

# Coaches believe Buffs will be in basement again

## CU picked last in Big 12 poll

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Bill Self, Rick Barnes, Jeff Capel and the rest of the Big 12 coaches aren't true believers in the Buffs.

Sure, when it's time for the Jayhawks, Longhorns or Sooners to play Colorado this season, they will talk about how tough it is to prepare for Jeff Bzdelik's system and what a great player Cory Higgins is becoming and how deep the conference is.

But actions speak louder than words, and the Big 12 coaches have cast their votes against the Buffs being much better in 2009-10 than they have been over the past three seasons.

CU was picked to finish last (12th) in the conference's preseason coaches poll released on Wednesday.

"I don't care what the other coaches in the Big 12 think. And a lot of the guys on the team feel the same," point guard Nate Tomlinson said. "We only care what coach Bzdelik and the rest of our coaches think."

Bzdelik thinks this could be a good season in Boulder. The Buffs have more experience, athleticism and depth than they had during his first two seasons.

Of course, the Big 12 might be better than ever.

Kansas was picked unanimously to finish first by the coaches and is the favorite to win the NCAA title in most preseason publications. The Jayhawks bring back all five starters, including senior Sherron Collins and junior Cole Aldrich, who were both All-Big 12 First Team selections last season.

Texas was selected second and re-

ceived Self's first-place vote (coaches are not allowed to vote for their own teams). The Longhorns return four starters and have been touted as a top-five team nationally by most college basketball experts.

Oklahoma, Kansas State and Texas A&M were next in the predictions at third, fourth and fifth. Two teams that won NCAA Tournament games last season, Oklahoma State and Missouri, are next at sixth and seventh.

Iowa State, which returns NBA lottery talent Craig Brackins, was eighth. The Cyclones were the only Big 12 team CU beat last season.

Texas Tech (ninth), Baylor (10th) and Nebraska (11th) all received over twice as many points in the poll as the Buffs did.

Bzdelik's team begins practice on Friday in preparation for the Nov. 13 opener against Arkansas-Pine Bluff.

"We have a lot of confidence," junior forward Casey Crawford said. "We say that every year, but we're a year older and we've been playing with each other for three years now and we have new guys that can come in and help us."

CU has finished last in the Big 12 and suffered at least 20 losses in each of the last three seasons.

Bzdelik, who is 21-42 overall and 4-28 in conference play since taking over for Ricardo Patton, believes his team can produce a winning season.

His peers didn't exactly give him a vote of confidence in the preseason.

"It's a little bit of motivation. I think that's mostly about last year and how bad we played," Tomlinson said. "We can't talk about it. We have to go out there and show it starting November 13."

**Team (first place votes) Points**

1. Kansas (11) 121
2. Texas (1) 111
3. Oklahoma 95
4. Kansas State 92
5. Texas A&M 74
6. Oklahoma State 69
7. Missouri 66
8. Iowa State 57
9. Texas Tech 34
10. Baylor 33
11. Nebraska 27
12. Colorado 13

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