



# Thorne grows into leader for Bzdelik

## Buff junior coming off team-best 18 points in loss at Stanford

By Ryan Thorburn

Wednesday, December 3, 2008

Dwight Thorne is very impressed with the way his young teammates handled their first college road trip, despite the fact that Colorado flew home from Palo Alto, Calif., packing a 14-point loss to Stanford.

Starting point guard Nate Tomlinson (18 points) and forward Austin Dufault (10 points) played well for the most part, and Trey Eckloff (two points, four rebounds) helped the short-handed Buffs off the bench.

"It was the first time some of these guys had been on the road in a big-time college atmosphere, and I remember my first time in that situation at New Mexico," Thorne said. "It was a shock."

The Buffs lost 106-65 at the Pit in Albuquerque on Nov. 14, 2006. Thorne was 0-for-5 from the field in his first road game as a true freshman.

Two years later, the junior shooting guard is a team captain and the most improved player in the program. Entering tonight's game against TCU at the Coors Events Center (8 p.m., FSN), Thorne is averaging 14.4 points, 4.0 rebounds and 1.8 assists per game.

"He's finally an upperclassman, and I think he's playing within himself," CU head coach Jeff Bzdelik said. "But Dwight is also playing fearless. He's done a great job."

Thorne played through a painful knee injury last season and is a step quicker this year. He has also mastered Bzdelik's offense and no longer hesitates to let the ball fly when a good shot presents itself.

Against Stanford, Thorne was 5-for-7 from the field -- including 2-for-3 from behind the arc -- and 6-for-7 at the line. He also grabbed a team-high six rebounds.

After suffering through 20-loss seasons and a coaching change during his first two years in Boulder, all he really cares about is playing on a winning team.

"I think we're close," Thorne said. "We have a lot of things to work on just like any other team at this point in the year. But I think if we can just continue to get better every day on this practice court we're going to improve and surprise some people."

If Bzdelik can get his freshmen to improve as much in a year as Thorne has under his watch the Buffs could be relevant sooner rather than later.

For now, CU needs to continue to gain confidence and pick up some more wins.

It should be noted that Tomlinson injured a foot in the opener and has been playing at about "75 percent" since, according to Bzdelik.

"But I think against Stanford people got a glimpse of what Nate can do," Bzdelik said. "He was one of the best players on that floor the other night. Nate and Dwight."



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## Best yet to come for Buffaloes' Tomlinson?

Coach sees 'great future' for freshman point guard

*By Patrick Ridgell  
 Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — Nate Tomlinson has a great future as the point guard for the Colorado men's basketball program, says coach Jeff Bzdelik. Just be patient.

Those who watched Tomlinson play in CU's past three home games might have wondered about the assertion and aggression the Australian point guard was supposed to bring with him to Boulder. It wasn't what it can be, but for good reason, Bzdelik said.

Entering tonight against TCU (8 p.m., FSN), Tomlinson is only about 75 percent healthy, the coach said. Tomlinson said he sprained an ankle late in the Nov. 14 opener against Arkansas-Pine Bluff when he stepped on an opponent's foot.

After scoring 12 points and hitting 4-of-5 3-pointers that night, Tomlinson shot less and scored four points apiece in the next two games, during which he logged 38 and 34 minutes.

At Stanford on Saturday, he went 8-for-12 from the field and scored 18 points, all season bests.

The increased scoring might have stemmed from talks with coaches, who, Tomlinson says, are telling him to be more assertive. Or it might be something else.

"He's a freshman in his fifth game," Bzedlik said. "He's doing a terrific job considering the circumstances. I think anyone who's watched him play sees what a great future both he and us have.

"There's a nice balance between making the right decisions, and Nate has a great basketball I.Q. and has great vision and court sense. When he can assert himself to score, he will. He also does a great job of creating for others, as well."

Tomlinson leads CU with 18 assists.

Tomlinson is the son of an Australian pro coach, and he was a member of his country's under-19 national team during the summer of 2007. He played two seasons at Lee Academy in Maine.

He visited CU in November 2007. After taking one final recruiting trip to

### Tonight's games

#### TCU (4-3) at Colorado (3-2) men

**When/Where:** 8 p.m. tonight, at the Coors Events Center in Boulder

**TV/Radio:** FSN/KKZN 760

**The series:** CU leads, 2-1. CU beat TCU, 77-59, in Fort Worth on Dec. 20, 2005, the last time they met.

**Leading scorers:** TCU — Kevin Langford (13.9 points per game); CU — Cory Higgins (16.0 points per game).

**Notes:** Higgins leads CU in points, rebounds, steals and minutes. ... Dwight Thorne leads CU with a .657 shooting clip from the field. ... Austin Dufault has scored 10 points or more in each of CU's five games. ... One of TCU's three losses came to another Big 12 program, 62-50 at Nebraska on Nov. 19.

Patrick Ridgell

#### Denver (1-3) at Colorado State (1-4) women

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

**TV/Radio:** No TV/1410 AM

**The series:** CSU leads 14-5, including 9-2 in Fort Collins

**Leading scorers:** Denver — Ashley Robinson (10.8 points per game); CSU — Bonnie Barbee and Britney Minor (10.2 points per game each).

**Notes:** CSU won 11 straight games against DU from 1980-2005, but DU has won the last three meetings. ... Both teams come in riding two-game

UNLV, he chose CU because, he said, "I felt like I fit in here better."

Tomlinson said the ankle has been an ongoing problem since the opener, and that he's working closely with trainers and coaches, "just trying to get through it so I can play in the games."

losing streaks. ... CSU freshman Meghan Heimstra, a Silver Creek High School graduate, is averaging 4.8 points and 2.8 rebounds.

*-Brian Howell*

It's not an injury he's suffered before, he said.

Tomlinson knows how important it is that opponents defend him honestly, meaning that they don't sag off and wait for him to pass. He knows this because CU coaches stress it all the time, Tomlinson said.

With Big 12 play looming, Tomlinson knows he should heed their advice.

"I just try to do whatever it takes to win," Tomlinson said. "I love winning so much and I just feel like we lacked a little bit of scoring, so I was just trying to do it."

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