

Josh Scott contains potential to overpower for CU Buffs

By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Tad Boyle has already enjoyed some big victories over the last two years at Colorado.

Winning at Kansas State in the final trip to Manhattan. Knocking off No. 5 Texas in front of a sellout crowd at the Coors Events Center.

Beating Arizona in the Pac-12 Tournament championship game at the Staples Center. Upsetting UNLV in the NCAA Tournament.

It could be argued that the CU head coach's most important win came on the recruiting trail when Josh Scott committed to the Buffs.

For years many of the top in-state players -- Nick Fazekas (Nevada), Sean Ogirri (Wichita State/Wyoming), Matt Bouldin (Gonzaga), Reggie Jackson (Boston College), Jorge Gutierrez (Cal) -- were taking their talents elsewhere.

Scott, a 6-foot-10 power forward, who is one of the top prospects in the nation, decided to stay home to and help Boyle build a top-25 program.

"Josh improved more in one year than any other player I have ever recruited, which is very encouraging to see," Boyle said on signing day last November. "We recruited him hard and early, and luckily we did because after he recovered from his surgery everyone else in the country quickly realized how talented this player was.

"He is highly skilled and is a terrific young man who comes from a terrific family. He has a bright future ahead of him, just like all of these recruits."

Landing a player of Scott's caliber helped the coaching staff add Centennial State stars Wesley Gordon (Sierra) and Xavier Talton (Sterling) to an impressive 2012 class that will be the foundation of CU basketball for the next four years.

"I saw that (Boyle's) coaching style is very conducive to winning. That says it all," Scott said. "I just wanted to win, and coach Boyle is a great coach and his staff is great."

Scott ended the recruiting process as a junior in high school and remained loyal to CU as his stock soared.

While leading Lewis-Palmer to the 4A state championship at the Coors Events Center to cap a sensational prep career, Scott averaged 28.5 points per game.

Having the fundamentally sound Scott and reigning Pac-12 rebounding champion Andre Roberson in the paint together could be an unmanageable situation for opposing teams this season.

"He's going to make Andre work a little bit more this year, especially in the post," sophomore guard Askia Booker predicts. "Josh knows how to swivel his butt down there and he can dunk. He's pretty strong. Of course Andre is going to give him just as much of a challenge as he's going to give Andre a challenge."

Discipline and defense are traits many highly touted freshmen need to work on once they arrive on a college campus.

Scott's parents, Alton and Teresa, were both student-athletes at the Air Force Academy.

During his senior season, Scott averaged 11.0 rebounds, 2.5 blocks and 1.2 steals. Those numbers could have been even higher if he weren't hanging out on the bench in the second half of blowout wins.

"Josh is very fundamentally sound and he's strong and he's skilled," Boyle said. "For a freshman big guy, that's pretty

rare. Josh is used to overpowering people in the post. Right now he can't do that every single time at this level, so that's an adjustment."

All six freshmen were at CU for summer sessions to take classes and workout with their new teammates.

The confident group says the future is now.

"It's been good. We get to know everybody, get to know the system a little bit, kind of get a feel for what college basketball is like," Scott said of the early practice sessions at the Coors Events Center. "Maybe it's not going to be as bad of a freshman jump for us since we're up here already."

The players and coaches will reconvene in one week for practices leading up to four games against semi-pro teams in Paris (Aug. 15-16), Antwerp (Aug. 19) and Amsterdam (Aug. 20).

Boyle is counting on the foreign trip to give the young and restless Buffs an opportunity to establish some chemistry and get a head start on the learning curve ahead of a challenging 2012-13 schedule.

Expectations are sky-high for CU coming off the Pac-12 Tournament championship and the program's first NCAA Tournament win in 15 years.

"I think we can do everything they did and hopefully more," Scott said. "We're young, but that's not an excuse. Hopefully, we just go out and play basketball."

The Field House — Blogs — The Denver Post

JULY 30, 2012, 9:28 AM

Will Colorado's Scott and Johnson rank among Pac-12 best basketball freshmen?

By **TOM KENSLER** |  No Comments

Will Colorado men's basketball freshmen Josh Scott and/or Xavier Johnson make my pal, ESPN.com's Jason King, look bad?

