

CU Buffs' Dwight Thorne perseveres, thrives

After averaging 2.1 ppg freshman year, guard had 12 ppg last season

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Posted: 11/09/2009 11:55:12 PM MST

Dwight Thorne has made the most of his college experience.

He's going to leave Boulder with a degree, great memories and friends, and the same bright smile he arrived with as a wide-eyed freshman.

But what the only senior on the Colorado men's basketball team wants as much as anything is to experience a winning season before moving on with the rest of his life.

No player in the history of the program has experienced as many losses -- 62 -- during a three-year span as Thorne has over the past three seasons.

"We're all tired of losing," Thorne said. "We all know it's go-time with a capital G-O."

The Buffs, although still a very young team, are out of excuses. This is Jeff Bzdelik's third season at CU, and Thorne is the last man standing from Ricardo Patton's final recruiting class.

One by one, Thorne's classmates -- Kal Bay, Marc Van Burck, James Inge, Sean Kowal, Xavier Silas and Jeremy Williams -- left the program for various reasons.

There is a reason why Thorne, named one of Bzdelik's captains for the second consecutive season, not only survived but thrived during the difficult transition.

"I'm the last man standing because I've just persevered," Thorne said. "Obviously, coach saw me as a player he wanted to keep around, and I became a player he could rely on. I'm just here trying to contribute the best I can to help this team win games."

Thorne has only experienced the thrill of victory 28 times in three seasons at CU. This year's Buffs -- picked to finish last in the Big 12 by Bzdelik's peers -- will have to win at least 16 games against a difficult schedule to post a winning record in 2009-10.

"Team-wise, I want to get in postseason play. I was telling coach the other day that my time here has been fun, but it hasn't been very fulfilling," Thorne said. "I think that it being my senior year, and knowing how to play and having more confidence -- the sky's the limit for everybody."

Thorne, who averaged just 2.1 points as a freshman and struggled shooting for the first time in his life, led the Buffs with 45 3-pointers last season and was second on the team in scoring (12.0 ppg).

If players like Austin Dufault, Nate Tomlinson and Trey Eckloff can improve from their freshman to sophomore seasons the way Thorne and Cory Higgins blossomed in their second year under Bzdelik, then the Buffs could be a surprise team in the unforgiving Big 12.

"I have the utmost respect for Dwight Thorne," Bzdelik said. "He has totally bought into the new culture, so to speak. I told him initially that I probably had more confidence in him than he had for himself. He has grown into that and he's a confident player, a mature player who provides great leadership."

Thorne is going to be a winner in life when he leaves campus. Everybody who has had a chance to teach, coach, play or even just interview him after a game understands that. However, this nice guy is tired of finishing last.

"I want to make the tournament," Thorne said. "If we make the NIT, so be it. But the NCAA Tournament is the goal."

The Buffs can officially start dreaming big when the season opens against Arkansas-Pine Bluff on Friday night at the Coors Events Center.

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