

Mike Bohn delivers message to CU Buffs

Athletic director calls on Bzdelik's team to be more vocal

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Boulder Daily Camera

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It's a little too quiet at the Coors Events Center for Mike Bohn.

And not just because Colorado is last in the Big 12 in home attendance.

At the request of coach Jeff Bzdelik, the athletic director stopped by the Buffs' practice on Monday to give the team a pep talk in the aftermath of Saturday's 84-59 loss at Tulsa.

Bohn's message to the Buffs was that he believed in them but would like to hear them get a more vocal with one another on the court.

"It was kind of a different perspective coming from him," sophomore forward Austin Dufault said. "We all get along on this team, there's definitely no problems with us. But what he said is right, we don't talk enough. We have a lot of quiet guys on our team. I think we need to step out of our little shell and start communicating better."

Cory Higgins, CU's leader by example, prefers to pull teammates off to the side to speak to them about what they should be doing differently or better.

"I think we have different types of leaders, maybe not that voice you're going to hear all the time," Higgins said. Veterans like Dufault and Dwight Thorne seem to be as polite in the locker room as they are when interviewed by the media or blending into classes on campus.

Alec Burks, Marcus Relphorde, Shane Harris-Tunks and Keegan Hornbuckle are naturally more focused on doing their part to contribute individually in their first year at CU than barking orders at other players.

Bohn's observation is something Bzdelik has been well aware of since assembling a cast of good characters who could benefit from a 40-minute mean streak on game nights.

"We have great young men. I mean great young men," Bzdelik said. "But you also need to be great teammates in the sense of having each other's back. ...

"We have a very quiet team and we need to change our personalities out on the court in a positive sense. I change my personality between the lines."

Bzdelik's raised voice was the only sound that could be heard outside the visiting locker room after the Tulsa game. The Buffs, who have a 21-game road losing streak against Division I competition, usually act timid outside of Boulder.

CU will have to play with an edge tonight to beat Miami (Ohio) at the Coors Events Center (7:07 p.m., FSN).

The RedHawks (3-9) from the Mid-American Conference have played a brutal nonconference schedule that has included trips to Kentucky, New Mexico, Cincinnati and Xavier. Miami (Ohio) lost 72-70 to the Wildcats in Lexington.

"I watched the Kentucky game and they lost by two, but there were a couple of questionable calls against them," Bzdelik said. "They're very competitive and they're very well coached and they have some senior leadership."

Eventually, CU will have senior leadership. But for the second consecutive season the program only has one senior (Thorne) in the graduating class.

Although the losses at Oregon State and Colorado State were disappointing, as was the performance at Tulsa, the young Buffs are having much better results on the scoreboard.

A victory tonight would match CU's win total from last season.

"There is progress, there's no question," Bzdelik said. "But the bottom line in this business is to win. Reasons can't be excuses."

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CU's Bohn gives gentle scolding to men's team

By Patrick Ridgell
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BOULDER — What the Colorado Buffaloes appear to have is a failure to communicate.

It's so obvious that athletic director Mike Bohn visited men's basketball practice Monday morning, the day before CU was to conclude non-conference play with tonight's home game against Miami (Ohio) (7 p.m., FSN), and expressed his observations. As he left the floor, Bohn didn't detail those observations to reporters, but he suggested they ask the Buffs about them.

It seemed the AD's comments ruffled no feathers.

"We have to communicate," sophomore forward Austin Dufault said. "It's something we've heard all year, but it's nice to hear it from an outside person, I guess.

"It was kind of a different perspective hearing it from him. It was something that he had really been noticing and something that was true."

Asked what needs to be communicated, Dufault said: "everything."

Off the court, messages are being missed. Dufault said two players were late for a recent team dinner, displaying the kind of tardiness that drives coaches nuts.

On the floor, Dufault said better communication will facilitate improved defensive positioning. Freshman center Shane Harris-Tunks sees the same.

"We have times at practice where it's dead quiet and times where we're talking, and when we're talking, and you know and hear the person behind you is there, you have more confidence to get up and get into your opponent defensively," Harris-Tunks said.

"It allows you to be more aggressive."

CU isn't zeroing in on communication as its main problem. Saturday's 25-point loss at Tulsa also included problems with rebounding, defense, offense, depth, confidence, everything. CU opens Big 12 play next Saturday at No. 2 Texas, and the league has shown the Buffs little mercy over the past three seasons.

Coach Jeff Bzdelik has sought more toughness from his players seemingly since the day CU hired him. The coach trumpets their character. He wants more than character. That was part of Bohn's message, too.

"We have great, great young men," Bzdelik said. "I mean great. But you also need to be great teammates in the sense

Tonight's game

Miami (Ohio) (3-9) at Colorado men (8-5)

When/Where: 7 p.m. tonight at the Coors Events Center in Boulder.

TV/Radio: FSN/KKZN 760.

The series: First meeting between the programs.

Leading scorers: Miami (Ohio) — Kenny Hayes (13.9 points per game); CU — Cory Higgins (19.0 points per game).

Notes: This is CU's final non-conference game. The Buffs are 7-0 at home. CU is averaging 83.1 points per home game. ... Coach Jeff Bzdelik said Monday that his team suffered no academic casualties from last semester, meaning that everyone remains eligible. ... Freshman Alec Burks is averaging 18 points and five rebounds a game over his past five. He's shooting 53.3 percent from the field and 87.5 percent on free throws during that time. ... Miami has lost five of its past six and is 0-6 on the road. The Redhawks haven't played in 12 days. ... CU leads the nation in free-throw percentage, at 78.9 percent.

— Patrick Ridgell

of having each other's backs, communicating in a positive way.

"We have a very quiet team. And we need to change our personalities on the court in a positive sense. And (Bohn) made that observation, and it's something we've addressing."

Asked if hearing this is hard, especially from someone who's not inside the locker room everyday, Dufault said it was something the players had to hear.

"You try to listen to everybody and take something good out of what everybody says, not take it as an insult," Dufault said.

"We all get along on this team ... but what (Bohn) said was right. We don't talk enough, and we have a lot of quiet guys on this team. We need to step up and get outside of our shells.

"I think a lot of guys on our team are self-motivated. But at the same time, it would help to have somebody like that (a vocal leader). I'm going to start looking toward myself to be the type of guy to keep everybody positive. I haven't been communicating as well as I can with everybody else on our team. I need to step up and be that type of guy."

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