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CLIPPERS FYI

Clippers' Chauncey Billups gets warm welcome in Denver

The star guard receives a video tribute before scoring 32 points against his former team. It was the first time Billups had played against the Nuggets since being traded to the Knicks last February.

By Broderick Turner

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Reporting from Denver -- **Chauncey Billups** was back home, back where he went to high school, in the same state where he went to college, at the University of Colorado, back facing the Denver Nuggets team that traded him twice.

And he put on a show, scoring a season-high 32 points on 11-for-20 shooting, six for 12 from three-point range.

Billups was a part of the **Carmelo Anthony** trade that sent them to the New York Knicks on Feb. 22, 2011, a deal that the 15-year veteran wasn't too happy about.

Billups was less than enthralled when the Knicks used the amnesty provision to waive him after the lockout was over, and he was displeased when the Clippers acquired him in the auction bid, preventing him from selecting the team he would play for this season.

But all that is behind Billups, his spirits high playing for the Clippers and his feelings toward the Nuggets remaining positive.

Sunday night was the first time Billups played against the Nuggets since the trade to the Knicks, and from the look and sound of things at the Pepsi Center, the fans here showed their appreciation for the hometown kid, giving him a standing ovation.

"It was good to see people," said Billups, who said he had about 30 family members and friends at the game. "Being home is always fun."

There was a video tribute to Billups, who was the first Clipper introduced in the starting lineup. It started with, "Welcome back, Chauncey."

It continued with, "You are still the king of Park Hill," the Denver neighborhood where Billups grew up.

"That welcome I got was humbling," Billups said. "It felt good. I didn't expect that. I expected a good welcome, but that was more than I expected. So that felt really good. And the game, of course, went like we liked it."

Clippers Coach **Vinny Del Negro** acknowledged to the local media that he had to sell Billups on the organization.

Del Negro had to let Billups know that it was not the Clippers of old, of what they had always been perceived to be, and that the culture was changing for the better.

"It took him a little bit of time to kind of realize that wasn't just words. It was actually the fact," Del Negro said. "I think he's in a good place now and we need him to play well and he knows that. He's going to be a big part of our continued growth and

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hopefully our successes this year."

Bledsoe back

Clippers second-year guard **Eric Bledsoe** joined the team in Denver after playing two games with the Bakersfield Jam of the NBA Development League.

Bledsoe had not played in a regular-season game because he was recovering from surgery on torn cartilage in his right knee.

Del Negro said Bledsoe has been making progress and that he looked good in practice.

The Clippers have five guards, four of whom are point guards. It won't be easy for Bledsoe to get much action.

"Obviously there's not a lot of minutes there," Del Negro said. "But every day things change, it seems like."

Bledsoe did not play against the Nuggets on Sunday night.

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Valley News Dispatch

Colorado's Clemons heads to showcase game

By Bill Beckner Jr.
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Toney Clemons graduated from Colorado with a degree in sociology, but the wide receiver feels like a business major this week as he preps for the inaugural Players All-Star Classic in Little Rock, Ark.

Clemons, a Valley High School product who had two productive seasons at Colorado after a slow-starting college career at Michigan, will try to get NFL scouts to buy into his skills with the draft looming in April. The 112 players invited to the game will work out in front of pro scouts throughout the week.

"There are mixed projections on me but a lot of intrigue and interest at the same time," Clemons said. "Depending on how I work out will determine whether I move up or down."

Clemons will play for the South team at 4 p.m. Saturday at War Memorial Stadium. NFLDraftScout.com ranks him the No. 81 receiver in this year's draft class.

Clemons is coming off his best season. A deep threat as the season progressed, he averaged 15.8 yards per catch, hauling in 43 for 680 yards and eight touchdowns.

"Getting the chance to play in this game is a great opportunity for me to answer any questions scouts have about me as a player, about my game and how I am as a person more importantly," he said. "Each practice this week is going to be a

job interview and vital for me to prove I can play fast and make plays against some of the top senior talent in the nation."

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