

## Men's basketball: Xavier Talton could be CU Buffs' rock

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Editor's note: Today's feature on CU freshman Xavier Talton is the second of six on each of the new Buffs men's basketball players joining the team this summer. The series will run each Monday in the Daily Camera.

Golf ball. Basketball. Soccer ball. Football.

About 18 years ago, Xavier Talton's father placed one of each inside his son's crib and let the infant select his own athletic destiny.

"I chose the basketball," said Talton, whose dad, John Talton Jr., played college basketball at Virginia Union. "And that's how he started me out."

Now all grown up, Talton -- a well-rounded hoops star at Sterling High School, where he also lettered in football and track -- has arrived at Colorado as part of Tad Boyle's six-man recruiting class.

The 6-1 guard has been working out with the Buffs this summer at the Coors Events Center, where Talton led Sterling to a 4A state title in 2011 and was named the Colorado player of the year that season.

"It's definitely a privilege to be here," Talton said after a recent cross-training session with CU strength and conditioning czar James Hardy. "Boulder is an amazing place and so is this campus and the school in general."

Several of the prominent players Boyle has recruited to CU are city kids from Detroit, Los Angeles and San Antonio.

Talton stood tall in Sterling, a rural community on the northeastern plains located just off I-76.

"It's a small town, kind of unique," Talton said. "Not too much to do. That's when you just go to the gym and work out."

Boyle, a high school star in Greeley who played at Kansas, noticed Talton when he was the head coach at Northern Colorado. After landing two blue-chip prospects from Colorado Springs (Josh Scott and Wesley Gordon), Boyle decided to keep the in-state momentum going by signing Talton last November before Wyoming's Larry Shyatt could smuggle the hidden Centennial State gem across the border.

"This is a guy who wants to be a Buff," Boyle said. "The guys that want to be here can bring in a different attitude, and it can be something really special. We try to simplify the recruiting process as best we can, so if a player can pass, dribble and shoot, we want to be recruiting that player. Xavier is certainly a guy that can do all three of those things."

As a senior, Talton averaged 18.7 points, 7.1 rebounds, 6.3 assists, 4.2 steals and 1.3 blocks per game while leading Sterling to a 22-2 record. But a year after cutting down the nets at the Coors Events Center, Talton had to watch Scott (Lewis-Palmer) and Gordon (Sierra) battle it out for the 4A crown in March.

Now the state's three top prep prospects are united to help Boyle build a top-25 program at CU.

"They bring hard work," Talton said of his former rivals. "Josh is tremendous offensively, and Wes is outstanding defensively. They could probably rank as two of the top players in the nation. I think they'll help the team out quite a lot."

Talton describes himself as a true point guard with a pass-first mentality.

"But when I need to score," he added. "I can get that done."

Thanks to some NCAA rule changes, the CU coaching staff has been able to work with the players more this offseason. Boyle said Talton has already demonstrated a lot of maturity on the court.

"What makes him so valuable is he can do so many things well. He's rock-solid steady," Boyle said. "I told him he just needs to be more aggressive. But he's a really dependable player."

Sounds like Talton made the right choice in that crib.