

Hot-shooting Huskers beat Buffs, 84-74

By Troy and Tracy Renck
Special to the Daily Nebraskan

BOULDER, Colo. — On Saturday afternoon, the Nebraska men's basketball team received its first test in Big Eight conference play.

It's safe to say, if it were a final exam, the Cornhuskers would have set the curve.

After a slow start, the Cornhuskers beat Colorado 84-74 in front of a crowd of 6,706 people at the Coors Events Center. Nebraska improved its record to 12-1, 1-0 in the Big Eight. Colorado fell to 8-5 and 0-1.

"I think we have to play .500 in the Big Eight to get in the NCAAs," Nebraska coach Danny Nee said. "Now, we only have six more to go."

Nee was even happier with the fact that the win came away from Lincoln.

"The key thing is a road win," Nee said. "We couldn't win here last year. I think Colorado will beat a lot of

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Nebraska Coach Danny Nee

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teams on this court."

Colorado coach Joe Harrington said he was impressed with Nebraska, which is riding an eight-game winning streak.

"It was a good game," Harrington said. "I just think Nebraska's a year or two ahead of us. Obviously, they did things better in the second half and made their shots."

Nebraska outscored Colorado by 14 points in the second half to overcome a four-point halftime deficit. The Huskers used a strong showing from three-point range to pull off the win. Nebraska hit eight of 15 three-pointers for the game, four in each half.

The Huskers' proficiency from that range was no surprise, according to Colorado guard Donnie Boyce.

"We had seen them on tape, and I think they were averaging six three-pointers a game," he said. "We knew about that going in, but we just didn't get up in their face."

Boyce, a freshman and the Buffaloes' leading scorer, led Colorado with 15 points. Poncho Hodges added 13.

Sophomore Eric Piatkowski and senior Carl Hayes each hit three three-pointers as the two led Nebraska in scoring with 20 and 15 points, respectively. Piatkowski also pulled down a game-high 13 rebounds.

"I just think we settled down a little bit," Piatkowski said. "We were taking our time and not forcing any shots up."

Colorado guard Billy Law disagreed.

"They hit a lot of open shots," he said. "But Piatkowski hit three shots with two or three guys in his face. There ain't nothing you can do about that."

At times, Nebraska's offense seemed unstoppable, but it was Colorado's inability to score down the stretch that ultimately left the Buffaloes dead in their tracks. Colorado had entered the game last in the Big Eight in shooting percentage.

Saturday's performance certainly didn't help.

Colorado shot 43 percent from the floor, including only six of 24 from three-point range.

At the outset, however, it was a different story.

Colorado came out with a full-court press and forced numerous Husker turnovers on its way to a 26-17 lead with 8:42 left in the first half. The Buffaloes forced 13 Nebraska first-half turnovers.

Nebraska managed to take better control of the ball and, with a three-pointer by Chris Cresswell at the buzzer, Nebraska trailed 46-42 at halftime.

The deficit could have been worse, Nee said.

"We felt lucky to be down by four," he said. "We could've been down a lot more — by even 10 or 12 points."

After escaping Colorado's first wave of pressure, the Huskers regained their composure and handled the Buffalo press the second half.

Husker guard Jamar Johnson continually broke the Colorado press, leading to easy scoring opportunities for Nebraska. And it was Johnson who gave the Huskers their first lead of the game at 51-49 with a three-



Michelle Paulman/DN

Nebraska's Eric Piatkowski drives past an Eastern Illinois player in action earlier this season. Piatkowski led Nebraska with 20 points and 13 rebounds in Saturday's 84-74 win over Colorado in Boulder in the Big Eight opener for both teams. Nebraska's next game is Saturday against Missouri at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

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Time for yet another post-bowl reality check

It's been cold outside lately, which is normal in Nebraska this time of year.

After the Cornhusker football team's annual loss in whatever bowl it's lucky enough to play in, the air gets a lot colder for many of the die-hard Husker fans.

Since construction began on the Cook Indoor Practice Facility — a.k.a. Uncle Tom's Cabin — five years ago, the Huskers are 0-5 in postseason bowl games. So much for giving Nebraska's players a nice warm place to prepare for their bowl games so those big bad Southern teams don't beat them.

But that's not important. Neither is the fact that Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne will receive a hefty raise to his six-figure salary this spring.

It's also not important that Nebraska's run-and-boot offense has become so predictable that teams like Miami have no trouble shutting it down, even when the Hurricanes play one of their worst games of the season.

There are only two things that are really important. One is that Husker fans come up with excuses and defenses for the inevitable loss that awaits. People already have jumped on

the bandwagon to congratulate the Husker defense on a fine game, holding the Hurricane offense to just three yards under its season average.

Hmmm. Unfortunately, these people watched the Orange Bowl game through scarlet-and-cream glasses. They chose to forget a few things.



Chuck Green

The only thing that stopped Miami's offense in the Orange Bowl was the Hurricanes' mistakes.

Consider:
— Miami had a 70-yard touchdown run called back for holding.
— Horace Copeland, one of Miami's receivers, caught a pass over the middle and rambled to the 2-yard line before being shoved out of bounds. The play was called back because Copeland was called for illegal use of hands.

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From the desk of
a dedicated NU Fan

Dear Sports Editor,

I love Nebraska.
I hate Miami.
Tom Osborne is
the Greatest Coach
in the world.

Sincerely,
A Dedicated
NU Fan

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Scott Maurer/DN