



Bufs just miss upset bid at Kansas

CU falls to Jayhawks

By Ryan Thorburn
Saturday, January 31, 2009

LAWRENCE, Kan. — The white flag moment this year came just 39 seconds into the second half.

Kansas -- which had handled Colorado by 21, 29, 21, 23 and 24 points in the previous five meetings here -- scored the first five points out of halftime after tallying the final six points of the first half.

The Jayhawks' lead over CU was a seemingly cozy 46-25 at that point.

Historically, the Buffs have responded to such moments at Allen Fieldhouse by starting the bus early and allowing the KU faithful to serenade their heroes with "Rock Chalk Jayhawk" until the final buzzer ends the misery for the visitors.

Not this time.

Jeff Bzdelik's team didn't pull off what would have been an upset for the ages, but the young Buffs might have come of age during Saturday's 66-61 loss to Kansas.

"I can say this is the first time that I've been here they haven't started singing that song with 10 minutes to go," Jermeyl Jackson-Wilson said. "It's a big improvement for our team. Obviously, we have to grow from this."

After the Jayhawks took their largest lead of the game (21 points) with 19:21 remaining, the Buffs decided to punch the bully back in the face and see what happened.

Nate Tomlinson capped a 7-0 run with a hoop to make the score 46-32 with 18:11 remaining. A 3-pointer by Dwight Thorne off the glass cut the deficit to 10 points as part of a 13-2 spurt.

CU rattled off 10 more unanswered points in a span of 7:43 as Jackson-Wilson finished the spurt with a layup to make the score 54-52 with 6:10 remaining.

The 16,300 stunned witnesses were forced to sit down on the edge of their seats.

"We started playing with that desperate energy coach tells us to play with over and over again," is how Cory Higgins explained the 27-8 CU run. "We were believing we could win that whole second half."

Despite matching KU's intensity and only committing three turnovers in the first half, the Buffs trailed 41-25 at the intermission.

Austin Dufault and Casey Crawford missed some open 3-pointers. Jackson-Wilson and Higgins couldn't finish some point-blank opportunities in the paint.

CU shot just 32.1 percent from the field through 20 minutes. Thorne was 3-for-5 with 10 points and his teammates were 6-for-23 with 15 points.

KU was 12-for-13 at the free throw line while the passive Buffs were 4-for-5. The Jayhawks also dominated the glass 25-10.

"We had good looks in the first half and we didn't make the shot and we avoided contact," Bzdelik said. "I thought in the second half we adjusted well and grew as a young basketball team. "

The Buffs out-rebounded KU 14-12 in the second half and shot 65.2 percent while holding the Jayhawks to 33.3 percent.

After Jackson-Wilson brought CU to within two points, Tyrel Reed answered with a 3-pointer to begin an 8-0 KU run capped with a Sherron Collins swish from behind the arc that made the score 62-52 with 3:55 remaining.

The Buffs got off the mat again and Tomlinson made it a one-possession game (62-59) by burying a 3-pointer from the corner with 60 seconds left.

"We just played Colorado basketball," Thorne said after finishing with a game-high 18 points on 6-for-9 shooting. "We did the things we know we're good at doing."

KU Bill Self was forced to call a timeout with four seconds remaining on the shot clock and his team clinging to its three-point lead.

Collins received the in-bounds pass, put a move on Tomlinson that sent the freshman point guard sprawling to the floor, and then calmly splashed a floater over Higgins and Jackson-Wilson with one second to spare, making the score 64-59 with 23.3 seconds left.

"That's a great young talent making a great play. We forced him into a tough shot. Give him credit," Bzdelik said.

Thorne's final basket brought the Buffs within three points with 7.1 seconds left but Collins slammed the door on any remaining hope by making a pair of free throws to extend the nation's longest home winning streak to 36 games.

And so the Buffs -- who have lost 24 consecutive Big 12 road games dating back to Jan. 21, 2006, and 26 consecutive games at Allen Fieldhouse dating back to Feb. 10, 1983 -- settled for a moral victory.

"I don't like to say it, but it is," Thorne said. "We came into a hostile environment, we were down by a lot, and we came back. We showed poised. I think we grew up in the second half as a basketball team."

Kansas 66, CU 61

CU Min FG FT Reb A PF PTS

J.-Wilson 27 6-9 0-0 5 1 3 12

Dufault 28 2-5 2-2 4 0 1 7

Tomlnsn 32 3-4 0-0 0 2 1 7

Higgins 38 6-16 3-5 5 5 4 15

Thorne 35 6-9 3-4 2 2 2 18

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

Knutson 15 1-3 0-0 3 0 3 2

Crawford 7 0-3 0-0 0 0 1 0

Eckloff 16 0-1 0-0 4 0 2 0

Totals 200 24-51 8-11 7-24 10 17 61

Percentages: FG .471, FT .727.

