

New CU Buff Relphorde turning heads

Transfer called most impressive of newcomers

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Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 10/27/2009 12:10:55 AM MDT

Who has impressed you the most during pick-up games, workouts and practices?

It's a question the Camera posed to the majority of the men's basketball roster throughout the offseason as the Buffs enter Jeff Bzdelik's third season on the bench.

Time and time again the answer is: Marcus Relphorde.

Bzdelik and the Buffs are obviously expecting the versatile 6-foot-7 junior college transfer to have an immediate and significant impact on the program.

"Marcus is going to create a whole lot of matchup problems for people," Cory Higgins predicts. "He can guard their four man, and I can guarantee you their four man can't guard him because he's basically a guard out there."

There are five newcomers on the team this season, but Relphorde is the only one who isn't trying to make the jump to the Big 12 straight out of high school.

Relphorde, 21, played oneseason at Saint Louis for Rick Majerus before he decided to leave that rebuilding situation.

Last season on an Indian Hills Community College team loaded with D-I prospects he averaged 10.6 points and 4.2 rebounds.

"He's the one I expect the most out of and he knows that," said Bzdelik, who also plans to play his four true freshmen. "Marcus is from a great basketball area just outside the city of Chicago, so he grew up understanding passion and competitiveness and the game."

Bzdelik, who also grew up in the Chicago area, believes Relphorde's presence won't allow teams to focus so much on Higgins, who led CU in scoring, rebounding, steals and minutes during an otherwise disappointing 9-22 campaign last year.

"I can definitely take pressure off Cory," Relphorde said. "He does pretty much everything himself, and I can do a little bit of everything. Now we'll both be doing a little bit of everything together. But it's not just me, all of our guys have gotten better and all of us can take pressure off Cory."

Higgins has been as frustrated by the lack of wins during Bzdelik's two seasons in Boulder as the head coach. However, CU's best player is pleased with the development of the players around him and excited about the new talent that has arrived to add some much-needed depth.

"I think there is enough talent to start winning now," Relphorde said. "I feel like there is that depth we need, and as soon as everyone starts clicking I think we can be a good team."

Bzdelik said Relphorde's skill set includes the ability to knock down 3-pointers, to drive down either side of the lane on the dribble, to score in the post and to grab rebounds and take the ball coast-to-coast.

"I'm definitely a guard, but with my size I can go down and rebound at the four or five," Relphorde said. "Right now, I'm a more versatile three or four and can also guard a five now and then."

When the starters for the 2009-10 season are introduced at the Coors Events Center on Nov. 13, expect Relphorde to be out there. Whether that's at guard, forward or even center ... well, the Buffs need his help just about everywhere.

"Honestly, he could play anywhere from the one to the four and even the five if he had to," sophomore forward Austin Dufault said.

"He can handle the ball," senior shooting guard Dwight Thorne said. "If you're small, he can post you up. If you're big, he can go around you."

"Marcus is a good player. He's a big body, very athletic ... he's a Big 12 guy," junior forward Casey Crawford said.

Bzdelik, who has raved about players before only to be disappointed by their play at this level, recently called a brief timeout on his effusive praise of Relphorde.

"We can talk all this talk," Bzdelik said. "But until they turn the lights on ... that's when we'll all find out together."

Tickets on sale

Single game and season tickets for both the men's and women's basketball games went on sale on Monday.

Tickets are available at cubuffs.com, at the CU athletic ticket office or by calling 303-49BUFFS.

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