

CU Buffs' Harris-Tunks tears ACL, out for season

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 10/29/2010 01:19:42 PM MDT

For the second consecutive October, the Buffs have lost a key player to a season-ending injury.

Sophomore center Shane Harris-Tunks, a player described by Colorado head coach Tad Boyle as the "most improved" on the roster since workouts began, will miss the 2010-11 campaign after tearing the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee.

Last season, CU lost point guard Shannon Sharpe to a knee injury during the first practice.

"This stuff happens, it's sports," said Harris-Tunks, who had added 25 pounds of muscle to his 6-11 frame since the end of his freshman season. "The good thing is, I have three years remaining and it's an opportunity to get better and keep moving forward."

This is a significant setback for the Buffs considering Harris-Tunks was going to be a starter and someone the team was counting on for interior defense and rebounding.

Trey Eckloff, a 6-11 junior, will have an opportunity to take his game to a higher level with more minutes. True freshman Ben Mills, a 7-footer who could have benefited from a redshirt season, will almost certainly be thrown into the Big 12 fire now.

"Ben I think is continuing to get stronger. For big guys, the adjustment and the learning curve is a little steeper in the physicality of the game and what he's used to," Boyle said recently. "He's a skilled guy who runs the floor very well for guy his size."

The Buffs — led by Sharpe, Cory Higgins, Alec Burks and Marcus Relphorde — can also go with a smaller lineup and get a spark from 6-7 freshman forward Andre Roberson.

"The intensity level and how fast the pace is going up and down the court (are the biggest differences). I think I can adjust to that pretty quickly," Roberson said. "I'm just trying to make my mark on the team and gaining trust with other guys on the team, bringing an intensity level, rebounding and defense."

Junior forward Austin Dufault, senior guard Levi Knutson and junior point guard Nate Tomlinson have all shown an ability to rebound during their careers. They'll have to help out on the glass consistently this season with the unexpected hole in the middle of the defense.

Harris-Tunks averaged 1.8 points, 1.6 rebounds and 11.7 minutes per game as a true freshman last year. But the Australian's dedication to improving over the summer had the team excited about their center.

"Shane looks like a tight end now," Higgins said recently. "He's physical, he's knocking people around on screens, and he's going to help us because he can defend any big man in our league. I think Shane is really under-rated. I think he's going to be the biggest surprise for everybody."

Unfortunately, Harris-Tunks will have to help the Buffs surprise everyone in the Pac-12.

"I am extremely disappointed for Shane," Boyle said after Friday's practice. "He has worked so hard putting himself in position to be a positive contributor on this team. He gained 25 pounds in the offseason and without a doubt was the team's best ball-screen defender.

"On the bright side, Shane has three years remaining. He will learn from the bench and continue to develop from the sideline."

Close Window

Send To Printer