3-Point Goals: 5-17, .294 (Thorne II 3-4, Tomlinson 1-2, Dufault 1-3, Knutson 0-1, Coney 0-1, Eckloff 0-1, Crawford 0-2, Higgins 0-3).

Team Rebounds: 1.

Blocked Shots: 0.

Turnovers: 7 (Thorne II 3, Dufault, Higgins, Jackson-Wilson).

Steals: 9 (Higgins 4, Jackson-Wilson 2, Thorne II 2, Dufault).

Technical Fouls: None.

KU Min FG FT Reb A PF PTS

Mc. Morris 20 1-2 4-4 7 2 1 6

Aldrich 31 5-10 5-6 13 1 0 15

Collins 34 4-16 2-2 1 4 3 11

Morningstr 39 3-7 2-2 4 0 3 10

Taylor 22 1-4 2-2 2 1 3 4

Teahan 2 0-0 0-0 1 0 0 0

Thomas 3 0-1 0-0 1 0 1 0

Reed 24 2-4 2-2 2 2 1 8

Mk. Morris 12 4-5 2-2 4 3 3 10

Little 11 1-2 0-0 1 0 0 2

Releford 2 0-0 0-0 1 0 0 0

Totals 200 21-51 19-20 14-37 13 15 66

Percentages: FG .412, FT .950.

3-Point Goals: 5-21, .238 (Reed 2-3, Morningstar 2-6, Collins 1-10, Little 0-1, Taylor 0-1).

Team Rebounds: 0.

Blocked Shots: 8 (Aldrich 2, Mark.Morris 2, Marc.Morris, Little, Morningstar, Taylor).

Turnovers: 13 (Morningstar 3, Collins 3, Mark.Morris 2, Reed 2, Little, Releford, Taylor).

Steals: 4 (Collins, Aldrich, Reed, Morningstar).

Technical Fouls: None.

Colorado 25 36--61

Kansas 41 25--66

A -- 16,300.

Officials -- Mike Wood, Greg Rennegarbe, Warren Evans.



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Bufs contain Aldrich

Jayhawk big man held to 2 points in second half

By Ryan Thorburn
Sunday, February 1, 2009

LAWRENCE, Kan. -- Cole Aldrich came out wearing a mask.

And the Bufs appeared to be afraid of the big, scary-looking dude with a freshly broken nose.

Aldrich did his damage early -- scoring 11 points in the first 6:43 and 13 before halftime -- and Kansas was able to hold on for a 66-61 victory over Colorado on Saturday after nearly letting a 21-point lead slip away at Allen Fieldhouse.

"He got a lot of offensive rebounds and touches and we were fouling him a lot," explained CU forward Jermyl Jackson-Wilson, who gives up five inches to the 6-11 Aldrich. "When he caught the ball we tried to make him make shots over us instead of gambling. He's 6-11 or whatever, but it's 50-50 when you turn around and try and shoot it."

Aldrich, who had his nose broken at Nebraska last Wednesday, was 4-for-5 from the field and 5-for-6 at the line in the first half but held to 1-for-5 from shooting with no trips to the line over the final 20 minutes.

Jackson-Wilson scored eight of his 12 points in the second half. And the Bufs, who were out-rebounded 25-10 before halftime, had a 14-12 edge on the glass after the break.

Tomlinson improves

Nate Tomlinson had seven turnovers, one assist and no points during CU's 73-56 loss to Kansas in Boulder two weeks earlier. On Saturday, the freshman point guard had seven points, two assists and no turnovers.

CU finished with just seven turnovers as a team but allowed the Jayhawks to score 17 second-chance points off 14 offensive rebounds.

Stunner at stripe

The more aggressive Jayhawks were 12-for-13 at the free throw line in the first half and finished 19-for-20 at the stripe.

The Bufs were 8-for-11, but two of the misses were by Cory Higgins on the front end of one-and-one situations.

CU's best player, who set a Big 12 record with 45 consecutive made free throws earlier this season, said he would be thinking about those two misses as much as anything on the flight home.

"That would have helped us a lot. It's a missed opportunity, basically," said Higgins, who was shooting 86.3 percent at the line entering the game. "I expect to make every one of them. They just didn't fall tonight."

Higgins played extremely hard and led the Buffs with five assists and four steals. He finished with 15 points but couldn't quite get in a groove offensively, finishing 6-for-16 from the floor and 3-for-5 at the line.

Friendly faces

Rod Higgins, the general manager of the Charlotte Bobcats, was on press row supporting his talented son.

"It was nice. He's a busy man and when he can make it out it's a pleasure," Cory Higgins said of the brief reunion.

Casey Crawford, a former Gatorade Player of the Year from the state of Kansas, had a little section of family and friends from nearby Overland Park, Kan., in the stands. He was 0-for-3 from the field and did not score in the homecoming.

Notable

Knutson scored CU's only two points off the bench. KU's reserves contributed 20 points. ... Both coaching staffs wore tennis shoes to raise awareness about the cancer research.



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