

Women's basketball: Callan relishes role with USA Basketball

CU radio personality director of women's national team program

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Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 03/30/2012 08:47:04 PM MDT

DENVER -- To fans of Colorado women's basketball, Carol Callan is well known. She has provided color commentary on CU radio broadcasts for more than 30 years.

Others in Boulder will remember her as the former athletic director at Fairview High School, from 1986-95.

For the past 16 years, Callan has also been an integral part of the USA women's basketball program. That made Friday a big day for her.

At the Colorado Convention Center, Callan was on hand to help introduce the 2012 U.S. Olympic women's basketball team.

"The biggest relief is really for the players," Callan said. "Now they know."

Callan is one of five members of the committee that selected the 11 players for the team (a 12th member will be selected before the Olympics begin).

"It's rewarding," she said of seeing the team announced. "It's satisfying, it's exciting, it's exhilarating and I can't wait for July 28, our first game."

Callan played a big role in the 1995-96 women's national team that went 52-0 and won the 1996 Olympic gold medal. Shortly after that, in October 1996, she was named the Team USA women's national team director. That means she is responsible for all the Team USA programs at all age levels.

Through her work at Team USA, Callan has seen several players develop into Olympians and mature as players. Seeing those players grow up gives her inside knowledge when she sits down to help pick the Olympic squad.

"It's how are they continually performing? How are they contributing to us?" she said. "Then we mix and match with coach (Geno Auriemma) and what his expectations are and how he wants to play. It's a real group effort."

Auriemma, the seven-time NCAA championship coach from Connecticut, credited Callan for handling much of the day-to-day responsibilities of Team USA during the past several months while he's focused on UConn's season. Auriemma has the Huskies in the Final Four for the 14th time.

"It's been great," Callan said of her job. "I've seen the world, I've seen (U.S. star) Diana Taurasi come in as a high school kid and she's now a young woman. I've been around Teresa Edwards. She's a five-time Olympian; I was with her for three."

"It's just absolutely a dream job."

So is her side gig. This past season, she once again worked the radio broadcasts for the Buffs, providing color commentary along side play-by-play man Mike Rice.

"We have a home in Boulder and a home in Colorado Springs," said Callan, who has two master's degrees from CU. "I'm up in Boulder on the weekends anyway. I've been involved since the late 70s, so it's almost like I can't let go of it. I enjoy it immensely, I love the University of Colorado and I think very highly of the women's basketball program over the years. It works, because they're good and I enjoy it."

Callan has been highly impressed with CU coach Linda Lappe, who recently completed her second season with the Buffs.

"She works hard, she's bright, she's competitive," Callan said. "She has all the qualities of the coach you would want to guide your program. Because she's young, she's also extremely enthusiastic and puts in the hours. I think she's going to be terrific and already is."

Because of her love of women's basketball and her love of Colorado, Callan is thrilled to see Denver hosting the Women's Final Four this week. The semifinals will be held Sunday and the championship on Tuesday.

"I've been a Colorado resident since the mid-70s and I'm just really proud that this is here," she said. "It's a great event. You can't get better weather. You can't get a better downtown. Denver is terrific."

"We've got some great women's basketball programs around the state. Linda's got the team back on track. I think this is even a tribute to (legendary CU coach) Ceal Barry and what she did back in the day, which is why the state was in contention (to host the Final Four). It's a great state and coaches I've talked to are loving every minute of it."

"I think it's a great boost to the future of women's basketball here."

With the Final Four in town and Team USA ready to go after a fifth straight gold medal, Callan said this is shaping up to be a nice year for women's basketball.

"It's a great way to start," she said.

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