

Woelk: New CU hoops coaches burn midnight oil at Coors

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The folks who pay the utilities at the Coors Events Center might be seeing a spike in the light bill this spring.

Colorado's two new basketball coaches, Linda Lappe and Tad Boyle, are going to work early and staying late. They're hiring coaches, finishing up recruiting classes for this year and getting a start on next year's classes. They're working on scheduling, learning everything they can from recent workouts with their current teams -- and wishing for more hours in the day.

Both were in their offices Wednesday afternoon. Boyle had a few minutes for an interview while a recruit was taking a campus tour; Lappe took a break from a stack of paperwork to answer a few questions.

Lappe was officially hired on April 12; Boyle on April 19. Since then, they've spent nearly every waking minute working on Colorado basketball.

It's not been a 9-to-5 task.

Want a taste of Division I hoops glamour? Boyle has been living out of a suitcase for the last two-plus weeks.

"When my wife left after the (April 19) press conference, I told her I'd see her in a month," Boyle said with a laugh.

It wasn't much of an exaggeration. Since the day his hiring was announced, he's been home to Greeley for one brief weekend visit. He's seen his kids once in that span; his wife twice.

"That's the nature of the business," Boyle said. "We knew what was ahead of us."

Boyle has already signed one recruit and added a transfer to CU's roster. He'll likely sign at least one more player and possibly two. His new staff, while not yet officially announced, is also immersed in the recruiting game.

"I haven't had a chance to take a breath -- but it's going great," Boyle said. "We had to speed the process up because of the timing of everything. We got a late start and we're playing catch-up, but we're making great progress."

"Right now, the key is to keep distractions to a minimum. Prioritizing your time is important so we don't waste a minute."

Boyle said he's been very well-received by prep coaches. He already had inroads in many places from his recruiting at Northern Colorado, but now he's trying to find Big 12-caliber talent.

And, yes, he believes there are still some quality big men out there.

"This year is a little different than some other years," Boyle said. "I've talked to other coaches, and they're saying the same thing. The quality of players still available this late in the year is better than usual -- but then, the competition for those players is a little tougher than usual."

The final date for the spring signing period is May 19.

"We'll keep on working," Boyle said. "We're seeing the light at the end of the tunnel in terms of some of the kids we're talking to."

Lappe hasn't announced any player signings yet, but expects to have one -- or possibly two -- in the near future. She's also putting the finishing touches on her coaching staff.

"It's been good," she said. "We're extremely busy and putting in lots of long hours.

"But one neat thing is working next door to a staff that's going through the same thing. I'll leave here late at night and Coach Boyle will be turning his lights off at the same time. What you see here -- from the men's staff to Coach Kritza (volleyball) to everyone -- is that kind of commitment. The people here work hard."

Lappe has also received a major helping hand in the administrative arena.

"I can call the search committee and say I have an assistant coaching candidate who can meet them at 4 o'clock, and they're ready to go," Lappe said. "They've been extremely helpful. When you have people like that on top of their game, you can be much more efficient at yours."

Both coaches can look out their office windows and see where the new practice facility will be built. Serious construction won't begin until after the Events Center has hosted area high school graduation ceremonies, but a construction trailer has already been moved on site and fencing is in place.

"The day they put that trailer in was a great day," Lappe said. "That's when you knew it was getting serious."

Both coaches said public reaction has been "great."

Since Lappe's hiring, CU has more than doubled its number of women's season tickets. Men's tickets are also selling well.

"We've got a lot of work to do," Boyle said. "But we're getting there. This thing is going to continue to move forward."

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