

CU ex-Buff Austin Dufault works out for Denver Nuggets

By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

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Austin Dufault's hoops dream is to become the next Phil Jackson.

A smart and skilled 6-foot-9 forward from sparsely populated North Dakota who makes it to the NBA.

Jackson, best known for winning championships as the head coach of the Chicago Bulls and Los Angeles Lakers, was picked by the New York Knicks (17th overall) in the 1967 NBA Draft after starring at Williston (N.D.) High School and the University of North Dakota.

Dufault, a four-year starter at Colorado from tiny Killdeer, N.D., understands his path to professional basketball could lead him just about anywhere on the planet.

On Monday the journey began with a pre-draft workout at the Pepsi Center for the Denver Nuggets.

"It's definitely my goal to play at the highest level possible, whether that's in Europe or China or wherever," Dufault said. "As far as the NBA is concerned, I know I probably won't get drafted. Right now my goal is to get into the summer league."

Dufault's agent, Ben Pensack, has received some positive feedback from teams about his CU client possibly getting invited to play in the NBA Summer League next month in Las Vegas.

Monday's session was attended by Nuggets head coach George Karl and general manager Masai Ujiri. The other players competing were Kansas guard Tyshawn Taylor, Kentucky guard Marquis Teague, Memphis guard Will Barton, Tennessee Tech guard Kevin Murphy and St. Bonaventure forward Andrew Nicholson.

Dufault matched up with Nicholson, a 6-10, 234-pound prospect who is projected as a first-round pick in the June 28 draft.

"Overall, I thought it went well," Dufault said. "I was giving up a couple of inches and some pounds, but that was the story of my career the last four years."

Dufault took his lumps playing out of position for the Buffs as a center in the rugged Big 12 before finally getting a chance to showcase his offensive skills as a forward last season in the Pac-12.

A strong NCAA Tournament performance against Baylor's NBA-caliber front line of Perry Jones, Quincy Miller and Quincy Acy certainly enhanced Dufault's resume.

But nothing quite prepares a college player for his first NBA audition.

"There were a little bit of nerves seeing George Karl and the general manager in the gym," Dufault

said. "But it all happened so fast that I didn't have a lot of time to think about it. I got a call from my agent (Sunday) night and worked out (Monday) morning."

Dufault set a CU record for most games played in a career (136) and career conference games played (66). During the memorable march to the NCAA Tournament this spring he also became the 19th player in program history to finish his career with at least 1,000 points (1,076) and 500 rebounds (529).

As a senior, Dufault averaged 11.1 points and 4.4 rebounds while taking more of a leadership role with the departure of Alec Burks, Cory Higgins, Levi Knutson and Marcus Relphorde from the NIT Final Four team.

"The Nuggets front office people told me that Austin really brought a high level of intensity to the workout and that he performed well," Pensack said. "They really liked his fundamentals and work ethic and they were impressed with how well he can shoot the ball for a power forward. They seem to think that he has a very bright future in pro basketball, if not in the NBA than certainly in Europe."

Adam Pensack, who owns and operates the Pensack Sports Management Group, added:

"This was a great opportunity for Austin to show that he can play and compete with some of the top players in the country. We are very happy about the positive feedback we received concerning Austin's pre-draft workout with the Nuggets, which reinforced our belief that Austin has a very bright professional future ahead of him."

Dufault, who graduated from CU in May, plans to live and train in Boulder this summer. He has recently worked out with ex-Buffs Dwight Thorne (Greece) and Marcus Hall (Bulgaria), who are playing professionally overseas, as well as Tad Boyle's top-25 recruiting class.

"The new guys seem like they are a very mature group, especially for six freshmen," Dufault said. "They seem to be pretty level-headed kids that work hard."

Those same traits should help Dufault chase his dreams.

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Kara Goucher and Family Thankful For Hometown Support

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By KBJR News 1
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DULUTH, MN (Northland's NewsCenter)---Thousands watched this weekend as Duluth native, Kara Goucher, broke a course record on her way to her second Olympics.

It's a victory, Goucher and her family say means more with the generous support of the Northland.

Kara Goucher set a course record while winning the USA Half Marathon Championship Saturday, at the 36th Annual Grandma's Marathon.

It was a record last set in 2003 by a Colorado woman; Goucher crossed the finish line 14 seconds faster, with an official time of 1:09:46.

"It's the home crowd town," Patty Wheeler, Kara's mother said. "This is the best place for her that she could possibly run and she did what she wanted to do."

With a 6:25 a.m. start time, Goucher said she was most surprised by the support from the crowds.

"They were here from the beginning; you know my high school coach was at the finish line," she said. "I used to work at Grandma's Marketplace. It's just amazing, it's just been a fantastic trip down memory lane."

Formerly Kara Wheeler and a Greyhound at Duluth East, her last competitive race in Duluth was during her senior year.

"She represents Duluth well and I think Duluth wanted to be a part of that." Kelly Grgas-Wheeler, Kara's sister said. "And they are, she is all Duluthian."

Goucher qualified for the 2012 summer Olympics in London by placing third in the January US Olympic trials in Houston.

It's a dream the two-time olympian has had since childhood.

"I remember sitting in her bedroom, she was probably a junior in high school and she told me, I want to make it to the Olympics someday," Grgas-Wheeler said. "It hasn't come easy to her, but she's always put the work in."

Work she's proud to share with her hometown.

"Duluth knocked it out of the park and I am so proud because I knew they could do it and they've done an amazing job," Goucher said. "It has blown away my expectations. I felt better than I thought I would and the crowds were better than I thought they'd be. It was awesome."

The women's olympic marathon event takes place on August 5th.

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Fullback Lawrence Vickers wasn't the Dallas Cowboys' most noteworthy free agent acquisition this offseason, but if Jerry Jones is to be believed, he could have a huge impact on the Cowboys' offense. Specifically, Jones believes Vickers has the tools to be the best Dallas fullback since Daryl "Moose" Johnston.

Vickers was picked up in March after spending a season blocking for Arian Foster in Houston. Before that, he spent four years in Cleveland, where he helped Peyton Hillis to a 1,000-yard rushing season (and, as a result, a Madden cover) in 2010. Back in 2008, he was named an alternate for the Pro Bowl.

Much like the aforementioned Johnston, Vickers doesn't often run the ball, contributing mostly as a blocker and a pass catcher out of the backfield. And in Jerry's estimation, he'll ensure that Dallas won't be hurt by the departure of Tony Fiammetta, who is now with the New England Patriots.

"This can be [the best we've been at fullback since Daryl \[Johnston\]](#)," Jones recently said, per the *Dallas Morning News*.

DeMarco Murray, the team's feature back, is just getting to know Vickers, but he too seems excited about what the former Brown and Texan could bring to the table.

"So far so good," Murray said. "I'm loving the enthusiasm he brings to the running back group and brings to the practice field and what he brings to this team, so I'm excited to see what he's going to do in training camp."

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