

Bzdelik to look for missing pieces to CU puzzle

Buff coach hopes to add post player this spring

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 03/11/2010 04:30:36 PM MST

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- There is a big piece missing from Jeff Bzdelik's rebuilding puzzle.

With Cory Higgins, Alec Burks and Marcus Relphorde all returning next season, Colorado's offense and perimeter defense should be dynamic.

Entering his fourth season as CU's head coach, Bzdelik believes the point guard position will also be significantly upgraded when Shannon Sharpe is completely healthy.

"We have a very talented freshman (Sharpe) that's every bit as talented as anyone else on our team who is sitting out," Bzdelik said. "We feel real good about where we're headed in recruiting."

Sharpe sustained a knee injury in October and took a redshirt during 2009-10 campaign. He watched helplessly from the end of the bench as the Buffs' season ended with an 82-67 loss to Texas Tech in the opening round of the Big 12 tournament at the Sprint Center.

"He's a good defender and somebody who plays the game hard. He is also somebody that has a lot of confidence and that rubs off on everyone around you," Dwight Thorne, CU's only outgoing senior, said of Sharpe. "I wish the best for him and these guys. I'll be following them wherever I am."

Next season expect Sharpe to start at the point with the experienced Nate Tomlinson backing him up. The versatile Relphorde, who struggled with consistency after transferring from a junior college, said he will work hard on his game and wants to become a better rebounder.

Burks, the Big 12 freshman of the year, can improve his 3-point shot and add some more muscle to a slender frame this offseason. Higgins might be a preseason first-team, All-Big 12 pick entering his senior season, depending on how many veteran stars around the league leave early for the NBA.

Which brings us to that big hole in the middle of the lineup.

To have any chance at making the NCAA tournament before the window slams on this talented group, Bzdelik and his staff need to recruit a post player or two during the spring signing period who can rebound and block shots with the best of them.

During the Buffs' three-game winning streak to end the regular season they were out-rebounded 115-71, including a 52-8 deficit on the offensive glass.

Texas Tech won the battle of the boards 39-29 on Wednesday. Burks, a 6-foot-6 guard, had 10 of CU's boards.

"We need to go recruit right now and we need to continue to get stronger and develop these players," Bzdelik said.

Austin Dufault seemed to regress after a respectable freshman season. The 6-9 forward averaged just 5.7 points and 3.1 rebounds during the regular season.

Dufault didn't score and had one rebound in 15 minutes of action at the Big 12 tournament. Levi Knutson had four points and two rebounds in 15 minutes.

Casey Crawford, who started, didn't score or grab a rebound in 13 minutes. And the only time 6-11 freshman Shane Harris-Tunks or 6-10 sophomore Trey Eckloff took the court was for pre-game warm-ups.

"I know coach is going to get a big man in here who can bang and rebound," Thorne said. "They'll have all their scoring back and some depth. They'll have all the things we had this year, plus hopefully a guy who can come in and average 10 points, eight rebounds and be a presence on the block."

When asked about getting a contract extension done this offseason, Bzdelik responded this way:

"That's now for me to decide. Right now I just want to find a big man."

The spring signing period begins April 14.

Close Window

Send To Printer