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Longmont, Colorado
Thursday, December 04,
2008

Publish Date: 12/4/2008

Buff's embarrassed in loss

By Patrick Ridgell

Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — The Colorado men's basketball team learned before tip-off Wednesday that it would be without its starting point guard for possibly six weeks. Then its game with TCU started, and things got worse.

TCU capitalized on CU's frigid start while beating the Buffs, 62-46. It's unclear whether Nate Tomlinson's presence would have made a difference for CU. But without its starting point guard, CU had 13 turnovers and no assists in a first half in which it scored only 14 points. The Buffs trailed, 12-0, to start the game. They never pulled to within fewer than nine after halftime.

"I think the worst feeling for a coach is when your team doesn't play with emotion, doesn't play with discipline, doesn't play with passion and appears to just be disorganized," CU coach Jeff Bzdelik said. "That's on me. That's a rotten feeling."

"We had a great crowd, a great student-body turnout. That's really a shame that we couldn't at least give a great effort, any kind of effort. So I'm embarrassed for the university."

Losing like CU did Wednesday was, as Bzdelik put it, embarrassing. It's also not easy losing to TCU (5-3), which is picked to finish last in the Mountain West and entered 2-13 in its past 15 games against Big 12 teams. But for CU (3-3), losing Tomlinson could be the sadder story.

He's scheduled to undergo an MRI today. Bzdelik said the worst-case scenario would be that Tomlinson has a stress fracture that has him out for six weeks.

"Maybe we'll get lucky and it's just a bone bruise," Bzdelik said. "We want to make sure."

Bzdelik said CU will make the results known today.

Tomlinson said Monday he sprained an ankle in the season opener Nov. 14. Bzdelik said Monday the freshman was about 75 percent healthy when asked why Tomlinson hasn't been playing more assertively.

Bzdelik said Wednesday that Tomlinson has been playing on one foot since the opener. Bzdelik said Tomlinson has been limited in practice, and it was unclear whether Tomlinson could even continue in the second half of Saturday's loss at Stanford. Tomlinson scored 18 points that night. Bzdelik said it was his decision to finally shut Tomlinson down. "Nate is such a competitor, I knew he was lying to me," Bzdelik said. "I've known him for awhile."



CU's Austin DuFault reacts to being called with a charging foul against TCU during the first half on Wednesday at the Coors Events Center in Boulder. **Lewis**

Geyer/Times-Call

TCU 62, COLORADO 46

TCU (5-3)

Buljan 6-14 3-3 15, Langford 4-6 2-2 10, Ebie 1-6 1-2 3, Ruzgas 2-5 1-2 7, Mitchem 5-6 2-2 15, Moss 3-5 1-2 8, Lancon 0-2 0-0 0, Rose 0-2 0-0 0, Butler 1-1 0-0 2, Ortiz 1-3 0-0 2.
Totals 23-50 10-13 62.

COLORADO (3-3)

Jackson-Wilson 0-2 0-0 0, Dufault 3-9 1-3 8, Crawford 1-2 0-0 2, Higgins 4-10 7-8 16, Thorne 3-5 0-0 6, Kelley 2-2 0-0 6, Coney 1-4 0-0 2, Veal 0-0 0-0 0, Knutson 2-5 0-0 4, Zehnder 0-0 0-0 0, Eckloff 1-3 0-0 2. Totals 17-42 8-11 46.

Halftime—TCU 24-14. 3-Point Goals—TCU 6-15 (Mitchem 3-3, Ruzgas 2-5, Moss 1-1, Buljan 0-2, Langford 0-1, Ebie 0-1, Lancon 0-2), CU 4-13 (Kelley 2-2, Dufault 1-4, Higgins 1-3, Crawford 0-1, Thorne 0-1, Coney 0-1, Knutson 0-1). Fouled Out—none. Rebounds—TCU 33 (Buljan 10), CU 23 (Higgins 8). Assists—TCU 10 (Ebie 6), CU 5 (Thorne 2). Total Fouls—TCU 20, CU

“When I say lying, I mean he wanted to play tonight. But we have to be smart and he has to get healthy, and we just need to find out for sure what’s wrong and deal with it.” Tomlinson had started all five of CU’s previous games.

