



# Colorado men seek redemption after Iowa State debacle

## Intensity up as CU prepared for today's game against Texas

By Ryan Thorburn

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BOULDER, Colo. — Austin Dufault was featured on SportsCenter all week on the wrong end of a windmill dunk by likely national player of the year and No. 1 NBA draft pick Blake Griffin.

Seemingly everyone in his home state saw the clip.

"A lot of people in North Dakota have been adding me on Facebook," Dufault, a freshman from Killdeer, N.D., said with a laugh before practice on Friday. "People are just asking me what it was like to try and guard him and play against him.

"I have to remind them that it was a lot closer game than what it looked like on ESPN."

No. 2 Oklahoma was able to escape with a 77-72 victory over Colorado a week ago in Norman. Three OU dunks were all that made the national highlight reel.

The Buffs -- coming off a humbling 70-42 loss at Iowa State they hope no one was watching -- get a chance to redeem themselves today against Texas at the Coors Events Center.

The game will tip off at 12:05 p.m. and televised nationally on ESPN.

"We took a step backwards, just from a competitive spirit standpoint," CU head coach Jeff Bzdelik said of his team's lackluster performance in Ames. "We need a win. To me a breakthrough moment is getting a win, because that's what we're in this business for, that's why people come to the games."

The Buffs (9-14, 1-8) find themselves alone in the Big 12 basement after the debacle at Iowa State. Dwight Thorne was the only player on his team to score as CU trailed 37-9 at halftime.

Players said whatever intensity they were missing against the Cyclones returned during the two practices leading up to today's game.

"We weren't making any shots on offense, they were making everything against our defense, and you look up and Dwight has all our points for the first half," Jermey Jackson-Wilson said when asked to relive CU setting a Big 12 record for fewest points in a half. "It was kind of shocking, but you can't dwell on that. ... In practice you just try to get that out of your system. You learn from it and obviously you don't want to do that again."

Texas has fallen out of the rankings for the first time in two years after a recent three-game losing streak. A stumble today against the Buffs — who had an RPI of 216 as of Friday evening — could make Rick Barnes very uncomfortable on selection Sunday for the NCAA Tournament.

The Longhorns are 16-7 overall and 5-4 in the Big 12.

“I think we’ll see a very desperate team. If you look on ESPN and they talk about the teams on the bubble ... that’s what our team needs to understand is we’re going to be playing people who are all on the bubble,” Bzdelik said. “And you’ve got to understand that they’re going to be bringing it. You better bring it too, otherwise we’ll have a first half like we did the other day.”

The Buffs have played their best basketball this season against the Big 12’s best teams. That’s a puzzling trend for the head coach considering the lack of wins his young players have produced this season.

“Maybe we played well at Kansas and Oklahoma because we were so desperate and so together and in fear of being embarrassed that we actually found ourselves in a competitive situation,” Bzdelik said. “We should be like that all the time. ... Pat Riley used to hate the term ‘step up,’ and I do too.

“Why do you have to step up? Why can’t you always be stepped up? You should always be like that.”

With five consecutive losses by single digits Bzdelik felt like the Buffs were making steady progress and ready go through a winning door before “having it slammed back in our face” at Iowa State.

A victory over Texas would certainly open some eyes around the country today. And maybe even get the Buffs featured on the right end of a SportsCenter highlight.

“Winning against anyone would do a lot for us,” Jackson-Wilson said. “We’ve been playing with a lot of people and now we need to play better than a lot of people.”



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## CU men's preview: Feb. 14, vs. Texas

**TODAY --** Colorado hosts Texas at noon at the Coors Events Center.

**BROADCAST --** Television: ESPN with Ron Franklin (play-by-play) and Fran Fraschilla (analyst); Radio: KKZN AM 760 with Mark Johnson (play-by-play) and Charles Johnson (color)

**STORYLINES --** The Buffs (9-14, 1-8) are coming off a 70-42 loss at Iowa State on Wednesday night. The Buffs trailed 37-9 at halftime to set a Big 12 record for fewest points in a half. ... The Longhorns (16-7, 5-4) snapped a three-game losing skid and offensive slump with a 99-74 victory over Oklahoma State on Tuesday.

**KEY STAT --** Texas set team season highs in scoring (99 points), field goal percentage (.569) and assists (19) during its win over Oklahoma State while CU set team season lows in scoring (42), field goal percentage (.310) and assists (3) during its loss at Iowa State.

**COACHES --** Jeff Bzdelik is 21-34 in his second season at CU. Rick Barnes is 263-100 in his 11th season at Texas.

### PROBABLE STARTERS:

**Colorado --** G Nate Tomlinson, 6-2, freshman, 7.9 ppg, 2.6 rpg, G Cory Higgins, 6-5, sophomore, 17.2 ppg, 5.7 rpg, G Dwight Thorne, 6-2, junior, 13.3 ppg, 3.2 rpg, F Austin Dufault, 6-8, freshman, 9.0 ppg, 4.0 rpg, F/C Jermyl Jackson-Wilson, 6-6, senior, 5.3 ppg, 3.9 rpg.

**Texas --** F Gary Johnson, 6-6, sophomore, 11.3 ppg, 6.2 rpg, G A.J. Abrams, 5-11, senior, 16.7 ppg, 2.3 rpg, G Dogus Balbay, 6-0, sophomore, 2.2 ppg, 1.7 rpg, G Damion Jones, 6-7, junior, 15.3 ppg, 8.7 rpg, G Justin Mason, 6-2, junior, 6.9 ppg, 4.1 rpg.

**SERIES --** Texas leads 11-8 with a 3-5 all-time record in Boulder.

**UP NEXT --** The Buffs will travel to Lincoln on Wednesday for a rematch with Nebraska (7 p.m., ESPNU).



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