



Bzdelik wants more passion from Buffs

CU coach still bothered by effort in loss to TCU

By Ryan Thorburn

Wednesday, December 10, 2008

Mike Bohn didn't take Jeff Bzdelik's advice.

There will be no change on the Colorado bench tonight when the Buffs host Colorado State at the Coors Events Center (8:07 p.m., FSN Rocky Mountain).

After CU's uninspired effort during a 62-46 loss to Texas Christian -- a team pegged for last-place in the Mountain West Conference in a preseason media poll -- Bzdelik called for his own head while banging it against the microphone in a postgame press conference.

"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 after the loss one week ago. "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."

When asked before Tuesday's practice if he was being hard on himself, Bzdelik was clearly still emotional about the way his young team inexplicably played without passion or energy.

"What really disappointed me about the TCU game was the fact that we never competed. You can get beat, but if you competed and you had no regrets in that locker room that's different," Bzdelik said. "And I'm the leader here. In all 34 years of coaching I've very seldom had teams act in a non-competitive way. And I was humiliated and I was embarrassed."

"But it's not for me to feel that way, it's for them to feel that way. I don't know if they felt that way, and I hope they did."

Two players in leadership positions -- guards/captains Cory Higgins and Dwight Thorne -- were also upset after the loss and had Bzdelik's back after a week of practices described as "intense."

"We knew coach was going to be hard on himself because he looks at himself in the mirror first before anybody," Higgins said. "And that's what we all need to do."

CU fell behind 12-0 and scored 14 points at halftime against TCU. Higgins was the only Buff who scored in double figures with 16 points on a 4-for-10 night from the field. "After the game (Bzdelik) said a couple things that were pretty hard on himself. As one of the people on the team that is a leader and a captain I told him, 'This isn't your fault, it's our fault,'" Thorne said. "We're the ones that came out and laid an egg on the court and didn't play with any heart or urgency. He was being hard on himself. Coach is doing a great job, and we just have to rally around him and his emotions and try and turn it around and

start a winning streak."

The Rams (3-5) were picked to finish 8th in the Mountain West, one spot ahead of TCU, and are the only team from that conference with a losing record at this point in the season.

Bzdelik is 5-0 all-time against CSU (4-0 at Air Force and 1-0 at CU).

"I'm not even worried about them. I've watched very little film on them," Bzdelik said. "I'm more concerned about us. ... I know it's going to be a challenging year because of our inexperience and youth, but you always compete to your highest level."

Point guard Nate Tomlinson will return to the starting lineup after watching the TCU game from the bench with a sore foot. The coaches feared the promising freshman had a stress fracture but an MRI revealed the injury to be just a sprain.

"It helps a lot to have a true point guard out there because me and Dwight are off-the-ball scorers," Higgins said.

The Buffs, however, are expected to be without Casey Crawford indefinitely. The 6-9 forward/center had his right foot in a walking boot on Tuesday and was scheduled to see a doctor about the injury.

The sophomore transfer from Wake Forest, who only mustered a total of three points in the back-to-back losses to Stanford and TCU, had a stress fracture in the same foot last year. Bzdelik said Crawford's right ankle has been bothering him.

"Whenever you lose somebody that plays it's a big-time loss," Thorne said. "You just hope that the people behind him and the people on the side of him can step up and play to the best of their abilities and just help the team."

As of Tuesday afternoon only 2,908 tickets had been sold for tonight's game.



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CU men's preview: Dec. 10

TONIGHT -- Colorado hosts Colorado State at 8:07 p.m. at the Coors Events Center.

BROADCAST -- **Television:** FSN with Drew Goodman (play-by-play), Ceal Barry (color) and Alanna Rizzo (sideline); **Radio:** KKZN (760 AM) with Mark Johnson (play-by-play) and Charles Johnson (color).

STORYLINE -- The Buffs will welcome back point guard Nate Tomlinson to the starting lineup after losing 62-46 to TCU a week ago with the talented freshmen sitting out with a sore foot. But sophomore forward Casey Crawford is expected to miss the game with an ankle injury. ... The Rams (3-5) have lost three consecutive games and are the only team in the Mountain West Conference with a losing record.

