



CU vs. ISU: Big 12 basement dwellers square off

Bufs out to snap 25-game road losing streak vs. league foes

By Ryan Thorburn

Wednesday, February 11, 2009

AMES, Iowa -- On paper this is kind of a pathetic matchup.

Colorado and Iowa State are tied for last place in the Big 12 with 1-7 conference records.

The Buffs (9-13) have lost 10 of their last 12 games and the two wins were over Division II Western State (65-52) and Iowa State (55-49) at the Coors Events Center.

Entering tonight's rematch at Hilton Coliseum (5:30 p.m., FSN) -- a venue where CU has lost 16 times in its last 17 trips -- the Buffs are looking to snap a 25-game losing streak in Big 12 road games.

Meanwhile, the Cyclones (12-11) have lost six consecutive games and are looking to avoid their first seven-game conference losing streak since the 1987-88 season.

But on the court this should be a very competitive and even matchup.

The coaches insist that their teams are excited about the opportunity to escape the Big 12 basement and validate all of the hard work they've been putting in with a much-needed victory.

"Losing can beat you up, there's no question about that," CU coach Jeff Bzdelik said. "But it is an absolute privilege to play college basketball, especially in the Big 12 ... (The players) know they're knocking in the door. They know you've got to get it done and they're trying to."

Since the win against Iowa State in Boulder on Jan. 27, the Buffs have had the rug pulled out from under them in the final minutes by Kansas (66-61), Nebraska (55-53) and Oklahoma (77-72).

Bzdelik's young squad sliced a 21-point deficit down to two points at Allen Fieldhouse and were within one possession of the No. 2 Sooners at Lloyd Noble Arena in the final minute on Saturday.

CU shot 47.1 percent in Lawrence and 50.9 percent in Norman.

"They impose their will on you with what they do offensively," Iowa State coach Greg McDermott said. "They're going to do what they're going to do, and you have to figure out how to stop it and you have to outlast them on the defensive end, because they're going to execute it for 30 seconds on the shot clock."

While CU has failed to come out on top in close games recently the Cyclones have lost by an average of 14.8 points during their six-game slide, including an 82-68 home loss to Missouri on Saturday.

"Our guys are holding up remarkably well," McDermott said. "Their approach to practice and the belief in one another and what we're doing has not wavered. That's a sign to me that it's a team that has a chance to do some things down the road."

CU (61.1 ppg) and Iowa state (60.0 ppg) are the two lowest scoring teams in the conference. Interestingly, both teams are giving up 70.9 points per game in Big 12 play.

The difference in the first meeting was a 10-3 run by the Buffs to close out the game over the final 2:47.

"(CU) is a young team that's getting better," McDermott said. "Obviously they beat us the first time so they have our full attention."

Each team's best player will get most of the attention from the opposing defense tonight. CU's Cory Higgins (19 points) and ISU's Craig Brackins (24 points) were the only players who scored in double figures in the first meeting.

The other 18 players who saw playing time at the Coors Events Center were a combined 22-for-61 from the field with 43 total points.

"We've just got to get better," Higgins said. "We can't have those two- or three-minute lapses that seem to cost us every game."



© 2006 Daily Camera and Boulder Publishing, LLC.



CU men's preview: Iowa State

TODAY -- Colorado travels to Ames to take on Iowa State at 5:30 p.m. at Hilton Coliseum.

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

STORYLINES -- The Buffs (9-13, 1-7) are looking to snap a 25-game road losing streak in the Big 12 after suffering a 77-72 loss at No. 2 Oklahoma on Saturday. ... Cory Higgins is CU's leader in scoring (17.5 ppg), rebounding (5.8 rpg), assists (2.9 apg) and steals (2.2 spg). ... The Cyclones (12-11, 1-7) are coming off a 68-62 home loss to Missouri. ... Craig Brackins is second in the Big 12 in scoring (19.1 ppg) and had 24 points on 11-for-16 shooting in the first meeting with the Buffs.

KEY STAT -- Colorado is 1-16 in its last 17 appearances at Hilton Coliseum. The only victory over that span was a 54-52 overtime triumph on Jan. 22, 2005.

COACHES -- Jeff Bzdelik is 21-33 in his second season at CU. Greg McDermott is 41-39 in his third season at Iowa State.

PROBABLE STARTERS

Colorado -- G Nate Tomlinson, 6-2, freshman, 8.1 ppg, 2.6 rpg, G Cory Higgins, 6-5, sophomore, 17.5 ppg, 5.8 rpg, G Dwight Thorne, 6-2, junior, 13.3 ppg, 3.1 rpg, F Austin Dufault, 6-8, freshman, 8.9 ppg, 3.9 rpg, F/C Jermyl Jackson-Wilson, 6-6, senior, 5.6 ppg, 4.0 rpg.

Iowa State -- G Lucca Staiger, 6-5, sophomore, 8.9 ppg, 2.3 rpg, G Diante Garrett, 6-4, sophomore, 10.1 ppg, 3.7 rpg, G Bryan Peterson, 6-1, senior, 6.3 ppg, 4.2 rpg, F Craig Brackins, 6-10, sophomore, 19.1 ppg, 9.0 rpg, C Justin Hamilton, 6-1, freshman, 4.8 ppg, 3.3 rpg.

SERIES -- Iowa State leads 75-66 with a 45-18 edge in Ames.

UP NEXT -- The Buffs will host Texas on Saturday at the Coors Events Center (noon., ESPN).



© 2006 Daily Camera and Boulder Publishing, LLC.