



# Veal vows better times are ahead for Buffs

## CU men must first close out season at Kansas State

By Ryan Thorburn  
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MANHATTAN, Kan. — Toby Veal wasn't ready for college.

He thought he was. High school was pretty easy. Basketball has always been really easy.

But adjusting to the demands of being a full-time student and basketball player at the University of Colorado was something the talented freshman has struggled with.

The light might have flipped on last week.

After missing some classes and recovering from having wisdom teeth pulled, Veal spent hours working with the academic support staff to catch up on homework and gave an equally honest effort on the practice floor.

It was finally enough to convince Jeff Bzdelik -- a guy who could really use a 6-7 forward with jump-out-of-the-gym athleticism -- to give Veal an opportunity to prove himself against Big 12 competition.

"It felt pretty good to have a breakout game," Veal said after scoring a career-high 10 points on 5-for-7 shooting during CU's 72-66 loss to Texas A&M on Wednesday. "There were a couple practices last week I couldn't even come to because I had tutoring. (Bzdelik) worked me hard in the practices Monday and Tuesday and that's why he put me in."

Entering today's regular-season finale against Kansas State here at Bramlage Coliseum (11:30 a.m., Altitude), the Buffs haven't had a lot to get excited about.

Here's the short list:

Cory Higgins, the team's leading scorer (17.6 ppg) and rebounder (5.6 rpg), has developed into an all-conference caliber player. And he's only a sophomore.

Dwight Thorne (11.9 ppg), who couldn't buy a basket as a skinny freshman, is now a solid shooting guard and locker room leader. He will be the only senior next season.

Nate Tomlinson and Austin Dufault -- much like Higgins last season -- have been in the starting lineup from the moment they stepped on campus. Both players have a chance to use the experience to become more consistent as sophomores.

That's about it, other a handful of shining moments:

Casey Crawford's 3-point shooting early in the non-conference schedule and late in the Big 12 schedule.

Levi Knutson's career-high 19-point outburst against Oklahoma State.

Trey Eckloff getting physical in the paint with Blake Griffin at Oklahoma.

Ryan Kelley's 19 points at Missouri.

And Veal's impressive performance against the Aggies, even though he fouled out in 14 minutes.

"Next year all the pieces will come together after playing this whole season together," Veal predicted. "It's all going to be easier to comprehend, and I think it's going to be an interesting season because everyone on our team is going to be a lot better. ...

"Next year is the year when we get over the hump and the close games go our way."

Next year is almost here. But first the Buffs will look to snap their 28-game Big 12 road losing streak today against the Wildcats before preparing for the Big 12 Tournament.



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## CU men's preview: March 7, at Kansas State

**TODAY --** Colorado will finish the regular season against Kansas State at 11:30 a.m. at Bramlage Coliseum.

**BROADCAST --** Television: Altitude with Dave Armstrong (play-by-play) and Bryndon Manzer (analyst); Radio: KKZN AM 760 with Mark Johnson (play-by-play) and Charles Johnson (color)

**STORYLINES --** The Buffs (9-20, 1-14) are looking to snap a 10-game losing streak on this season and a 28-game Big 12 road losing streak. ... CU hasn't lost 11 games in a row since finishing the 1985-86 campaign with 17 straight defeats. The conference road losing streak is a Big 12 record. ... The Wildcats (20-10, 8-7) have to win to solidify their positioning for an NCAA Tournament bid. ... K-State is currently tied with Texas A&M for sixth place in the Big 12 after a 77-71 loss at Oklahoma State.

**KEY STAT --** The Buffs have only defeated one Division I opponent (Iowa State at home) since Dec. 28.

**COACHES --** Jeff Bzdelik is 21-40 in his second season at CU. Frank Martin is 41-22 in his second season at Kansas State.

**PROBABLE STARTERS -- CU --** G Nate Tomlinson, 6-2, freshman, 7.3 ppg, 2.5 rpg, G Cory Higgins, 6-5, sophomore, 17.6 ppg, 5.6 rpg, G Dwight Thorne, 6-2, junior, 11.9 ppg, 3.2 rpg, F Austin Dufault, 6-8, freshman, 8.5 ppg, 3.8 rpg, F/C Jermyl Jackson-Wilson, 6-6, senior, 5.3 ppg, 3.8 rpg.

**KSU --** G Jacob Pullen, 6-0, sophomore, 13.5 ppg, 2.6 rpg, G Denis Clemente, 6-1, junior, 17.6 ppg, 5.6 rpg, F Dominique Sutton, 6-5, sophomore, 7.7 ppg, 5.2 rpg, F Darren Kent, 6-11, senior, 9.2 ppg, 5.6 rpg, C Luis Colon, 6-10, junior, 4.8 ppg, 5.0 rpg.

**SERIES --** Kansas State leads 94-43, including a 77-75 overtime win in Boulder on Jan. 24. The Wildcats have a 52-10 historical edge against CU in Manhattan.

**UP NEXT --** The Buffs will be the No. 12 seed at the Big 12 Tournament in Oklahoma City. CU will face the No. 5 seed, either Oklahoma State or Texas, at 1 p.m. on Wednesday.



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