



# Bzdelik's Buffs beat Iowa State

## CU men earn first Big 12 victory of season

By Ryan Thorburn

Tuesday, January 27, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — Craig Brackins is very good. Maybe even NBA-lottery good.

But not good enough to beat the Buffs by himself.

Iowa State's sophomore star, fresh off a 42-point performance against Kansas, scored 24 points on 11-for-16 shooting against Colorado on Tuesday night at the Coors Events Center.

However, Brackins' supporting cast only chipped in with 25 points on 9-for-26 shooting, and the more balanced Buffs broke into the Big 12 win column with a 55-49 victory over the Cyclones in front of 3,004 witnesses.

"Give Brackins credit. He's an excellent player," CU head coach Jeff Bzdelik said. "But what's significant is nobody else was an all-star for them."

Lucca Staiger was Iowa State's second-leading scorer with just six points. And that included a meaningless 3-pointer with 1.5 seconds remaining.

After Brackins gave the Cyclones (12-8, 1-4) a 46-45 lead with 4:02 remaining, CU answered with a 10-0 run to seal its first victory over a Division I opponent since Dec. 28.

"With three minutes left we got a little spark and that's when it became desperate for us," Dwight Thorne said after scoring five of his nine points in the final 1:58. "We made some big plays."

None bigger than Casey Crawford's 3-pointer in the first half or Levi Knutson's steal and layup that tied the score and changed the momentum with 8:23 remaining.

The two sophomore shooters were both 0-for-8 from the field in Big 12 play before sparking the Buffs off the bench with a combined 11 points on 5-for-9 shooting.

"Their contributions were really big," Thorne said. "If they can do that every night, we'll be OK."

In their previous conference games the Buffs turned the ball over 81 times with a low of 17 against Kansas State.

In 40 minutes against the Cyclones, who didn't pressure the ball very aggressively, CU only coughed it up eight times.

Starting point guard Nate Tomlinson played 38 minutes and did not have a single turnover.

"If we have eight turnovers we'll be in every game," Cory Higgins said after leading the Buffs with 19 points and three turnovers. "If we can keep it below 10 ..."

That's what it will take for the Buffs (9-10, 1-4) to have any chance of picking up win No. 10 at Kansas on Saturday.

But there was no looking ahead to Allen Fieldhouse on Tuesday night. Bzdelik's team was savoring the sweet taste of victory for the first time since a 65-52 victory over Western State on Jan. 7.

"I think it was important for everybody just to get a win," Bzdelik said. "Because that's why you play the game. I'm proud of the fact that they battled through it."

### **Notable**

The Buffs have won 11 of the last 13 meetings against Iowa State in Boulder, including the last four. ... It was the first time CU held an opponent under 50 points since limiting Denver to 44 in the 2006-07 season opener. ... Both teams had 28 rebounds. The Cyclones only scored three second-chance points off three offensive rebounds. ... Tomlinson led CU with nine assists. ... CU football player Austin Bisnow sang the national anthem.

### **Colorado 55, Iowa St. 49**

#### **IOWA ST.**

#### **FG FT Reb**

#### **Min M-A M-A O-T A PF PT**

Brackins 36 11-16 2-4 1-9 1 1 24

Hamilton 12 2-5 0-0 0-3 0 2 4

Staiger 24 2-4 0-0 0-3 3 4 6

Garrett 30 1-4 0-0 0-1 3 4 2

Petersen 37 2-4 0-0 0-2 4 2 6

Boozer 12 1-4 0-0 1-3 0 1 3

Buckley 0 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 1 0

Haluska 8 0-1 1-2 0-0 0 2 1

Eikmeier 9 0-1 0-0 0-1 0 0 0

Thompsn 18 1-3 0-0 1-2 0 0 2

Vndrbkn 14 0-0 1-2 0-3 0 0 1

Totals 200 20-42 4-8 3-28 11 17 49

**Percentages:** FG .476, FT .500.

**3-Point Goals:** 5-13, .385 (Petersen 2-3, Staiger 2-3, Boozer 1-3, Brackins 0-1, Eikmeier 0-1, Garrett 0-2).

**Team Rebounds:** 1.

**Blocked Shots:** 2 (Hamilton, Brackins).

**Turnovers:** 15 (Garrett 5, Brackins 5, Staiger 2, Eikmeier, Hamilton, Haluska).

**Steals:** 3 (Garrett 2, Petersen).

**Technical Fouls:** None.

## COLORADO

### FG FT Reb

**Min M-A M-A O-T A PF PT**

J-Wilson 18 0-1 0-2 0-1 1 5 0

Dufault 31 2-5 2-4 0-5 1 1 7

Tomlinsn 33 3-6 1-2 3-6 1 1 9

Higgins 38 6-14 5-5 0-3 2 0 19

Thorne II 32 3-9 3-3 0-5 0 1 9

Coney 9 0-1 0-0 0-1 0 2 0

Veal 6 0-1 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Knutson 10 3-3 0-0 0-1 0 0 6

Crawford 14 2-6 0-0 2-2 1 2 5

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

Totals 200 19-49 11-16 7-28 6 13 55

**Percentages:** FG .388, FT .688.

**3-Point Goals:** 6-19, .316 (Higgins 2-4, Tomlinson 2-4, Dufault 1-2, Crawford 1-4, Coney 0-1, Eckloff 0-2, Thorne II 0-2).