19. Technicals—none. A—3,483.

Dwight Thorne started at point guard Wednesday, and Bzdelik inserted Casey Crawford into the starting five, giving it three forwards, in Tomlinson’s absence.

It didn’t matter. With 11 minutes, 40 seconds remaining, Bzdelik was playing two walk-ons in an effort to find a combination that could compete.

CU’s 14 first-half points were its fewest in a half since last year’s loss at Nebraska. It finished with a season-most 20 turnovers and five assists, plus a 33-23 rebounding deficit.

The loss left sophomore guard Cory Higgins and Thorne with critical remarks. Higgins said CU “didn’t show up, we had no heart, we played like we didn’t want to be here.” Thorne added, “We played like our minds were gone.”

But the most scathing criticism came from Bzdelik. And it was about Bzdelik.

“Obviously, I have to do a better job than what I’m doing,” he said. “To be frank, if I was (athletic director) Mike Bohn, I’d be searching for a new basketball coach, because this was very unacceptable.

“That’s not a statement of feeling sorry for myself or looking for sympathy. That’s a statement of fact. This was not good.”

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sports

Emotion runs a leader low

Without floor general, Buffs' points amounted to drops in the bucket

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Updated: 12/04/2008 12:02:25 AM MST



Texas Christian's Ronnie Moss looks to make a play as Colorado junior Dwight Thorne defends in the Buffaloes' 62-46 loss to the Horned Frogs. (Cliff Grassmick, Boulder Daily Camera)

BOULDER — Either Colorado really missed its usual floor leader Wednesday night in a 62-46 loss to Texas Christian, or somebody put a lid over the Buffaloes' basket — and somehow caused the team to fall asleep.

CU freshman Nate Tomlinson, who had started every game at point guard, watched in street clothes from the bench. The pass-happy Aussie has been hobbled since the season opener, when he had a foot stepped on.

Colorado could be without Tomlinson for a while. He is scheduled to undergo an MRI exam today. The worst scenario, CU coach Jeff Bzdelik said, would be a stress fracture that could shut down Tomlinson for at least six weeks.

Ironically, Tomlinson had his game of the season on Saturday, an 18-point effort

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CU sports

in a loss at Stanford. He has not practiced since.

"(The challenge of playing without Tomlinson) should have fired us up," sophomore guard Cory Higgins said. "We had no heart. We played like we didn't want to be here."

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Colorado (3-3) went 6-for-21 (.286) from the field in the first half and trailed 24-14. The Buffs were fortunate that TCU shot 36 percent before halftime and didn't run away with a big lead.

CU could only pull as close as nine points (28-19) in the second half. Higgins (16 points) was the only Buff in double figures, but Bzdelik was more concerned with his team's lack of effort than the missed shots.

"The worst feeling for a coach is when your team doesn't play with emotion, doesn't play with discipline, doesn't play with passion and appears to be disorganized," Bzdelik said. "That's on me. That's a rotten feeling.

"To be honest, if I was (athletic director) Mike Bohn, I would be searching for a new basketball coach because this was unacceptable."

TCU (5-3) was picked to finish last in the Mountain West Conference preseason poll. The Horned Frogs had won only four road games over the past three-plus seasons.

"This gives us something to build on," said TCU first-year coach Jim Christian, who came from Kent State.

Colorado has a week to learn how to play without Tomlinson and find a spark. The Buffs host Colorado State next Wednesday.

"We have to do some soul searching," said junior Dwight Thorne, who is expected to handle point-guard duties in Tomlinson's absence.

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Bufs miss Tomlinson in loss to TCU

Tomlinson to undergo MRI for stress fracture

By Ryan Thorburn

Thursday, December 4, 2008

Nate Tomlinson wore a black shirt with matching pants and shoes while watching Colorado's game on Wednesday night against Texas Christian helplessly from the bench.

It was appropriate attire considering the atmosphere at the Coors Events Center had a funeral feel to it.

Based on the way the rest of the Buffs played during a 62-46 loss to the Horned Frogs -- a team picked to finish last in the Mountain West Conference -- this team will be buried if Tomlinson misses six weeks with a stress fracture in his foot.

Without their promising starting point guard the Buffs had five assists and 20 turnovers in the game.

"We didn't show up," sophomore guard Cory Higgins said. "We had no heart. We played like we didn't want to be here."

