



Bzdelik's Buffs back to square one after ISU

Colorado looks to bounce back against Texas at home Saturday

By Ryan Thorburn
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AMES, Iowa -- It's time for the young Buffs to grow up.

That was Jeff Bzdelik's feeling after watching Colorado get outscored 37-9 in the first half of Wednesday night's 70-42 loss to Iowa State at Hilton Coliseum.

After losing the previous five games by single digits -- including 66-61 at defending national champion Kansas and 77-72 at No. 2 Oklahoma -- it appeared CU was ready for a breakthrough road victory.

But instead of getting out of the Big 12 cellar the Buffs set a Big 12 record for fewest points in a half.

Dwight Thorne, the only junior in the program, scored all nine of those points while his sophomore and freshmen teammates stood around watching the debacle unfold.

So what happened boys?

"They came out and they wanted to win the game. We just weren't ready to play," Thorne explained. "They made shots, we didn't. They rebounded, we didn't. They defended, we didn't."

And so the Buffs -- now 9-14 overall and a miserable 1-8 in conference -- are seemingly back at square one.

This team obviously still lacks enough experience and maturity to win much of anything in the Big 12. This is still an under-sized team that has trouble rebounding. This is still a team with a single-digit win total and apparently headed for the program's third consecutive 20-loss season.

It's hard to believe, but CU might have taken the now 11th-place Cyclones (13-11, 2-7) lightly after beating them on Jan. 27 and hanging tough at Allen Fieldhouse and the Lloyd Noble Center recently.

"I think it's immaturity," Bzdelik said of the surprising lack of desire and focus in Ames. "That's what we were: immature in our approach."

The Buffs still have opportunities to prove that they have made some real progress this season.

A vulnerable Texas team is on deck at the Coors Events Center with Missouri, Oklahoma State and Texas A&M also scheduled to visit Boulder down the stretch.

CU came out with a lack of passion during the lopsided home loss to Texas Christian back in early

December and responded with a four-game win streak.

"Playing teams close doesn't mean anything in this league, you've got to win games," Austin Dufault said. "We didn't win at Oklahoma, so I don't know why we felt like we had the entitlement to just show up and play. Iowa State just took advantage of that and took it to us."

The Buffs will obviously have to show some growth in order to beat the Longhorns at high noon on Saturday in front of a national television audience.



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colorado basketball

Unexpected victory against Texas would be big rebound

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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BOULDER — Not much was expected during the rebuilding of Colorado's men's basketball program this season.

- Compiling a winning record during nonconference play? Check. But just barely, at 8-6.
- Giving the freshmen substantial playing time? Check. Point guard Nate Tomlinson and forward Austin Dufault are starters, and center Trey Eckloff has played extensive minutes off the bench.
- Developing a go-to player? Check. Sophomore guard Cory Higgins ranks sixth among Big 12 scorers (17.2).
- Winning in conference? Check. Well, at least

once anyway: a 55-49 victory over Iowa State on Jan. 27 in Boulder.

- Getting a signature victory? Not yet.

Beating Texas on Saturday in Boulder (noon,

CU Basketball

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ESPN) could qualify as such.

"That would be huge, huge for everybody in this locker room," sophomore guard Levi Knutson said Thursday. "We know we can win. Proving it to ourselves and to everybody else would be a huge step for this program."

Especially after what happened Wednesday night in Ames, Iowa.

In one of the worst performances in school history, Colorado (9-14, 1-8 Big 12) got smoked 70-42 by an Iowa State team that the Buffs had defeated two weeks earlier and had lost six

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consecutive conference games.

But that wasn't the half of it. Colorado trailed 37-9 at halftime — the worst scoring effort for a CU team in a half of basketball since 1980, when the Buffs trailed Missouri 29-4 at the break.

"It was like a bad dream in the first half," recalled Colorado junior guard Dwight Thorne, who scored all of his team's points in the first half — a rarity CU would like to forget.

Colorado players admitted afterward that they might have taken Iowa State lightly, which Buffs coach Jeff Bzdelik called ridiculous considering his team's record. And the Cyclones surprised CU by extending their defensive pressure. Thorne's teammates combined for the collar in the first half: 0-for-15 from the field.

So much for Colorado having shown improvement in recent games. The Buffs did not look like the same team that, on the road, took Kansas and Oklahoma to the final minute.

"I think we know we can play well," Thorne said, "so to play that bad against a team we had already beaten, it's disappointing. But I think we're going to bounce back."

Texas fans might wonder which Longhorns team will show up. After having been in the top 10 of preseason polls, Texas (16-7, 5-4) fell out of the rankings this week after the program's first three-game losing streak since the 2004-05 season. Whether Texas can build on its 99-74 home win Tuesday over Oklahoma State remains

to be seen.

But encouraging signs for the Longhorns included 6-foot-10 senior Connor Atchley regaining his shooting eye (2-for-4 on 3-pointers) and the play of sophomore point guard Dogus Balbay (10 points, seven assists) in his first college start. Balbay is from Istanbul.

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