

Men's basketball: CU Buffs eye pro careers overseas

By Ryan Thorburn [Buffzone.com](http://buffzone.com) Boulder Daily Camera

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Nate Tomlinson doesn't need to shake David Stern's hand tonight at the NBA draft to realize his dream.

After four years as Colorado's starting point guard, Tomlinson is returning to his native Australia to play professionally for the Melbourne Tigers.

"It's going to be sad leaving Boulder," Tomlinson said. "It's become like a second home for me."

Tomlinson was born in Melbourne and followed the National Basketball League growing up. His father Billy, who is now coaching in China, used to coach in the NBL, which is very popular in Australia.

"Playing at CU helped me a lot," Tomlinson said. "I've played with and against a lot of good athletes going back to my freshman year. Then also adjusting to a new coach and a new system pretty much got me prepared for anything."

Tomlinson was recruited by Jeff Bzdelik to run a Princeton-style offense and survived some serious rebuilding pains in the Big 12. Over the last two seasons, he enjoyed back-to-back 24-win campaigns, an NIT semifinals run, and the NCAA Tournament experience as an upper classman under Tad Boyle.

"Nate was top of our list of young graduating talent, and we are delighted he chose the Tigers, as there was interest from a number of other clubs," Melbourne head coach Chris Anstey said in a release after the team signed Tomlinson to a multi-year deal. "We see him as a long-term prospect and want to give him every opportunity to be a Tiger for as long as possible."

Two other recent CU graduates, Carlon Brown and Austin Dufault, are also planning to play professionally.

Brown, the most outstanding player of the Pac-12 Tournament, could be a second-round pick tonight. If the explosive 6-5 guard is not drafted, there is still a good chance he will be invited to participate in the NBA Summer League.

"I haven't been told anything directly by scouts on what they need to see me do," Brown said after competing in April's Portsmouth Invitational, an NBA pre-draft showcase for seniors. "I would assume they want me to shoot from NBA (3-point) range and just be more consistent in everything I do, work on turnovers. If I do that, I think I will have a shot."

Dufault is open to playing in Europe or China, if necessary. Tomlinson has even tried to talk his friend into considering relocating to Australia.

Last week the Denver Nuggets brought Dufault, a 6-9 forward and four-year CU starter, in for a workout at the Pepsi Center.

"They seem to think that he has a very bright future in pro basketball," said Ben Pensack, Dufault's agent. "If not in the NBA, then certainly in Europe."

The other member of CU's senior class, Trey Eckloff, is planning to enroll in law school next year.

Boyle's rising program -- which was in the spotlight a year ago when Alec Burks was selected by the Utah Jazz with the No. 12 pick -- could produce another first-round pick next summer if Andre Roberson leaves school following his junior season.

The Pac-12's leading rebounder is working out in Boulder with a talented cast that includes six promising freshmen.

"I feel like being back one more year is going to help out a lot," Roberson told Buffzone.com recently. "Some guys just look at the NBA and just being in there. I want to be in there and be good and play right away."

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Redskins lineman runs football clinic for special-needs youth *by Jennifer Beekman* *Staff Writer*

Nineteen-year-old Friendly High School student Nicholas Senior was diagnosed with Fragile X syndrome when he was 6 months old. The genetic condition, which involves changes in the X chromosome, is the most common form of inherited intellectual disability, according to the U.S. National Library of Medicine.

"Doctors told us he would be sitting in a chair the rest of his life not doing anything," his mother, Sherrie, said. "We put him in therapy right away."

Sherrie hasn't set limitations for her son. She said she has always pushed him to participate in events that involve inclusion.

Those words of encouragement and support mean something different when they come from a professional athlete.

On June 8 Washington Redskins offensive lineman Tyler Polumbus' Tyler's Kids Outreach partnered with Dreams for Kids and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission in Prince George's County for an adaptive football clinic for special needs children.

TKO is an Athletes for Education Program that aims to help children achieve their potential both on and off the field, according to the organization's website.

Dreams for Kids is a volunteer-based nonprofit children's charity that aims to empower at-risk youth and those with disabilities, according to its website.

The three-hour football clinic held earlier this month on the new artificial turf field at the Prince George's Sports and Learning Complex in Landover featured modified drill stations for approximately 50 children ranging in disability, from speech and language issues to Down syndrome and Spina bifida.

"Each station was modified based on the person's disability," said Upper Marlboro resident Sherri Wright, whose 7-year-old son Robert has Down syndrome. "It was amazing. There were kids there who were in wheelchairs. The stations where kids had to run and throw a pass there were adults who actually pushed the wheelchair and the kid was kicking or catching the ball. A typical program, [Robert] would be pushed aside. Holding the ball would be good enough and they'd just move on."

Polumbus' No. 1 message to the clinic's participants was that they can do anything they set their minds to.

"Tyler did such a good job with his talk," said Mary Bowie, the therapeutic recreation coordinator for Prince George's Parks and Planning. "He told them, people might tell you that you can't do something but if you practice and you put your heart into it, you can reach your goals. It was much bigger than football. It was a life lesson. He had those kids feeling like they could do anything they want."

Senior, Wright and Karla Timmons of Fort Washington, whose son Caleb, 8, participated in the event, said children learned a lot about waiting their turns and about working as a team.

It was a big day for parents as well. The effect of the supportive environment cultivated by Polumbus and other clinic volunteers was evident, Wright said, in the childrens' disposition and the effort they were willing to put forward.

"Robert learned that he can push himself to do extra things," Wright said. "There was one player who was working with Robert on kicking. Normally Robert would've just given up, but when it was time to move to another station, he still wanted to try it. And he did it. He dropped the ball and punted it. It didn't go straight but that was wonderful to see, definitely a proud mommy moment."

Added Senior: "Unfortunately people feel like children with special needs don't know too much difference one way or another, but we saw them get involved and just light up with enthusiasm and that means a lot. Seeing these celebrities really take the time to show them how to work together and individually to accomplish goals really gave them a huge boost in self esteem."

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