

## Billups backs McClain for CU basketball coach

**Also, Mike Bohn contacts UNC's Tad Boyle**

**By Ryan Thorburn**, Camera Sports Writer  
Boulder Daily Camera

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DENVER -- The next Colorado coach will have a lot less to worry about than Jeff Bzdelik did when he began rebuilding the men's basketball program three years ago.

Inside the Coors Events Center there is a new locker room, a new weight room, a new floor and new coaches offices. Outside the upgraded facility, some dirt and trees have already been moved as CU prepares to construct a new \$10 to \$12 million practice facility.

Back inside, talented players like Cory Higgins, Alec Burks and Shannon Sharpe are conducting individual workouts with the assistants Bzdelik left behind during his whirlwind exit to Wake Forest this week.

Thanks to the work Bzdelik did behind the scenes while suffering through three difficult seasons on the scoreboard, coupled with the unprecedented commitment CU has made to hoops, athletic director Mike Bohn's phone is ringing off the hook with interest from coast to coast.

However, the three leading candidates appear to be the ones with strong local ties:

CU associate head coach Steve McClain

The former Wyoming head coach is the candidate the returning players clearly want to keep the momentum from last season going.

Chauncey Billups, who in many ways remains the face of Colorado basketball, is also in McClain's corner at this point in the search process.

"First of all, I think Bzdelik did a great job of getting that program off to a good start to where it needs to be at, getting some good players in there like Cory and Alec," Billups said after the Denver Nuggets' practice on Thursday at the Pepsi Center. "My only concern would be that if they don't stay in-house with McClain and those guys leave, now you're back at ground zero again. It's kind of tough. ...

"I think (hiring McClain) is probably the best thing at this juncture."

McClain turned down a chance to join Bzdelik as an assistant at Wake Forest to pursue becoming the next CU head coach. He has been working with players during individual workouts this week and will be hosting some key recruits over the weekend.

Northern Colorado head coach Tad Boyle

Bohn has asked UNC athletic director Jay Hinrichs for permission to speak with the former Kansas player.

Charlotte Bobcats head coach Larry Brown and Texas A&M head coach Mark Turgeon, Boyle's coach and teammate at KU, respectively, have recommended to CU officials that they hire the Greeley native.

"It has been two short years since we won four games," Hinrichs said during an interview with the Camera on Thursday. Boyle guided the Bears to a school-record 25 wins last season. "I attribute a lot of that turnaround to Tad and his assistants and the student-athletes. ...

"We've been very pleased with what Tad has established here. He has done an excellent job."

Hinrichs, who was a graduate assistant at KU when Boyle was playing for the Jayhawks, said the coach's contract with UNC does have a buyout clause. CU is owed \$500,000 since Bzdelik left with two years remaining on his original five-year pact.

Oregon associate head coach Mike Dunlap

A source has told the Camera that the former Metro State and Nuggets assistant is also an official candidate at CU. Dunlap was a finalist to replace Ricardo Patton three years ago until it became clear that Bohn was focusing on hiring Bzdelik away from Air Force.

Dunlap is the candidate George Karl lobbied for when the Nuggets head coach reached out to Bohn this week.

According to the Eugene Register-Guard, Dunlap is due \$400,000 from Oregon for next season, under the terms of his contract signed last year, but he can't be required to work for the Ducks. That financial amount is also not affected by whether Dunlap gains employment at another school.

Dunlap, who has not returned telephone messages left by the Camera, interviewed at Oregon for the head coach position. The Pac-10 school fired Ernie Kent nearly a month ago.

"When was the last time we had somebody steal our coach? That's a testament to Jeff and our program and the Big 12," Bohn said during a meeting with the local media on Wednesday at the Dal Ward Center. "What is the perfect fit? You never know until it goes. ...

"You'd like someone who has familiarity with Colorado, familiarity with the challenges and what it takes to go here, someone that's excited about the commitment that has been made to basketball here."

Nuggets assistant coach Jamahl Mosley, who played at CU under Patton, said he would also like to be considered for the job.

"Absolutely," Mosley said. "That's kind of an honor to coach at the place that you played. It's a beautiful thing."

Mosley said his immediate focus is on helping the Nuggets win an NBA championship and that he would not be calling the administrators in Boulder to throw his hat in the ring. However, Mosley would certainly answer if Bohn or associate athletic director Tom McGrath, the search committee chairman, called him.

"They've done so much better. When (Bzdelik) was up there they backed him, there was more involvement, and they were giving him the weight room, the locker room, and the little things he was asking for constantly to make improvements in the right direction," Mosley said. "I think Bohn and McGrath have done a great job to make sure it goes in the right direction, which is to be a phenomenal job."

