

CU among just two BCS conference jobs open

Missouri also searching for new women's basketball coach

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The down economy has no doubt made athletic departments' fundraising jobs more difficult the last couple of years.

A tight job market, however, might be one of the bigger things working in the University of Colorado's favor as the school searches for a new women's basketball coach.

The number of head coaching slots open at the 300-plus Division-I institutions has dropped dramatically the past two seasons, especially among the major conferences.

Nearly 100 Division-I jobs turned over in 2007 and 2008 combined. The last two years that number has been closer to 40. Among the 73 schools in the six BCS football conferences, only four women's hoops jobs have come open this spring — CU, Missouri, Clemson and Seton Hall.

Clemson and Seton Hall have already filled their posts, leaving Big 12 Conference rivals CU and Mizzou as the only options for coaches at mid-majors or small schools looking to move up to the big leagues.

You can bet slots on former CU coach Ceal Barry's calendar have been at a premium this weekend.

The Colorado associate athletic director — who is heading CU's coaching search — said earlier in the week that she planned to head to San Antonio for the women's Final Four and Women's Basketball Coaches Association National Convention.

Both events are key each year in the coaching shuffle as coaches from all levels and all regions of the country convene for five days.

CU officials have been coy about what they're looking for in their seventh women's hoops coach, who will replace the fired Kathy McConnell-Miller.

The criteria athletic director Mike Bohn laid out last week centered more on personal attributes than resume flash, opening the door for a broad pool of candidates.

Barry, however, has indicated that head-coaching experience is important. That in itself might weed out most head coaches from major conferences. Given where the salaries of CU's head coaches rank among their Big 12 peers, it is unlikely the school will try to be a leader in the arms race that had the average Big 12 women's basketball salary at well over \$600,000 this season.

Diversity could be another factor for CU, given the fact that six of the school's nine current head coaches are white men.

Still, the pool of qualified candidates remains broad, and CU has proven with its other recent hires that one thing that isn't imperative is previous ties to the school. McConnell-Miller, football coach Dan Hawkins, men's hoops coach Jeff Bzdelik, volleyball coach Liz Kritza, men's golf coach Roy Edwards have all been Bohn hires. None had ties to CU.

So where do the Buffs look?

It stands to reason that a few assistants from major programs might still grab the search committee's attention. But as for head coaches, there are three categories that figure to offer up a host of prospects: mid-major standouts, small-school elites and the Ceal Barry coaching tree.

Below is a smattering of such prospects:

JENNIFER RIZZOTTI, Hartford: Mentioned in internet buzz as a possible successor to UConn legend Geno Auriemma someday, Rizzotti is perhaps most intriguing -- if she could be lured away from the East Coast. Rizzotti, who starred at UConn in the mid-1990s, was recently named coach of the 18-under U.S. national team. The former WNBA player's Hartford Hawks, meanwhile, have dominated in the America East conference, winning four regular season titles and making five NCAA Tournament trips in the last nine years. Rizzotti could not be reached by the Camera.

ROBIN PINGETON, Illinois State: Another young star, Pingeton's name has also been mentioned in relation to the Missouri opening. After three seasons as associate head coach under Bill Fennelly at Iowa State, she has rebuilt the Redbirds program and won 20 or more games four seasons in a row. Her teams have made two NCAA tourney appearances in seven seasons and just completed a run to the WNIT semifinals. Pingeton said via telephone that she has lots of respect for the Big 12 and called CU "a great university," but so far has not been contacted about the Buffs' job.

BETH BURNS, San Diego State: Burns, who has twice turned around a struggling Aztec program, told the San Diego Union-Tribune this week via text message that she is "100% Aztec." Still, she's worth mentioning because Bohn hired her in one of his last acts at SDSU and because she was a Barry assistant in the 1980s.

LINDA LAPPE, Metro State: Like DU assistant Shelley Sheetz and Utah State coach Raegan Pebley, Lappe is a former Barry player who followed her mentor into the profession. After stints as an assistant at Drake and Colorado State, Lappe has guided the Division-II Roadrunners to a 50-36 mark in her three seasons at the helm. "CU is a great place and I love Boulder," the 2002 CU grad said. "But at the same time we're trying to focus on keeping Metro State very successful and I'm putting all of my time and effort into that."

MARK KELLOGG, Fort Lewis: His name might not catch a lot of CU fans' eyes, but he's a proven winner and he's

familiar with the Colorado recruiting landscape. In his fifth season as a head coach, the Skyhawks finished as the Division-II runners-up. Kellogg said he hadn't been contacted by CU. "If I were," he said, "I would entertain a phone call."

KEVIN McGUFF, Xavier: The 36-year-old's squads have won 20 or more games in seven of his eight seasons and broke through with an NCAA tourney Elite Eight run this year.

JEFF MITTIE, Texas Christian: Prominently mentioned as a candidate for the Missouri job, the 43-year-old has had the Horned Frogs in the NCAA Tournament in 10 of his 11 seasons.

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CU Buffs' Houston in holding pattern

Senior with eligibility left waiting to see who next CU coach will be

By Joshua Lindenstein Camera Sports Writer
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Whitney Houston would like to keep playing basketball.

Whether she does at Colorado or not will likely come down to a conversation between her and whoever is hired as the Buffaloes' next women's basketball coach.

Houston said in a phone interview Friday that she's waiting to make any concrete decisions about her future until fired coach Kathy McConnell-Miller's replacement is on board at CU.

Houston, a 5-foot-5 fourth-year guard from Memphis, took a leave of absence 13 games into the season for what coaches announced at the time were personal reasons.

"I'm just going to see how he or she is as far as coaching styles and stuff, see what they have in mind," Houston said of the new coach.

Houston is on track to graduate next month with a bachelor's degree in women's studies. But she has one year of playing eligibility left after redshirting the 2008-09 season with a knee injury, and the aspiring high school teacher and coach intends to pursue her teaching certificate after graduation.

Houston declined to elaborate Friday on the reasons for her leave, saying simply that she needed to step away.

"I'd just like to keep it as a leave of absence because I just had to keep myself together and now I'm trying to graduate," she said. "That's what I really need to focus on."

The 2009-2010 season began with optimism throughout the program that Houston would give the team a boost after she was injured during preseason workouts the year before.

She started the opener against UC-Irvine and scored 11 points. After missing the next game with an injury, she scored 10 points in 26 minutes against Minnesota off the bench.

But she struggled after that and saw her minutes drop as freshman Chucky Jeffery took her spot in the starting lineup. Houston started only once more and played just 107 minutes over the next 10 games, including three each in her final two outings.

"My outlook on the season was not what I thought it would be," Houston said.

Now she's just watching along with her teammates and other fans of the program to see who will take over.

If Houston is back, the team would have all of its scholarship slots filled for next season provided there is no other attrition in the wake of the coaching change.

"I'm going to wait until the new coach comes in and go from there," she said.

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