

Men's basketball: Future looks bright, but current CU Buffs still have work to do

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Posted:

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SEATTLE -- There was a light at the end of the dark tunnel to the visitors' locker room here at Alaska Airlines Arena.

For Tad Boyle it was seeing Tre'Shaun Fletcher's smile.

Colorado's disappointing start to the Pac-12 season continued with a 64-54 loss to Washington. The Buffs' head coach understands there is a lot of work ahead to get the 2012-13 team turned around.

But Boyle also had a chance to think about the future, at least for a moment late Wednesday night, while talking to Fletcher, a member of CU's 2013 recruiting class from Tacoma, Wash.

"I asked Tre'Shaun after the game, 'Could you have made some shots for us tonight?' He looked at me and said, 'Yeah,'" Boyle said. "Tre'Shaun is going to be a great player at Colorado. He's a lot like a lot of these Washington guys. He's got length, he's got skill, he's a good passer, he's got size on the perimeter. I can't wait to get him in a Buffalo uniform."

Before watching his future teammates, the 6-6 Fletcher scored 21 points and grabbed 11 rebounds to lead No. 1-ranked Lincoln High School to a victory over rival Mount Tahoma.

"I'd almost say that he's like a thinner version of (CU freshman) Xavier Johnson with maybe a little nicer jump shot," CU freshman forward Josh Scott said of Fletcher. "He's going to be a great player for us."

Boyle also had a chance to catch up with one of Fletcher's future CU classmates, 6-5 guard Jaron Hopkins of Mesa, Ariz., during the Buffs' trip to Arizona State. He said the third member of his recruiting class, 6-7 forward Dustin Thomas of Texarkana, Texas, is also having an outstanding senior season.

With two promising members of the 2012 class, Wesley Gordon and Chris Jenkins, redshirting this year, Boyle will have another layer of talent to work with next season.

Sabatino Chen is the only senior on CU's current roster.

"That's the thing that we can't forget is this program is on the right track," Boyle said. "We've hit some bumps in the road here, there's no question about it. But it's not like we've been blown out, it's not like we've played just absolutely awful."

"We just are in a tough league and the margin for error is very small and we have some young guys that are learning."

Scott, who finished with eight points and two rebounds against Washington, missed his first five shots. Most of those were strongly contested by 7-foot center Aziz N'Diaye.

"I need to get stronger. But I missed a lot of bunnies that I generally make," said Scott, who averaged 15.6 points and 7.2 rebounds in the previous five games. "It was just one of those nights. I wished they didn't happen, but it happened to me. It was just a rough night for me."

Junior forward Andre Roberson finished with 10 points and 11 rebounds. Sophomore guards Spencer Dinwiddie (15 points, one assist) and Askia Booker (nine points, 3-for-14 shooting) were aggressive but inefficient on offense.

Johnson had nine points and four rebounds. Eli Stalzer, another freshman, scored the visitors' only three bench points.

Chen did not take a shot in 15 minutes of playing time.

"Our offense has to get better. Our motion is terrible right now," Roberson said after CU shot 36.2 percent from the field. "We were unselfish, we came out here and competed hard, we just fell short."

Boyle will have a deeper team next season. The coaching staff's focus in the here and now is on figuring out a way for these Buffs to beat Washington State on Saturday.

"I like this team," Boyle said. "I don't like the loss, I never will. But I liked the pride, I liked our toughness, I liked how we competed. We have to be better on the road offensively. The margin for error is very small."

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