KEY STAT -- Jeff Bzdelik is 5-0 against the Rams (4-0 at Air Force and 1-0 at CU).

COACHES -- Jeff Bzdelik is 15-23 in his second season at CU. Tim Miles is 10-30 in his second season at CSU.

PROBABLE STARTERS

CU -- G Nate Tomlinson, 6-2, freshman, 9.6 ppg, 3.4 rpg, G Cory Higgins, 6-5, sophomore, 16.0 ppg, 6.0 rpg, G Dwight Thorne, 6-2, junior, 13.0 ppg, 4.2 rpg, F Austin Dufault, 6-8, freshman, 10.7 ppg, 3.3 rpg, F/C Jermyl Jackson-Wilson, 6-6, senior, 4.7 ppg, 4.5 rpg.

CSU -- G Marcus Walker, 6-0, senior, 18.0 ppg, 2.4 rpg, G Jesse Carr, 6-2, freshmen, 7.4 ppg, 2.0 rpg, F Andre McFarland, 6-6, sophomore, 13.1 ppg, 5.4 rpg, F Andy Ogide, 6-8, sophomore, 13.8 ppg, 8.8 rpg, C Dan Vandervieren, 6-10, sophomore, 6.3 ppg, 4.8 rpg.

SERIES -- CU leads the all-time series 86-33, including a 51-7 edge in Boulder. ... The Buffs won last year's meeting 73-70 in Fort Collins.

UP NEXT -- The Buffs host Prairie View A&M on Dec. 19 at the Coors Events Center (8 p.m., no television).



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local college basketball

Rivals look to heat up series

By Natalie Meisler
The Denver Post

Posted: 12/10/2008 12:30:00 AM MST



Tim Miles (Denver Post file photo)

Talk of a Colorado-Colorado State rivalry in men's basketball is generally on a hand-me-down basis. With two second-season coaches and extensive roster turnover, there's not a whole lot of recent history in the 119-game series.

Colorado senior forward Jermyl Jackson-Wilson and junior guard Dwight Thorne II are the only scholarship holdovers on either club from CSU's last trip to Boulder — Dec. 9, 2006.

"It's a game that you have to win," Jackson-Wilson said. "I'm not saying it makes your season when you win, but it makes it a whole lot better."

As one of five first-year starters between the Rams and Buffs lineups, CSU freshman point guard Jesse Carr can't wait to play tonight at the Coors Events Center.

Growing up

CSU Basketball

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- [Visit Natalie Meisler's All Things Rams blog for a behind-the-scenes look at CSU sports](#)

in the small north-central Nebraska town of Ainsworth, Carr heard of the Buffaloes before he became familiar with CSU. He couldn't help but notice the Huskers' rancor directed at CU every Thanksgiving week for the CU-Nebraska football game.

"I don't think the young guys realize that, no matter what type of season either team is having, fans will come out for it; the schools will get pumped up," Jackson-Wilson said.

CSU sophomore transfer Andy Ogide, who scored in double digits every game until he started playing with a bad foot against Nevada, at least saw the game in Fort Collins a year ago as a redshirt coming from Ole Miss.

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"It definitely has the potential to be a real big rivalry," Ogide said. "Both schools have new coaches, and in the next couple of years it will be a big-time rivalry."

CU freshman point guard counterpart Nate Tomlinson grew up in Australia and knew nothing of the rivalry until the Rocky Mountain Showdown football game this year, in which "the atmosphere was unbelievable."

Something gets lost in translation from the football game at Invesco Field at Mile High to campus arenas in early December. The CU-CSU game usually highlights each school's nonconference hoops schedule, but the football



Jeff Bzdelik (Denver Post file photo)

swarms of intoxicated students and alleged grown-ups melting down the Internet boards with trash talk are largely absent.

With CSU entering the bragging-rights game at 3-5 and CU at 3-3, neither side has much to brag about. CSU has to live down a home loss to Division II Saint Martin's. CU is coming off a dismal home loss to Texas Christian, picked to finish below CSU in the Mountain West.

"I'm more worried about us than CU," Rams coach

Tim Miles said of some nagging injuries and the inconsistency of youth. "We're excited about it and look forward to going to Boulder. We also look forward to the day when it is a big game that captures fans' interest."