**Team Rebounds:** 1.

**Blocked Shots:** 0.

**Turnovers:** 8 (Higgins 3, Eckloff 2, Jackson-Wilson, Thorne II).

**Steals:** 9 (Higgins 3, Dufault 2, Eckloff, Crawford, Jackson-Wilson, Knutson).

**Technical Fouls:** None.

**Iowa St. 28 21--49**

**Colorado 26 29--55**

A -- 3,004.

**Officials** -- Curtis Shaw, Scott Thornley, Kelly Self.



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# Bufs get good news on Kelley

## Injury to frosh not as serious as originally thought

By Ryan Thorburn

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — It was perhaps the best 24 hours of the season for Colorado men's basketball.

The Buffs earned their first Big 12 victory with a 55-49 triumph over Iowa State on Tuesday.

And Wednesday night the good news continued when athletic trainer Larry Willock announced that Ryan Kelley -- who was originally diagnosed with a dislocated left kneecap sustained during a collision in practice last week -- should be able to play again in two to four weeks.

Results from an MRI performed on Kelley revealed a minor ligament sprain in the left knee. No surgery is required and the freshman guard will be stepping up his rehab in an effort to get back into the lineup in some time in February.

Kelley spent most of non-conference play on the end of the bench but turned some heads with a 19-point outburst in CU's conference opener at Missouri.

After that game, a 107-62 CU loss at Mizzou Arena in which Kelley was 7-for-12 from the field, he said he was not frustrated by a lack of early-season playing time.

"It was nice to get out there and help out my teammates," Kelley said. "I just want to try and be an extension of the coach out there. Unfortunately, we didn't win the game."

CU also had injury scares with point guard Nate Tomlinson (foot) and Casey Crawford (ankle) earlier this season that weren't as serious as initially feared by the coaching staff once their MRI results came back.

The Buffs (9-10, 1-4) play at Kansas on Saturday (2 p.m., ESPNU).



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## Woelk: CU finally seals deal with a win

By Neill Woelk

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — Jeff Bzdelik's Buffaloes needed this one. Oh, how they needed this one.

Their third straight game against one of the Big 12's lower-tier teams, meaning their third straight chance for a win in a season in which such chances are few and far between. If the Buffs had dropped Tuesday night's game against Iowa State, you could see this season heading so far south they'd be seeing penguins soon.

But finally, after letting a couple of games slip away in the last week, the Buffs sealed the deal. While they're still technically in the Big 12 basement with a 1-4 conference record, they're no longer the sole tenants, as they caught up to Iowa State, Texas A&M and Kansas State.

Oh-and-16 is no longer a possibility.

"We've been in the last few games," said sophomore Cory Higgins, who led the Buffs with 19 points. "We just finished this one."

Tuesday's win didn't require a super-human effort by any of the Buffs. Neither did it require a miracle shot, or even a surprise effort from unexpected quarters.

Rather, it proved to be the result of exactly what Bzdelik has been preaching over the last couple of months.

Defense. Take care of the ball. Rebound.

The Buffs committed just three turnovers in the entire second half, giving them only eight for the game. How important is that stat? Figure this: despite starting thesecond half with a 3-for-15 effort from the field, CU managed to stay within striking distance because the Cyclones didn't get any cheap buckets.

On the boards, Colorado played the Cyclones even with 28 apiece. And when they most needed defensive stops, the Buffs produced them. Colorado went from a 46-45 deficit to a 55-46 lead in the final four minutes, coming up with a couple of huge steals and defensive rebounds to fuel the 10-0 run.

"I think with about three minutes left, the desperation kicked in," said Buff junior Dwight Thorne.

While Higgins did finish with the bulk of the Buffs' points, there were plenty of other players chipping in. It gave CU the kind of balance it hadn't enjoyed in weeks.

Thorne, coming off a 30-point effort against Kansas State, finished with a relatively quiet nine points, but that included a huge bucket and free throw with just under two minutes to play that gave CU a 50-46

cushion. Freshman point guard Nate Tomlinson broke out of a prolonged slump with nine points and team-high six rebounds, and freshman forward Austin Dufault had seven points, five rebounds and a couple of steals.

CU even received some key contributions from the bench, something that was painfully absent in Saturday's loss to Kansas State, when the reserves scored just four points.

Levi Knutson, who had missed his last 16 field goal attempts, broke the ice with six points, including a huge steal and layup that tied the game at 38 midway through the second half. Sophomore forward Casey Crawford, who hadn't scored in Big 12 play, came up with five points in the first half, a couple of rebounds and a steal and assist.

Defensively, CU also did an admirable job on ISU's Craig Brackins, who was coming off a 42-point effort against Kansas. Brackins did finish with 24, but the next highest scorers for the Cyclones -- Lucca Staiger and Bryan Petersen -- had only six apiece.

Yes, there were still some of those costly mistakes, the kind that give Bzdelik heartburn.

In the waning seconds of the first half, the Buffs turned the ball over on an in-bounds play that resulted in a coast-to-coast layup for ISU's Diante Garrett and a 28-26 lead for the Cyclones going into the locker room. Late in the second half, with CU clinging to a one-point lead, the Buffs couldn't get the ball in-bounds at all and turned it over on a 5-second violation.

But overall, the Buffs produced a solid effort. It gives them hope that there will be a few more wins in the future.

"It's only one win," Thorne said. "But it's a boost."



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