[King ignored the CU newbies](#) ^[1] when he recently wrote about five Pac-12 freshmen to watch: Shabazz Muhammad, UCLA; Kyle Anderson, UCLA; Kaleb Tarczewski, Arizona; Grant Jerrett, Arizona; Brandon Ashley, Arizona.

I can't blame King. Those five were ranked higher than Scott and Johnson on national recruiting lists.

But it would not surprise me if Scott, the 6-foot-10 forward-center from Lewis-Palmer HS in Monument, and the 6-6 Johnson, a forward from national power Mater Dei in Orange County, Calif., have debuts strong enough to be listed on post-season lists of the Pac-12's most impactful freshmen.

Scott and Johnson were both ranked among the nation's top 100 recruits (Scott made some top-50 lists). Early reports from CU workouts have them living up to their billing.

ARTICLE PRINTED FROM THE FIELD HOUSE

<http://blogs.denverpost.com/colleges/2012/07/30/colorados-scott-johnson-rank-pac12-basketball-freshmen/23939/>

URLs in this post:

[1] King ignored the CU newbies :

http://espn.go.com/blog/collegebasketballnation/post/_/id/61204/pac-12s-freshmen-to-watch

Click [here](#) to print.

All contents [Copyright © 2011 The Denver Post](#) or other copyright holders. All rights reserved. | [Privacy Policy](#) | This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed for any commercial purpose.



Powered by Limelight NETWORKS

Posted: Monday July 30, 2012 1:23PM ; Updated: Monday July 30, 2012 3:48PM



Seth Davis > INSIDE COLLEGE BASKETBALL

[More Columns](#)[Email Seth Davis](#)

LAS VEGAS -- They say that hope springs eternal, but in college basketball, the summer is also fertile ground for green shoots of hope. It has been months since anyone has lost a game, and it will be several months before anyone loses another. Meanwhile, every head and assistant coach trolls the country during the July recruiting period to scavenge for the next young player who will provide that hope for their programs. I mean, if a man can't adopt a sunny disposition in the summer, what chance does he have to make it through the hard, cold winter?

So while hundreds of coaches descended upon Las Vegas last week to take in a trio of grassroots tournaments, I came to Sin City hoping to bask in their sunny-side-up luminescence. During my stay, I caught up with 15 head coaches and got their take on what lies ahead for their programs. I've broken those conversations into two parts; eight are described below, the other seven will be posted Tuesday. Even as these coaches acknowledged the challenges ahead, they cheerfully laid out all the ways their teams would overcome them.

One side note: I have done this exercise in the past, but this year the coaches were especially informed about their players because they have had the opportunity to work with them thanks to the "summer access" rule that the NCAA passed in January. The rule allows coaches to work with players who are enrolled in summer school for a maximum of two hours per day and eight hours per week. The fact that there was ever a rule prohibiting coaches from working with their own players in the first place is, of course, ludicrous, but that's a column for a different day. But the upshot is, the coaches have a much better feel for what their players are prepared to contribute in the 2012-13 season.

Here, then, is part one of what I learned during my visit to Vegas. Look for Part 2 on Tuesday.

Tommy Amaker, Harvard. Last season was magical for this program. The Crimson were nationally ranked, they reached their first NCAA tournament since 1946, and they got lots of buzz from that whole Linsanity thing. Though Ivy League Player of the Year Keith Wright and team leader Oliver McNally are gone, Amaker doesn't expect much of a dropoff. "We might be as good as we were last year, but it might not appear that way," he told me. "A lot of pieces fell into place for us. We won 26 games. That's hard to duplicate. But do I think we can be very good? Yes, I do."

Amaker pointed out that for a program like Harvard, the ability to absorb personnel losses depends more on player development than one-and-done recruiting. So while first team All-Ivy forward Kyle Casey is back alongside veteran point guard Brandyn Curry, Amaker will need sophomores such as 6-foot-5 forward Wes Saunders to take advantage of their opportunity for more playing time. "We played 10 guys last year, so we do have guys who, on paper at least, are ready to take their turn," Amaker said. "That will be the signal of how good we can be over the long haul."