CU coach Jeff Bzdelik is 5-0 against the Rams dating to his two-season Air

CU Basketball

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Force stint. Both coaches know a healthy rivalry of two successful teams will be good for the long-suffering state of college basketball in Colorado.

Miles is particularly interested in staying on friendly terms with Bzdelik. Miles wants to pick the Buffs coach's brain about Stanford, which beat CU 76-62 last month and plays Sunday at CSU.

"If Jeff is willing to share, God love him," Miles said.

Staff writer Tom Kensler contributed to this report.

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college basketball

CU hoops' Veal reunited with CSU

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 12/10/2008 12:30:00 AM MST

BOULDER — Colorado freshman forward Toby Veal is really glad his first Colorado vs. Colorado State game is on CU's campus. Veal, who played high school basketball in Savannah, Ga., took a recruiting visit to CSU last year before picking the Buffaloes.

"It's going to be kind of odd to play against them," Veal said this week. "I got to know coach (Tim) Miles (of CSU). I considered going there. It's going to be an odd feeling, but I think I'm going to be all right. It's just a game. But I'm happy it's here."

Veal's mother, Theresa, lived in Colorado during elementary school. If possible, she wanted Toby to attend college in the Centennial State.

Veal also considered Auburn, but his decision came down to the Rams and the Buffs. Miles joked this week that Veal exercised some bad judgment in not picking the Rams.

"Toby is a high-level athlete," Miles said. "He has great feet. He's an excellent leaper. He runs the floor well. He has a chance to be an impact player."

A week before Veal gave an oral commitment to Colorado on Oct. 5, 2007, Miles traveled to Savannah and made a late pitch to Veal.

"Coach Miles is a nice guy and I liked their players that I met, but I thought Colorado would be a good fit for me," Veal said.

A 6-foot-7, 225-pounder, Veal is struggling to get playing time, averaging two minutes while playing in four of six games. Bzdelik tells his players that the distribution of playing time may be differ later in the season. Bzdelik has called Veal "an exceptional rebounder" who needs to refine other skills.

Staff writer Natalie Meisler contributed to this report.

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Rocky Mountain News

Buffaloes glad to have Tomlinson back tonight

By **B.G. Brooks**, Rocky Mountain News ([Contact](#))

Published December 9, 2008 at 4:26 p.m.

Jeff Bzdelik is reluctant to attach undue importance to a particular game or to any single player's presence in his University of Colorado basketball team's lineup.

But Bzdelik won't deny this: He's glad to have freshman point guard Nate Tomlinson back for the Buffaloes' game tonight against in-state rival Colorado State (8 p.m., Coors Events Center, FSN Rocky Mountain).

Tomlinson is "our quarterback . . ." Bzdelik said. "I think people got a glimpse of what Nate could do against Stanford, even though he was on one leg."

In CU's 76-62 loss at Stanford on Nov. 29, Tomlinson scored a career-best 18 points and contributed three assists and three rebounds. A game later, against Texas Christian at the Events Center, he was held out because of what CU's medical staff feared was a stress fracture in his right foot.

Further tests, though, revealed a sprain, and after a recuperative period with his foot in a protective boot, Tomlinson is scheduled to start tonight.

His teammates hope his return can help shake the Buffs out of whatever funk enveloped them in a 62-46 loss against the Horned Frogs in which CU recorded no first-half assists and 13 early turnovers.

"It's going to be great (having Tomlinson back)," sophomore off-guard Cory Higgins said. "He sees the court so well. . . I knew (his absence) would have an impact because me and Dwight (Thorne II) are more off-the-ball scorers. We need a guy like Nate to get the ball to us."

Tomlinson, who leads CU in assists (18) and averages 9.6 points, said he's "somewhere around 80 percent" of being whole: "I'll feel good at the start of practice or the start of a game, then towards the back end (the foot) begins to bother me."

Watching the meltdown against TCU, Tomlinson said he became "miserable and angry at myself." Bzdelik seconded those emotions but didn't blame Tomlinson for his injury.

"It's not because we lost the game, it was because of our lack of toughness and execution," Bzdelik said.

"We just kind of fell apart in all areas. We didn't take a charge against a team that was driving the ball."

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