



CU men fall short at Nebraska

By Ryan Thorburn

Wednesday, February 18, 2009

LINCOLN, Neb. -- Cory Higgins didn't really want to stop outside of the depressing visitors locker room and talk about the game.

But as Colorado's unofficial leader, the sophomore decided to put a brief but telling spin on his team's tough stretch.

"I'm starting to get sick of it," the unflappable Higgins admitted.

It being single-digit defeats to Big 12 foes.

CU's broken record of a season continued with a predictable 46-41 loss to Nebraska on Wednesday night at the Devaney Sports Center.

That's seven close-but-no-cigar efforts in the last eight games for the Buffs if you're scoring at home.

Or on the road in this case.

CU's Big 12 road losing streak is now at 27 and counting with only trips to Baylor and Kansas State remaining this season.

"It gets a little frustrating," Dwight Thorne said after the Buffs' sixth consecutive loss. "But we're going to get there."

Defensively, the Buffs were impressive while out-rebounding Nebraska 35-25 and holding the home team to 34.8 percent shooting from the field.

Ade Dagunduro (18 points) was the lone bright spot offensively for the Cornhuskers. The 6-foot-5 senior's teammates only chipped in with 28 points on 9-for-34 shooting.

"It was a little bit frustrating," Dagunduro said after making 7-of-12 shots. "We thought we had them earlier in the first half, but Big 12 games are going to come down to the last five minutes, so you can't expect to blow any team out. It's not going to happen unless you get lucky here and there, but we did a good job of not breaking."

The 46 points were the fewest by Nebraska in a victory since a 45-41 win over Oklahoma State in 1966. The 41 points by CU marked the fewest the Huskers have allowed against a conference opponent since 1984.

"Again, we've put ourselves in position to win on the road against a team that will be in postseason

play," CU coach Jeff Bzdelik said. "I thought defensively we did enough to win the game."

The key play of the night came when Higgins had the ball taken away as he went up for a jump shot that could have cut the deficit to one point.

Dagunduro cashed the turnover in for three-point play to make the score 44-38 with 2:25 remaining.

After a pair of free throws by Austin Dufault the Buffs created a turnover, but Higgins was called for a charge with 60 seconds remaining and the Huskers clinging to a 44-40 lead.

"Where we fall short is we're so young that we're not strong enough to finish plays around the rim and to be strong with the basketball," Bzdelik said. "A lot of our turnovers the ball was just out there. And we're not strong enough to protect it and we get dislodged off our cuts and off our positions because of the physicality of the game.

"And that's part of the game. It was a well officiated game. We're just not strong enough yet to just hold and contest position and finish plays around the rim."

The Buffs (9-16, 1-10) were just 16-for-46 (31 percent) from the field. Higgins (12 points) was the only CU player to score in double figures.

The Huskers (16-8, 6-5) scored 17 points off 16 CU turnovers and out-scored CU 20-6 in the paint.

"They're so difficult to play against," Nebraska coach Doc Sadler said. "They control everything on the offensive end and make you make shots. I thought we got some easy looks early but they stuck with their zone and it's difficult to play against."

The Buffs got off to a very shaky start and fell behind by scores of 9-1 and 17-9 before getting back into the game with five 3-pointers in the first half.

CU had three chances to take the lead during the Huskers' scoring drought of 3:40, but Nate Tomlinson missed a layup, Jermyl Jackson-Wilson missed a baseline jumper and Thorne had a layup attempt swatted into the cheap seats by Dagunduro.

The Buffs trailed 25-20 at halftime and cut the deficit to a single point several times down the stretch but never took a lead.

"You've just got to keep doing what you're doing and hopefully one of these days we'll see what it takes to win," Higgins said.

Nebraska 46, Colorado 41

COLORADO

FG FT Reb

Min M-A M-A O-T A PF PTS

J-Wilson 28 2-4 0-0 2-7 0 4 4

Dufault 32 2-5 4-6 1-3 0 3 9

Tomlnsn 34 2-7 0-0 1-3 0 3 6

Higgins 35 3-9 5-5 0-6 1 1 12

Thorne II 35 3-13 0-0 1-4 2 2 7

Coney 18 1-4 0-0 0-5 0 2 3

Knutson 15 0-0 0-0 0-2 0 0 0

Eckloff 3 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Totals 200 13-42 9-11 9-35 3 15 41

Percentages: FG .310, FT .818.

3-Point Goals: 6-17, .353 (Tomlinson 2-5, Thorne II 1-2, Dufault 1-2, Coney 1-3, Higgins 1-5).

Team Rebounds: 5.

Blocked Shots: 2 (Jackson-Wilson 2).

Turnovers: 16 (Tomlinson 6, Jackson-Wilson 4, Higgins 3, Dufault, Coney).

Steals: 2 (Jackson-Wilson 2).

Technical Fouls: None.

