



Bufs must stop Iowa State's Brackins

ISU forward has four 20-point, 10-rebound performances in last five games

By Ryan Thorburn

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When asked about Craig Brackins on Monday morning Bill Self started chuckling.

That's only because Kansas, despite allowing Brackins to score a career-high 42 points and grab 14 rebounds, still found a way to beat Iowa State in Ames on Saturday.

The sophomore forward put 22 of those points on the board before the intermission.

"We challenged our guys at halftime to stop him and they responded," Self said, with tongue planted firmly in cheek, during the Big 12 coaches teleconference.

Tonight it will be up to Jeff Bzdelik to come up with a strategy to at least slow down the Big 12's hottest player when Colorado hosts Iowa State (12-7, 1-3) at the Coors Events Center (8:30 p.m., FSN).

Brackins was 11-for-19 from the field and 17-for-21 at the free-throw line against the Jayhawks. The 6-10 forward has produced four 20-point, 10-rebound efforts in the last five games.

"He's a very talented player and we know he's going to get his points," Bzdelik said. "We just have to make sure it's not a huge number and make him earn those points. ...

"And we need to make sure no one else has an all-star night."

Self didn't have an answer for Brackins, but the Jayhawks held the rest of the Cyclones to 8-for-36 shooting from field and a total of six free-throw attempts in KU's 82-67 win.

Brackins' 42 points were the fourth-most in Big 12 history and two points shy of Michael Beasley's conference record.

Self described Brackins as a "hybrid" between Beasley, the former Kansas State standout who was the No. 2 pick in the NBA draft last summer, and former Texas one-and-done superstar Kevin Durant.

"We haven't crossed that bridge," Iowa State head coach Greg McDermott said when asked if Brackins might be thinking about leaving Ames early for the NBA. "We will when the time is right. Right now Craig is just figuring out how to get better and help his team wins some games."

The Buffs (8-10, 0-4) are still looking for their first Big 12 victory of the season and feature their own

player on the rise in Dwight Thorne. The junior guard scored a career-high 30 points on 8-for-12 shooting during Saturday's 77-75 overtime loss to Kansas State.

"Dwight has been shooting the ball very well throughout the course of the year," Bzdelik said. "He has been consistent, he's been a very good leader, and I'm proud of him. We just have to be a little bit better as a basketball team." Despite the recent efforts of Thorne and Brackins, this is a matchup of the two lowest scoring teams in the conference.

CU has averaged 62.0 points in Big 12 play with only Iowa State (61.2) averaging fewer points.

"We need a win badly," Buffs senior Jermeyl Jackson-Wilson said. "Just cracking that win column in the Big 12 does wonders for you."

Kelley to return?

Bzdelik isn't ruling out the possibility of Ryan Kelley returning just yet.

Last Thursday it looked like the freshman guard's season was over after he dislocated his left kneecap in practice. But the CU medical staff doesn't believe there is any cartilage or ligament damage in the knee, and Kelley has already started riding a stationary bike after the knee responded well to treatment.

"Fortunately, it isn't as serious as we thought it might be," Bzdelik said. "And he's going to be fine."

An MRI will be performed on Kelley's knee on Wednesday to determine a timetable for his return.

"He's been doing rehab and seemed to be feeling better," Bzdelik said. "That's why we're holding out hope."

After playing sparingly during non-conference play, Kelley scored 19 points in CU's Big 12 opener at Missouri.



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CU men's preview: Iowa State

TODAY: Colorado hosts Iowa State at 8:30 p.m. at the Coors Events Center.

BROADCAST: Television: FSN with Marc Stout (play-by-play), Ceal Barry (color) and Alanna Rizzo (sideline); Radio: KKZN (760 AM) with Mark Johnson (play-by-play) and Charles Johnson (color)

STORYLINES: The Buffs (8-10, 0-4) are the only Big 12 team without a conference victory after Saturday's 77-75 overtime loss to Kansas State. ... Dwight Thorne scored a career-high 30 points to lead CU. ... The Cyclones (12-7, 1-3) are coming off an 82-67 home loss to Kansas. ISU forward Craig Brackins scored 42 points during the loss and was named the Big 12's player of the week.

KEY STAT: First one to 60? Iowa State is last in scoring in conference play averaging 61.2 points through four Big 12 games. Colorado ranks 11th averaging 62.0 points during its 0-4 start the conference play.

COACHES: Jeff Bzdelik is 20-30 in his second season at CU. Greg McDermott is 41-41 in his third season at Iowa State.

PROBABLE STARTERS:

Colorado -- G Nate Tomlinson, 6-2, freshman, 8.1 ppg, 2.5 rpg, G Cory Higgins, 6-5, sophomore, 17.5 ppg, 6.1 rpg, G Dwight Thorne, 6-2, junior, 12.9 ppg, 3.3 rpg, F Austin Dufault, 6-8, freshman, 9.1 ppg, 3.8 rpg, F/C Jermyl Jackson-Wilson, 6-6, senior, 5.7 ppg, 4.1 rpg.

Iowa State -- G Lucca Staiger, 6-5, sophomore, 8.9 ppg, 2.3 rpg, G Diante Garrett, 6-4, sophomore, 10.1 ppg, 4.0 rpg, G Bryan Peterson, 6-1, senior, 6.2 ppg, 4.4 rpg, F Craig Brackins, 6-10, sophomore, 19.3 ppg, 9.1 rpg, C Justin Hamilton, 6-11, freshman, 5.1 ppg, 3.4 rpg.

SERIES: Iowa State leads 74-66 but is just 16-45 all-time in Boulder.

UP NEXT: The Buffs play at Kansas on Saturday (2 p.m., ESPNU).



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