Mosley's best chance to returning to CU would probably as an assistant under Dunlap.

Jay Humphries, a former CU and NBA star, said he planned to contact his alma mater to let them know he was interested in becoming the Buffs' next head coach.

"I'm sure this is going to work out for all parties and that they will find a good coach to take over," Humphries, a former Phoenix Suns assistant who is now the head coach of the D-League's Reno franchise, told the Camera on Wednesday. "A lot of high caliber student-athletes are going to want to have an avenue of opportunity to further their basketball career. I most definitely can help them with that."

Bzdelik told the Camera on a number of occasions over the last three years that if he did not take the Buffs to the NCAA Tournament in his fourth season that he should be fired.

The current assistants, players and many supporters believe CU can still experience some March Madness next season and finish what Bzdelik started.

"You really can't have that much tradition when you haven't been winning. At some point we're going to have to start it up," said Billups, who led the Buffs to their last NCAA Tournament victory in 1997. "I thought when I left it was in a good position, and they just weren't really able to capitalize on it."

"I think right now it's on its way to getting in good position. The time is now and you've got to move. You never know when you're going to get the chance again."

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cu basketball

## CU Buffs get UNC's OK to interview Boyle for basketball job

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

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After turning around Northern Colorado, coach Tad Boyle is a candidate for the CU post. ( John Leyba, The Denver Post )

Northern Colorado's Tad Boyle officially is a candidate for the position of Colorado men's basketball coach. UNC athletic director Jay Hinrichs said Thursday he has granted Colorado

athletic director Mike Bohn permission to interview Boyle.

"Mike let me know that he was going to have contact with Coach Boyle," Hinrichs said. "Mike wanted me to know as a professional courtesy that Tad was going to be on their list."

Boyle, 48, recently earned district coach-of-the-year honors from the National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) after guiding the Bears to a 25-8 record this season. That's a school record for victories and came just three years after Boyle went 4-24 in 2006-07 to begin the rebuilding process.

"Tad

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Boyle has done a great job with this program," Hinrichs said. "He has hired great, great coaches. He has developed a wonderful support staff. And he has recruited some great players. Anytime a Big 12 job opens up, I'd be silly to get in the way of a coach at least taking a look at that.

"Everybody can grade recruiting and wins," Hinrichs added, "but what I think Coach does better than many, many people in our profession is, he has the ability to see the whole picture and bring everybody into the right place to make whatever task at hand work. He's just a great communicator and a terrific motivator. . . . There's a lot of energy, a lot of enthusiasm."

A Greeley native and a high school All-American at Greeley Central, Boyle played for Larry Brown at Kansas. Bohn played football and baseball at KU, and he and Boyle overlapped for a couple of years in Lawrence. Hinrichs also is a Kansas graduate.

"Kansas has a tree of coaches," Hinrichs said. "You learn from the best. You don't have to make it up as you go along. The modeling keeps going forward."

## Chauncey speaks out.

Following the Nuggets practice Thursday, CU legend Chauncey Billups said the progress made by Jeff Bzdelik in three years could be jeopardized if associate coach Steve McClain is passed over for the job. McClain, 48, went 157-115 in nine seasons at Wyoming from 1998-

2007.

"My only concern would be that if (Colorado administrators) don't stay in-house with McClain, and those (current CU players) leave, then you're starting at ground zero again," Billups said. "It's kind of tough."

Bzdelik accepted the job at Wake Forest this week.

## Footnotes.

Reached by phone on Thursday, Bzdelik said he has not made a recommendation to Bohn for the opening. "I don't think he'll even take my call," Bzdelik said. "If people are angry with me, that's a good thing. If people are happy I'm gone, that's not a good thing." . . . Former Colorado forward Jamahl Mosley, the Nuggets' assistant coach for player development, said he would love to become a candidate for the CU job. "That's an honor, to coach at a place that you've played," he said. "That's a beautiful thing."

Mosley, 31, would be a longshot.

*Staff writer John Henderson contributed to this report.*

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APRIL 15, 2010, 12:24 PM

## Bzdelik leaves CU assistants behind

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

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Beyond the fact that men's basketball coach Jeff Bzdelik left Colorado for Wake Forest, I was more surprised that it appears none of his CU staff will be joining him in Winston-Salem.

Apparently, only Colorado associate coach Steve McClain was afforded that option. McClain told me Wednesday afternoon that he declined that offer in order to remain in Boulder to pursue the CU head-coaching job.

McClain said he won't be moving to North Carolina even if he fails to get the CU job.

The stunning part about all this is that Bzdelik almost brought his entire Air Force staff when he took the CU job three years ago. That includes assistant coach Derrick Clark, director of operations Jody Bailey and, a year later, trainer Larry Willock.

