

Bzdelik says CU men Buffs need to get 'into team'

Coach stresses that playing time up for grabs daily

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It's Division I basketball!

Jeff Bzdelik didn't produce the type of sound bite that Dan Hawkins received so much attention for a few years ago, but the Colorado men's basketball coach did blow off a little steam during his post-game press conference on Tuesday night.

After the Buffs' 70-59 victory over Yale at the Coors Events Center, Bzdelik was asked a basic question about his starting lineup, which has changed recently with senior Dwight Thorne now coming off the bench and sophomore Nate Tomlinson running the point as a starter.

"Everybody needs to get out of themselves and into the team," Bzdelik said. "Including mommy and daddy and AAU coaches and high school coaches and everybody else involved with these kids. And you can read between the lines on that one."

Bzdelik -- like many of his peers, including friends who are head coaches at some of the nation's most high profile programs -- is clearly tired of receiving calls on his cell phone from parents and lower level coaches complaining that their son or ex-pupil isn't getting enough minutes at CU.

Cory Higgins (35 minutes), Tomlinson (30), Alec Burks (29), Marcus Relphorde (29) and Austin Dufault (29) played most of the game and made the majority of the necessary plays for the Buffs to pull out the victory against Yale.

Thorne was 0-for-4 from the field with five points in 19 minutes, Shane Harris-Tunks had one point in 18 minutes, and Keegan Hornbuckle did not score in 11 minutes.

No other CU players entered the game.

Bzdelik explained that he simply went with his most athletic lineup to crank up the pressure defensively and create some easy baskets against a well-prepared Ivy League opponent that was used to guarding the Buffs' Princeton-style offense.

That doesn't mean Levi Knutson, Casey Crawford, Trey Eckloff or the other players can't have an impact during Big 12 play. Or even this Saturday at Tulsa.

Bzdelik said in his mind the starting lineup and all minutes are up for grabs on a daily basis in practice. He thought he made that clear to his players after CU's 15-point loss at Colorado State on Dec. 10.

"I mix it up. It's about all of us," Bzdelik said. "The starting lineup could change all the time."

If Bzdelik were to leave CU for the NBA again some day he wouldn't have to waste time explaining to a mom why her grown son isn't the big man on campus like she wants him to be.

However, dealing with coddled athletes -- the Houston Rockets are currently paying Tracy McGrady \$23 million *not* to play this season because the organization is tired of listening to him moan about his minutes -- is something coaches must deal with in today's society.

Hawkins' legendary rant occurred after CU's football coach received an anonymous letter from a parent who was "bummed out this year that the boys only get two weeks off before the start of the summer conditioning program."

After a seemingly standard question by a local reporter during an offseason media scrum, Hawkins bellowed out the famous lines:

"It's Division I football! It's the Big 12! ... Go play intramurals brotha!"

That's not Bzdelik's style, but you get the feeling he can relate to Hawkins on this issue.

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