Of course, I couldn't resist asking Amaker about Harvard alum Jeremy Lin, who just left the Knicks to sign a lucrative contract with the Houston Rockets. Amaker told me he spoke with Lin several times as he was sifting through his options. "I think the process was exciting and a little unsettling for him," Amaker said. "He wants to be thought of as a really good basketball player, not just a flash or a gimmick. But he's a guy who when the stage is set and the lights are bright, he's prepared and he performs." Meanwhile, Amaker hopes that some of that magic will continue to trickle his way, especially on the recruiting trail. "I don't know that there's a huge difference, but it definitely arms us against something that our league gets knocked for," he said. "If a kid we're recruiting wants us to help him with his professional aspirations, we don't have to feel like we've never done it."

Tad Boyle, Colorado. The Buffaloes' prospects begin with the best-kept secret in college basketball: Andre Roberson, a 6-7 jumping jack who was the nation's third-leading rebounder last season (11.1 per game) while leading the Pac-12 in blocks (1.9). So the first two things I asked Boyle were: How did this kid end up at Colorado, and did Boyle have any idea how good he would end up being?

The second answer is easy. "We had no idea he'd turn into the player he is," Boyle said with a laugh. The first answer comes down to luck (as it often does). Boyle was the coach at Northern Colorado when Roberson's AAU team happened to be playing on Boyle's campus. Roberson, who hails from San Antonio, wasn't a big-time recruit, but he was good enough that Boyle figured he probably couldn't convince him to come to Northern Colorado. When Boyle got the CU job, Roberson was the first recruit he called. "We beat Penn State for him," he said.

Roberson's improvement enabled the Buffaloes to win the Pac-12 tournament and reach the NCAA tournament for the first time in nine years. While Colorado lost three starters, it is bringing back its three most talented players in Roberson, 6-5 sophomore guard Spencer Dinwiddie and 6-1 sophomore guard Askia Booker. "We'll be more talented, but not as experienced," Boyle told me. Six freshmen have also entered the program, most notably Josh Scott, a 6-10 forward from Colorado Springs who Boyle said "can really score it"; and Xavier Johnson, a 6-7 forward who played at Mater Dei High in southern California.

The Buffaloes will be taking a trip to Paris in a couple of weeks, so Boyle has conducted six practices in preparation for that trip. (NCAA rules allow a team to practice 10 times in advance of a foreign trip.) Looking ahead, one of the main questions that needs to be answered is whether Roberson can provide leadership that is commensurate with his talent. "You always want your best player to do that," Boyle said. "In the past he has led by example, but he's not the most vocal person in the world. We've been talking to him this summer about doing that." If Roberson can find his voice, then the Buffaloes will be ready to make some noise in the much-improved Pac-12.

Jamie Dixon, Pittsburgh. When I spoke with Dixon last year at the Peach Jam in South Carolina, I asked him if it was hard to see his team's season end with that bizarre free-throw fest against Butler that eliminated the Panthers from the NCAA tournament. Dixon shook me off, saying it was always tough to see a season end, no matter the circumstances. He evinced that same even keel when I asked him last week how tough it was to watch his team miss out on the NCAA tournament for the first time since 2001.

"Every season is a challenge," Dixon said with a smile. "We won 22 games. There's not a lot of sympathy for us throughout the country."

Will Pitt be able to bounce back? The answer depends largely on the health of veteran point guard Tray Woodall, who had surgery to fix the sports hernia that sidelined him for 11 games last season. Woodall came back for the final stretch of the season, but he wasn't nearly the same player he was before he got hurt. Dixon told me that Woodall is "pretty close" to being cleared for practice. Also, 6-6 junior forward J.J. Moore is still recovering from the broken foot he sustained during a pickup game after the season was over.

If Pitt is going to be a ranked team again, it will need production from its new players. Dixon caught a break when the NCAA granted 6-5 junior guard Trey Zeigler a hardship waiver after his previous school, Central Michigan, fired his father as its coach. That allowed Zeigler to transfer to Pitt and be eligible to play right away. Dixon also signed two highly-rated freshmen, 7-foot New Zealand native Steven Adams and 6-3 guard James Robinson. Adams is particularly intriguing because of his height and skill set, but Dixon tried to downplay expectations that Adams will be a high-scoring center. "The main thing he does well is guard the post," he told me. "But he'll be a bigger story because of the type of kid he is. He's mature. He's all about the team. He's there for the right reasons. It's very refreshing to coach a kid who is like that even though he's coming in with a lot of hype."