NEBRASKA

FG FT Reb

Min M-A M-A O-T A PF PTS

Harley 32 2-8 1-2 0-4 1 1 5

Henry 18 0-2 0-1 1-1 1 3 0

Dagndro 30 7-12 4-4 2-6 0 3 18

Velander 26 1-4 2-2 0-4 2 1 5

Anderson 29 2-4 2-2 0-3 5 2 6

Richrdsn 24 1-7 1-2 0-2 0 1 4

Miller 22 3-6 0-0 0-1 1 1 8

McCray 15 0-1 0-0 1-2 1 0 0

Salomon 4 0-2 0-0 0-0 0 0 0

Totals 200 16-46 10-13 6-25 11 12 46

Percentages: FG .348, FT .769.

3-Point Goals: 4-15, .267 (Miller 2-2, Velander 1-3, Richardson 1-5, Henry 0-1, Harley 0-2, Anderson 0-2).

Team Rebounds: 2.

Blocked Shots: 6 (Dagunduro 2, McCray 2, Henry, Harley).

Turnovers: 6 (Henry, Velander, McCray, Miller, Harley).

Steals: 8 (Harley 3, Richardson 2, Miller, Henry, Anderson).

Technical Fouls: None.

Colorado 20 21--41

Nebraska 25 21--46

A -- 10,425.

Officials -- Ted Hillary, Rick Randall, Rick Hartzell.



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Huskers, Buffs could meet one more time

By Ryan Thorburn

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LINCOLN, Neb. -- Ugly, uglier ... ugliest?

There are still five games remaining in the regular season, but looking down the road there is a chance Colorado and Nebraska could meet for a third time next month at the Big 12 Tournament in Oklahoma City.

The Buffs (9-16, 1-10) will almost certainly be the No. 10, 11 or 12 seed while the Cornhuskers (16-8, 6-5) are currently in a three-way tie with Kansas State (18-8, 6-5) and Texas (17-8, 6-5) for fourth place in the conference.

No. 12 plays No. 5, No. 11 plays No. 6, and No. 10 plays No. 7 in the first round at the Ford Center.

Nebraska swept the regular-season series with a 46-41 peach basket special on Wednesday night at the Devaney Center.

The Huskers escaped with a 55-53 win in Boulder two weeks earlier.

"It's going to be a new season when we go there," freshman Austin Dufault said of the conference tournament, where a miracle run is CU's only chance at postseason play. "We have some games left of course before we get there, but once we get there we'll try and get one like we did last year against Baylor.

"Anything can happen if you play well."

Dufault said he watched the Buffs' double-overtime upset of the Bears on television last year.

"Seeing that really made me excited to come here and have that opportunity," he said.

Of course only fans who really, really enjoy defense would be excited to see a third meeting between the Buffs and Huskers.

The 87 combined points by the teams on Wednesday is a Big 12 record for fewest combined points in a league contest.

Too many turnovers

Some of it had to do with Nebraska's relentless defense, but the Buffs made no excuses after turning the ball over 16 times.

"There were about six or seven of them where we weren't strong enough with our balance or we just get the ball taken from us," CU coach Jeff Bzdelik said.

The miscues led to 17 points for the home team in a five-point game. The Huskers only had six turnovers, all in the second half, that CU cashed in for just one point.

The Buffs did win the battle of the boards 35-25 after getting out-rebounded 30-22 in the first meeting.

"If we rebound the ball and take care of the ball we're going to be in any game we play in," Dwight Thorne said. "Unfortunately tonight we didn't take care of the ball and we lost by a slim margin."

No Coney magic

Bzdelik gave sophomore Javon Coney a chance to recreate his performance here last season when the walk-on scored a career-high 15 points during CU's 68-49 loss at the Devaney Center.

Coney made a 3-pointer in the first half for his only points. He was 1-for-4 from the field with five rebounds and a turnover in 18 minutes.

No one else scored off the bench for the Buffs. Levi Knutson played 15 minutes but did not take a shot while Casey Crawford continued to ride the pine throughout.

Notable

CU has trailed at the half in all 11 Big 12 games this season. ... The Buffs made five 3-pointers before the intermission which is the most shots they have made behind the arc in a half during Big 12 play this season. CU had six treys in the first half against Arkansas-Pine Bluff. ... CU has made a 3-pointer in 220 consecutive games. ... Cory Higgins (12 points) has scored in double figures 24 times in 25 games this season. It was the fourth time this season he has been the only Buff to reach double figures.

Quotable

"The effort and competitive spirit of our basketball team through this season, without getting a lot of rewards, is a testimony to the high character that we have," Bzdelik said.

By the numbers

1-10 -- The Buffs' record outside of Boulder this season, including an 0-8 record in true road games and a 1-2 record at the Rainbow Classic.

2 -- Number of fast-break points by each team in this slugfest.

6-28 -- CU's record at the Devaney Sports Center.

27 -- Consecutive Big 12 road losses for the Buffs. There are only two more chances for CU to keep this streak from extending into 2010 -- at Baylor on Feb. 28 and at Kansas State on March 7.

41 -- CU's point total on Wednesday, which is a season low. The Buffs lost 72-42 a week earlier at Iowa State.



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