If you're going to build this thing right, you build it from the ground up with young players. They're going to have ups and they're going to have downs.

"Would their confidence level be different now if they were 13-1 as opposed to 8-6? It may be.

"But the reality is: When the ball's thrown up, you have to have the balance and the perseverance to play that game.

"I'm enthused. I'm excited. The only way they're going to realize they can play is when the ball's thrown up, and all of a sudden they score or make a steal or grab a rebound and realize they can play with these guys."

Tonight's opener comes at a place CU played well last year, though the Buffs have only won once in Columbia, Mo., since 1998.

Tonight's games

Colorado men (8-6, 0-0) at Missouri (13-3, 0-1)

When/Where: 7 p.m. tonight at Mizzou Arena in Columbia, Mo.

TV/Radio: ESPN/KVCU 1190.

The series: Missouri leads 91-54, 52-13 in Columbia. The Tigers have won the past four meetings.

Leading scorers: Missouri – DeMarre Carroll (16.1 points per game); CU – Cory Higgins (17.9 points per game).

Notes: CU hasn't played in a week. ... Higgins will try to extend his Big 12- and CU-record free throw streak of 45 in a row. ... Junior forward Keith Ramsey is expected to start in place of the suspended Leo Lyons for Missouri. He's averaging 3.9 points and 3.5 rebounds. ... Missouri lost its Big 12 opener Saturday at Nebraska.

Colorado women (8-5, 0-1) at No. 21 Oklahoma State (11-3, 0-1)

When/Where: 6 p.m. tonight at Gallagher-Iba Arena in Stillwater, Okla.

TV/Radio: No TV/KKZN 760.

The series: CU leads 26-22. Oklahoma State leads 11-8 in Stillwater, and the Cowgirls beat CU the past two times they met in Stillwater.

Leading scorers: Oklahoma State – Andrea Riley (22.3 points per game); CU – Brittany Spears (18.5 points per game).

Notes: Oklahoma State is the second

Missouri will be without starting forward Leo Lyons, whom coach Mike Anderson suspended Monday for multiple traffic violations. Lyons, 6-foot-9, is the Tigers' second-leading scorer and rebounder.

Bzdelik said tonight, like most nights, will come down to CU's ability to take care of the basketball and rebound. The Buffs are 10th in the Big 12 in turnover margin. They are last in rebounding margin.

"It we do that, we'll have a chance to be competitive down the stretch," Bzdelik said. "If we don't, we won't."

Said Jermyl Jackson-Wilson: "Last year, we lost of lot of games by single-digit margins. Those are small areas throughout the game we can correct. We know what we need to do to win those close games."

Which is?

"Limit turnovers, defensive rebounds and play good defense," he said.

Big 12 coaches picked CU to finish last. Recent weeks did little to change minds. Inside the program, though, opinions are different.

Amid all the dire predictions, players say they've forged a bond. With only one senior, that bond should go stronger no matter what happens over the next 16 games.

"All we've got is us," guard Dwight Thorne said. "We have to root for each other, stay together, band together."

Said guard Cory Higgins: "We're confident within ourselves. We know nobody expects anything from us, so we're going to use that to our advantage."

"We're going to sneak up on some people."

Patrick Ridgell can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.

of four consecutive ranked teams CU faces to start Big 12 play. The Buffs lost their opener to No. 6 Baylor on Saturday. ... Kathy McConnell-Miller is seeking her 50th win as CU coach. ... Riley leads the Big 12 in scoring and is second in assists, with 6.9 per game. ... Oklahoma State lost its conference opener Saturday at Iowa State.

UNLV (13-3, 1-1) at Colorado State men (5-11, 0-2)

When/Where: 7 p.m. tonight, at Moby Arena in Fort Collins

TV/Radio: No TV/560 KLZ.

The series: UNLV leads 28-7, and has beaten CSU 11 straight times.

Leading scorers: CSU – Marcus Walker (16 points per game); UNLV – Wink Adams (12.8 points per game).

Notes: CSU concludes a difficult three-game stretch to open Mountain West play tonight. The Rams first three opponents are 37-10. ... CSU has lost its past three games. ... UNLV had its eight-game winning streak snapped Saturday at TCU. Its biggest win of the season came Dec. 31 at Louisville.

Colorado State women (5-10, 0-2) at UNLV (7-8, 0-2)

When/Where: 8 p.m. tonight, at Cox Pavilion in Las Vegas

TV/Radio: No TV/1410 KIIIX.

The series: CSU leads 15-13, including a win in the first round of the MWC Tournament last March.

Leading scorers: CSU – Kim Mestdagh (8.1 points per game); UNLV – Shamela Hampton (14.9 points per game).

Notes: CSU has lost two straight and is seeking its first road win of 2008-09. ... CSU has used six starting lineups. Mestdagh has started nine of its past 11, and is averaging 10.3 points per during the stretch. ... First-year UNLV coach Kathy Olivier arrived at her alma mater from UCLA, where she went 142-128 in 15 years. ... Hampton is from Colorado Springs.