Tomlinson was averaging 9.6 points, 3.6 assists and 3.4 rebounds per game despite sustaining the injury in the second half of the opener against Arkansas-Pine Bluff.

He will undergo an MRI today to determine if there is a stress fracture, the worst-case scenario, or if it's just a painful bone bruise he can continue to play through.

When asked how big an impact not having Tomlinson was, Jeff Bzdelik said "excuses are for losers."

And then CU's second-year head coach turned the heat up on ... well, himself.

"To be quite frank, if I was (athletic director) Mike Bohn, I'd be searching for a new basketball coach because this was very unacceptable," Bzdelik said. "And that's not a statement of feeling sorry for myself or looking for sympathy. That's a statement of fact. This was not good."

The Buffs (3-3) used a two-guard lineup of Higgins and Dwight Thorne with both Casey Crawford and Jermyl Jackson-Wilson starting along with Austin Dufault.

Higgins was the only player in double figures with 16 points on 4-for-10 shooting with a team-high eight rebounds, one assist and two turnovers.

Thorne, coming off an 18-point performance at Stanford, had just six points with two assists and three turnovers playing the point.

"Basically we have to do some soul searching, look each other in the mirror and see what we have to do to get back on track," Thorne said. "We just didn't play with any heart. It was just an all-around bad game."

Crawford's struggles continued as the 6-9 sophomore Bzdelik was counting on to knock down 3-pointers scored two points and grabbed three rebounds in 14 minutes of play.

Jackson-Wilson did not score and had one rebound in 14 minutes as the coaching staff decided to get an extended look at other players.

"I was searching," Bzdelik said.

He didn't find anything.

The Buffs put their loyal fans in an awkward position -- standing -- for the first six minutes and five seconds of the game by missing their first six shots and turning the ball over twice while TCU slowly built a 12-0 lead.

Finally, after a Dufault steal and layup CU was on the scoreboard and the crowd was able to sit down and watch the rest of a first half that set the game of basketball back about 50 years.

Bzdelik's team trailed 24-14 at the intermission after shooting 28.6 percent from the field with no assists and 13 turnovers.

"I think the worst feeling for a coach is when your team doesn't play with emotion, doesn't play with discipline, doesn't play with passion and appears to just be disorganized," Bzdelik said. "That's on me. That's a rotten feeling.

"We had a great crowd, great student body turnout and it's really a shame that we couldn't at least give a great effort. Any kind of effort. So I'm embarrassed for the university."

The 14 points were the fewest points CU has scored in the first half in a non-conference game since scoring 14 at San Diego on Dec. 21, 1986; CU lost 61-51.

Overall, it was the fewest points in a half for the Buffs since they only mustered 14 at Nebraska on March 9, 2008; CU lost 68-49.

"Our minds weren't there," Thorne said.

CU cut the deficit to 28-19 after a 3-pointer by Dufault with 17:05 remaining but the Horned Frogs answered with an 8-0 run and were never seriously challenged.

The Buffs don't play again until Colorado State, picked to finish 8th in the Mountain West (one spot ahead of TCU), visits the Coors Events Center on Dec. 10.

TCU 62, Colorado 46

TCU (62)

min fg-fga ft-fta rb ast pf tp

Buljan 26 6-14 3-3 10 0 3 15

Langford 31 4-6 2-2 4 0 2 10

Ebie 33 1-6 1-2 1 6 3 3

Ruzgas 24 2-5 1-2 3 1 3 7

Mitchem 24 5-6 2-2 4 1 3 15

Moss 14 3-5 1-2 1 0 1 8

Lancon 8 0-2 0-0 1 0 0 0

Rose 18 0-2 0-0 3 2 3 0

Butler 12 1-1 0-0 3 0 1 2

Ortiz 10 1-3 0-0 1 0 1 2

Totals: 200 23-50 10-13 33 10 20 62

COLORADO (46)

min fg-fga ft-fta rb ast pf tp

J-Wilson 14 0-2 0-0 1 1 1 0

Dufault 28 3-9 1-3 0 0 3 8

Crawford 14 1-2 0-0 3 0 3 2

Higgins 38 4-10 7-8 8 1 2 16

Thorne 34 3-5 0-0 5 2 3 6

Kelley 9 2-2 0-0 1 0 0 6

Coney 21 1-4 0-0 1 0 3 2

Veal 4 0-0 0-0 0 0 1 0

Knutson 21 2-5 0-0 1 0 0 4

Zehnder 8 0-0 0-0 0 1 1 0

Eckloff 9 1-3 0-0 2 0 2 2

Totals: 200 17-42 8-11 23 5 19 46

Score by halves:

