



Bufs expected Thorne's outburst

Junior developing into solid starter

By Ryan Thorburn
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Unless you've be sneaking into Colorado's practices this season, Dwight Thorne's performance on Saturday was a pleasant surprise.

The junior shooting guard hit big shot after big shot with Chauncey Billups -- aka "Mr. Big Shot" -- watching from the front row as Thorne poured in a career-high 30 points on 8-for-12 shooting during CU's 77-75 overtime loss to Kansas State at the Coors Events Center.

So what got into Thorne? Nothing out of the ordinary, according to teammates.

"Dwight shoots like that every day. If it's new to everyone else, I hope (the game) was on TV so they know Dwight is a heck of a player," senior forward Jermeyl Jackson-Wilson said. "Dwight does that every day. Whatever you see out there on the floor, it's no surprise to us because we see it all the time."

Right now it must to be difficult for CU basketball fans to see any light at the end of this long, dark tunnel. The Buffs (8-10 overall, 0-4 in conference) are once again alone in the Big 12 basement and appear headed for the program's third consecutive 20-loss season.

Perhaps the improvement of Thorne provides some hope that Jeff Bzdelik and his staff will be able to develop a young roster into a competitive force in the conference when all of the current freshmen are juniors.

Thorne averaged 2.1 points as a true freshman under Ricardo Patton and shot 26 percent from the field. Last season he played through a painful knee injury and averaged 3.3 points off the bench while drastically improving his shooting (43.4 percent).

This season Thorne is a solid start-er and CU's second-leading scorer -- averaging 12.9 points and shooting 53.9 percent, including 42.2 percent from 3-point range.

"I told myself to take it up another level and I did," Thorne said after making clutch shots behind the arc to force overtime and nearly steal the victory from K-State in the final minute. "Unfortunately, we took the loss."

Thorne was 5-for-6 from 3-point range against the Wildcats. Since Big 12 play began he is 9-for-18 (50 percent) from behind the arc while the rest of the Buffs are a combined 13-for-41 (31.7 percent).

But with an opportunity to beat K-State in the final seconds of overtime, Thorne was unable to get open and Jackson-Wilson missed a desperation 3-pointer as time expired.

"They did a hell of a job denying Dwight," Jackson-Wilson said.

Thorne, who once scored 41 points in high school, gained a lot of confidence after making some key 3-pointers while scoring 14 points during CU's double-overtime upset of Baylor at the Big 12 Tournament last March.

"Personally, I feel like this can be a good year for me," Thorne predicted in October. "Being the only junior on the team, leadership is going to be a key. I can talk to the freshman about Allen Fieldhouse before they go out there and help with experiences like that."

The Buffs play at Kansas this Saturday looking to snap a 23-game road losing streak in the Big 12 at historic Allen Fieldhouse. First they will try to break into the win column in conference play on Tuesday against Iowa State at the Coors Events Center.

"I'm just going to try to rally my guys and continue to work hard and just get back into the lab," Thorne said. "Words can't describe how desperate I think some of our guys are to get a win."



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