Bzdelik also was ready to bring Jeff Reynolds to Boulder before Air Force decided to promote Reynolds to head coach as Bzdelik's replacement at the academy.

Bzdelik retained two Wake Forest assistants and the program's director of operations. He has one open assistant job, but two CU staffers told me that they already have been informed that they will not be candidates to fill it.

You have to feel for assistants left looking for a job following a coaching change. Heck, Tom Abatemarco just got to Boulder last month.

I'm sure several are crossing their fingers that McClain will be promoted to head coach.

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APRIL 15, 2010, 9:04 AM

## Morale remains high among CU hoopsters

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

After spending a couple of hours Wednesday roaming around the Coors Events Center and observing the CU men's basketball team in the aftermath of Jeff Bzdelik's departure, it reinforced my belief that college-age athletes are more resilient than a memory foam mattress.

I spotted no player hanging his head. In fact, a scheduled weight-lifting session produced so many jokes and laughs, you would have thought CU players were preparing for a Final Four.

"That's how it is, that's how the world is," Aussie sophomore center Shane Harris-Tunks said regarding Bzdelik leaving for Wake Forest after three years in Boulder. "Coach is going, but we're all still here. We're the ones on the court that have to get it done.

"(Bzdelik) coached us for a year; we got a lot out of him," Harris-Tunks added. "Now we can look at it as an opportunity to have a new head coach and learn different things as well. We're still on track for a good year next year."

Redshirt-freshman point guard Shannon Sharpe finds himself in the unusual situation of having signed a letter of intent with a coach and then not being able to play for him. Sharpe was projected as a starter last season but suffered a season-ending knee injury during preseason drills.

That's the way it goes, Sharpe said.

"I don't feel betrayed at all (by Bzdelik's departure)," said Sharpe, who is not related to the former Broncos tight end. "I'd probably make the same decision he did. He's got to do what's right for him and his family. Apparently that's what he thought the situation was, and he went ahead and did that.

"The team will continue on, as long as we stay together. That's the important thing, to get everybody to stay together. If we stay together we can have a good season next year."

"Morale is great," Sharpe added. "We're not worried about anything. We feel the athletic department will bring in a good coach that will get us to where we want to be and do what we've got to do to get wins."

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### All Things Colorado Sports Recommends

# University of Colorado shows interest in University of Northern Colorado's Tad Boyle

[MATT SCHUMAN](#),

University of Northern Colorado athletic director Jay Hinrichs confirmed Wednesday that University of Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn has requested and received permission to speak with UNC men's basketball coach Tad Boyle regarding the coaching vacancy in Boulder.

The position opened Wednesday when Jeff Bzdelik left CU to take the head coaching position at Wake Forest.

"We would always refer to Big 12 jobs," Hinrichs said. "It is a great opportunity for any coach, so we certainly wouldn't get in the way of coach (Boyle) going to explore that opportunity."

UNC is doing what it can to keep Boyle happy right here in Greeley. Hinrichs said UNC has also been in discussions with Boyle since the end of the Big Sky Tournament about a contract extension for what he termed would be "a long time."

However, it is unrealistic to think UNC could match an offer that CU would put up financially. Bzdelik was making a guaranteed annual salary of \$655,000, plus performance incentives. UNC signed Boyle to a contract extension worth \$110,00 in annual base salary through 2012 back in June 2008. Any multiyear contract extension for Boyle would have to be approved by the UNC Board of Trustees.

Boyle has made it a policy not to comment publicly on any job offers while he is still working for any university for which he is still employed. However, it seems unlikely that Boyle would pass up listening to an offer from the Buffs.

For one, Boyle seems to be a good fit for the Buffs. He is familiar with the Big 12 having played at the University of Kansas. He knows what it takes to recruit players to Colorado despite any limitations the program may have financially and facility-wise. He has proven at UNC he can turn around a struggling program.

He also has connections to Boulder, having worked there for nine years as a stockbroker before getting back into basketball.

Still, if interested, Boyle will face some stiff competition for the job. Several CU players have reportedly come out publicly in support of hiring of current CU associate head coach Steve McClain. So has former Buffs standout Chauncey Billups.

Earlier this week, the Associated Press reported Larry Brown has contacted Bohn regarding the vacancy. Brown coached Boyle at Kansas, and the two remain friends.

Other names that have surfaced as possible candidates include former Nuggets assistant and Arizona assistant Mike Dunlap, Nuggets assistant Jamahl Mosley, a former CU hoops standout, and former CU player Jay Humphries.

Hinrichs is prepared if Boyle were to depart. He has a target list of candidates including current coaches within the program ready to go should Boyle get the CU job.

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