TCU 24 38 -- 62

Colorado 14 32 -- 46

3-point field goals -- TCU (6-15): Buljan 0-2, Langford 0-1, Ebie 0-1, Ruzgas 2-5, Mitchem 3-3, Moss 1-1, Lancon 0-2; Colorado (4-13): Dufault 1-4, Crawford 0-1, Higgins 1-3, Thorne 0-1, Kelley 2-2, Coney 0-1, Knutson 0-1.

Officials --Self, George, Dugas.

Technical fouls -- None.

Attendance -- 3,483.

STEALS

TCU (5):Buljan 2, Ruzgas, Moss, Lancon.

Colorado (2):Dufault, Zehnder.

BLOCKED SHOTS

TCU (2):Langford, Ebie.

Colorado (2):Jackson-Wilson, Eckloff.

TURNOVERS

TCU (17):Buljan 3, Langford 4, Ruzgas, Mitchem 2, Moss 5, Ortiz.

Colorado (20):Jackson-Wilson, Dufault 6, Crawford, Higgins 2, Thorne 3, Coney, Veal, Knutson 2, Eckloff 2.



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Woelk: Tomlinson feels helpless on CU bench

By Neill Woelk

Thursday, December 4, 2008

Colorado freshman Nate Tomlinson was in pain Wednesday night.

Forget the foot injury that kept CU's point guard on the sidelines for the Buffs' 62-46 train wreck loss to TCU.

The pain Tomlinson felt mirrored that endured by the 3,483 fans who watched from the seats at the Coors Events Center. Like those fans, Tomlinson was helpless as the Buffs put on a turnover-filled display that left fans shaking their heads and head coach Jeff Bzdelik searching for answers.

"I feel sick right now," Tomlinson said. "I take full responsibility for what happened. I know I wasn't out there, but I'm still part of this team."

What's clear is that the Buffs desperately missed their point guard. Without their assists leader and fourth-leading scorer, the Buffs were rudderless.

In the first half, Colorado turned the ball over 13 times and had zero assists. By game's end, those numbers had jumped to 20 turnovers and only five assists.

The bad news is the Buffs may have to get used to missing their point guard for as long as six weeks. Tomlinson will undergo an MRI today, and if the tests show a stress fracture -- as feared -- he'll be out for as long as six weeks, leaving him on the sidelines until the beginning of the Big 12 season.

Tomlinson didn't want to sit out. If he'd had his druthers, he would have tried to play through the pain. But Bzdelik shut him down, knowing it is the prudent thing to do.

"I kept looking at coach in the first half, wondering if maybe I should go get dressed and go in," Tomlinson said. "But I do know there's no question I have to sit and get this thing healed up."

Bzdelik, who put the team's lackadaisical performance squarely on his shoulders, said he wouldn't blame the effort on Tomlinson's absence.

"Excuses are for losers," Bzdelik said. "Nate's such a competitor, he wanted to play. But he has to be smart and he has to get healthy."

Wednesday's performance certainly isn't what Buff fans expected this year, even from a team loaded with youngsters.

It will be up to Bzdelik and his staff to figure out a way to correct the boatload of errors and coax a semblance of cohesiveness from a team that looked lost against a mediocre Mountain West team.

Meanwhile, Tomlinson will watch and lend whatever help he can. He heard the grumbling from the stands Wednesday night — and couldn't blame them.

"I feel their pain," Tomlinson said. "I was cringing just like they were.

"But I hope they realize that's not us. That's not Buffalo basketball. I hope they stick with us and give us another chance. Every team has a bad game, and they're not going to see another effort like that. I know these guys, and they'll bounce back."

The Buffs have one week to regroup before they hit the floor again next Wednesday in a home contest against Colorado State.

"It's a rotten feeling," Bzdelik said. "The worst feeling for a coach is when your team doesn't play with emotion ... when it doesn't play with passion. That's on me."



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