

RINGO: Time for one last CU Buffs basketball game in Balch Fieldhouse

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There is a pretty cool idea floating around the Colorado athletic department. It might never come to fruition, but it says here every effort should be made to see that it does.

The CU men's basketball team hasn't played a game in Balch Fieldhouse since Feb. 24, 1979 when it lost to Kansas 71-60. But coach Tad Boyle and athletic director Mike Bohn are exploring the possibility of hosting a nonconference game in the 75-year old building on the west side of Folsom Field sometime in the next two or three years.

It definitely won't happen in the 2012-13 season because there are far too many issues to solve before it can even become a more serious conversation.

For instance, the seats in the balcony on the south end of the fieldhouse could not be used because that area is no longer up to code for that kind of event.

CU is not going to put money into bringing them up to code because the department ultimately has designs on remodeling the building as part of its Folsom Field makeover.

Bleachers would have to be brought in and it's likely no more than 3,000 fans could attend because of fire codes.

What playing surface would be used? Where would television cameras be positioned? Or could the game even be televised? Would fans have to walk over from their regular parking spots at the Coors Events Center? Could buses be used as shuttles?

Imagine a throwback night in the historic building.

Those who experienced it back in the day say it used to be a loud, imposing place for opponents to visit.

Players could wear throwback uniforms from one of the great seasons from the 1940s, 50s, 60s or 70s. Cheerleaders, too.

Imagine a game with no video boards for instant replays and the price of a coke or a tub of popcorn are throwbacks, too. What might be dreamed up for a halftime show?

Some might say it's not worth it to host a game in the building if so few fans can experience it.

But that's no reason at all to not do it.

In fact, it's an opportunity.

Don't include the game in the season-ticket package. The department should make sure to reward its most loyal season-ticket holders and students with the first opportunity to purchase tickets. It should also set aside a few hundred seats for former players. The chance to see one final game in the building they played in would certainly be popular in that fraternity.

Once the department has done that with, say, 1,500 or 2,000 seats, it could auction off the remaining tickets to those fans who want to be there most.

Even in an age when attendance is improving at the Coors Events Center there are still a handful of games each season, particularly around the holidays when the students are on break, that are far from sellouts. It wouldn't mean a lot of lost revenue for that fact alone.

Boulder and Fairview High schools used to play their annual grudge match in the building as well.

It would be a violation of NCAA rules to have the current teams from those schools play a game in the building before the Buffs now, but maybe Boulder and Fairview alumni could be invited back to play-in game before the Buffs take the court. Bohn attended Boulder and played against Fairview in Balch.

"Every time I walk through there I think of the tremendous experience I had playing the Boulder-Fairview game in there," Bohn said. "It's an idea we've talked about. It's very special to me personally and it's something we will visit with others about and see if there is any viability to it."

Perhaps a tripleheader is in order.

The women's basketball team once called Balch home, too, though it did so for less than a decade before the Coors Events Center was built.

Maybe Linda Lappe's Buffs could host a game sandwiched between a Boulder-Fairview alumni game and the men's game.

The old fieldhouse has numerous issues that need to be addressed and will eventually lead to major renovations. It's likely those renovations will happen sometime in the next five to seven years -- at most.

Why not host one more basketball game there before the opportunity to do so is lost forever?

Most coaches in this day and age are obsessed with trying to minimize distractions for their teams.

Playing a throwback game like this would certainly be one for Boyle's Buffs.

But Boyle is a rare breed who doesn't always think the way many of his peers do. He likes the idea of a throwback night in Balch.

In fact, it was his idea.