John Groce, Illinois. The Big Ten has a well-earned reputation for playing stodgy basketball, but Groce is going to help change that. He already generated buzz with the revelation that he instructed his players to use a 24-second shot clock during their informal pickup games, but he told me that is only one method in his madness. "We want pace and tempo to everything we do," he said. "Open gym, skills, weight room. Everything has to have pace."

If you look at the list of coaches whom Groce has worked with and for (Thad Matta, Todd Lickliter, Herb Sendek, Sean Miller, Brad Stevens), you don't see names associated with frantic, up-tempo basketball. Groce told me he adopted this philosophy after he became the head coach at Ohio four years ago. "I just thought it was important to be myself," he said. "What do you believe? What do you teach the best? Where are your convictions? This just fits who I am."

The problem is, Groce's system requires playing nine guys double-digit minutes. That won't be easy with his current roster - especially considering that his best player, 6-4 senior guard Brandon Paul, still has his jaw wired shut after breaking it at the beginning of summer school. Groce said that Paul has been very disciplined about keeping on weight -- "He bought a blender. He blends sub sandwiches." -- but despite that he has still lost about 15 pounds. Groce is also hoping that at least one (if not both) of his untested frontcourt prospects -- Sam McLaurin, a 6-8 transfer from Coastal Carolina, and 6-11 sophomore center Nnanna Egwu -- will provide the depth he needs to run his system.

Regardless of how this pans out, the Illini will be entertaining to watch. I believe it's only a matter of time before Groce gets this program up and running.

Ben Howland, UCLA. The summer of hope in Westwood clearly springs from the nation's top-ranked recruiting class, but that excitement is tempered by injuries to the two headliners. Kyle Anderson, a 6-7 forward from New Jersey, had surgery on his thumb in April and is still a week away from being cleared to practice with full contact, and 6-5 guard Shabazz Muhammad is still working his way back from a high ankle sprain. Howland told me that Muhammad has a history of ankle sprains, so Howland is being very cautious about how quickly he brings him back.

Howland also pointed out that there are a lot of good pieces on this roster beyond the freshmen. He said the Wear twins, David and Travis, are nearly 20 pounds heavier (all muscle) than they when they first got to UCLA after transferring from North Carolina. He also spoke highly of another UNC transfer, Larry Drew, who will step in to replace the graduated point guards Jerime Anderson and Lazerick Jones. The biggest question -- literally -- is once again whether 6-10 junior Josh Smith will finally shed the extra weight that has always, well, weighed down his considerable talent. "Josh has been working hard, but he still has a long way to go," Howland said. "The key for him is his ability to change his diet. That has always been his challenge. He needs to be really disciplined, and he's not where he needs to be with that yet."

Howland hopes that his team will be at full strength by the time it begins practicing in earnest later this month in preparation for a trip to China. While the freshmen will clearly play a big role, Howland is not guaranteeing starting positions for anyone just yet. Anderson and Muhammad (as well as the other two frosh, 6-9 forward Tony Parker and 6-5 swingman Jordan Adams) can score, but if Howland is the coach, then nobody will get on the floor unless he's ready, willing and able to defend. "A lot of it is learning and experience," Howland said. Nodding toward the ragtag basketball being played in front us

on the court of Bishop Gorman High, Howland added sarcastically, "It's a lot different than this fine basketball being played right now."

Josh Pastner, Memphis. Ever since Pastner took over for John Calipari three years ago, his rosters have been among the youngest in the country. This season, the Tigers are all grown up. "This is going to be the first time since I've been a head coach that we have an older team," he said.

That may sound odd considering that Memphis' core nucleus of 6-1 junior point guard Joe Jackson, 6-4 junior guard Chris Crawford, 6-6 sophomore forward Adonis Thomas, and 6-2 junior point guard Antonio Barton does not include a senior. But except for Thomas, who was injured for most of last season, those guys have played a lot of games. Pastner especially needs Jackson to continue his development. He got off to a shaky start as a sophomore, briefly considered transferring, and then came back to the team and finished strong. "It's important for him to put a whole year together from start to finish," Pastner said. "He has a much better mental outlook right now. He has a tremendous sense of peace."

Pastner knows that, as usual, it will be important for Memphis to bank some house money during the nonconference season because, as he put it, "our league doesn't get the respect it deserves." That won't be the case next year, when Memphis moves to the Big East. Since there are still so many unanswered questions about scheduling, Pastner told me he does not yet know how he's going to adapt, but there is no doubt this is a positive move for this storied program. "It will be great exposure for us," he said. "It has already opened doors for us to recruit different areas of the country."

Oliver Purnell, DePaul. The Blue Demons only won three Big East games last season, so the good news is there's nowhere to go but up. Purnell will be in his third season at DePaul, which means he'll be coaching players who have been around a little bit. "The biggest difference for us will be experience," he said. "We had a lot of close losses last year. Now all of our sophomores and freshmen are juniors and sophomores."

Heading the list is Cleveland Melvin, the 6-8 junior forward from Baltimore who has been one of the better players in the Big East the last two years (17.5 points, 7.4 rebounds as a soph) but has received little notoriety because the team has been losing so much. When I asked Purnell if he expected Melvin to make a significant jump, he smiled and said, "If he makes a significant jump, we'll be in great shape." Rather, Purnell is just looking for some steady progression -- better shot selection, more efficiency, better rebounding. Purnell is hoping for that same kind of improvement from 6-5 junior Moses Morgan ("It's time for him to be one of the best guards in the Big East") as well as 6-9 junior forward Donovan Kirk, who transferred from Miami but was limited by back problems last season. "He has to be a feature guy for us," Purnell said. "He's capable of that."

DePaul graduated two senior starters in guard Jeremiah Kelly and center Krys Faber, but Purnell hopes those losses will be offset by the arrival of freshman Durrell McDonald, a 6-2 guard from Las Vegas whom Purnell described as a "tremendous athlete." Sounds like the kind of kid who can help a program take a badly-needed leap forward.

Brad Stevens, Butler. When a midmajor school wins 22 games and finishes in tie for third in its league, it is typically thought to have had a pretty good season. Butler, however, is not a typical midmajor. Last season, which ended with a loss to Pittsburgh in the semifinals of the CBI, was a difficult comedown for a school that had played in two consecutive NCAA finals. "Historically, if you look at Butler over 110 years, it was a good year," Stevens said. "But we were a little spoiled there for a while."

There is no mystery as to what the Bulldogs' biggest problem was: They finished 340th nationally in three-point percentage. That's why all eyes will be on Rotnei Clarke, the 6-foot gunslinger who sat out last season following his transfer from Arkansas. Clarke shot 44 percent from three-point range and 86 percent from the foul line during his junior season in Fayetteville. Stevens said that Clark is one of the top three shooters he has ever coached, but because he has such a quick release, "he's the best game shooter I've ever coached."

Stevens was quick to add that Clarke's game involves much more than just firing away. "He's a better ballhandler and passer than I thought," Stevens said. "And he works at it. He's probably in the gym right now." The addition of 6-5 freshman guard Kellen Dunham, whom Stevens described as a "ridiculous shooter" who makes 80 percent shooting threes in a gym by himself, will also help.

Stevens is also hoping for significant improvement from 6-8 sophomore swingman Kameron Woods. "You can tell he has worked on his game. He's more confident." But the biggest difference will be the move from the Horizon League to the Atlantic 10. That means a significant upgrade in competition, but it also means exposure to large media markets along the east coast. "It's a great opportunity to get Butler's footprint into a different area," Stevens said. "The school wanted to extend its reach to the east, and this helps us do that. But from a competitive standpoint, there's no question it's going to be difficult."

Find this article at:

http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2012/writers/seth_davis/07/30/coaches-state-of-program/index.html#ixzz22869Bsw4

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Copyright © 2007 CNN/Sports Illustrated.