



COLORADO BUFFALOES

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Freshman George King is getting acclimated to a new world at CU.

Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



Brooks: George King, Classmates Cut From Same Cloth

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BOULDER – First impression of Tad Boyle’s four-member freshman class: Quadruplets. Four guys who – at least to the naked, semi-trained eye – are essentially the same size and have the same elegantly long frames and fluid athleticism.

I watched the frosh four a couple of days ago on their second day of college basketball at the University of Colorado, and what I saw is exactly what Boyle wanted from his 2013 recruiting class. They’re not clones, but if Boyle needed a template to start that process he might pick any of them.

“I told all four of them that the reason they’re here is because they’re so interchangeable,” he told me after an hour-long strictly fundamental, introductory workout at CU’s practice complex. “Defensively, that’s going to give us a lot of flexibility. They’re all long, all athletic and can all cover a lot of ground. I think it will allow us to extend our defense and press a little more. It’s going to allow us to be more of a switching team and not to have to worry about matchups so much – if they can all prove that they can guard at the Division I level.”

In time, Boyle hopes each of his 2013 “quads” will “start to understand that they can guard maybe four positions on the floor, that they can play four positions on the floor. We play four-around-one motion. I’m not expecting any of them to be (post players) like Josh Scott or Wesley Gordon or Ben Mills. But I think they can all be versatile, terrific players. Versatility and the ability to play multiple positions is something we look for. I’m

excited."

And so should be CU's fan base, which three seasons into the Boyle era already has witnessed an annual escalation of the excitement level. Three consecutive 20-win seasons – Boyle's 69 wins are CU's most-ever in a three-year period – and a school-record three straight postseason appearances definitely will move the needle.

Boyle's 2013 signees – multi-purpose guard JaRon Hopkins, of Mesa, Ariz.; wing Tre'Shaun Fletcher, of Tacoma, Wash.; combo forward Dustin Thomas, of Texarkana, Texas; and forward George King, of San Antonio – began taking summer classes on Monday. A new NCAA rule allows coaches to work them two hours a week during the summer, which makes most coaches shrug and say, "Gee, thanks." But as Boyle observed earlier, "It's better than nothing."

Week one's schedule for the new guys won't resemble the summer weeks to come. With Monday's main requirements attending to a lengthy freshman checklist and clearing compliance, there was no place for hoops. So Boyle's two hours with them this week were divided equally between Tuesday and Wednesday.

Next week will bring a pair of half hour sessions for freshmen only, then one hour as a full team. Some former CU players – Carlton Brown, Nate Tomlinson and Austin Dufault – have been on hand and offered pointers. Brown was in the NBA D-League last season, Tomlinson and Dufault played overseas.

Brown, who was headed to Portland for a minicamp at the end of this week, had this observation of the new foursome: "I haven't seen any of them play yet, but they've all got good overall skills. That doesn't surprise me; coach doesn't recruit anybody who can't do everything."

But honing them to the point where each can do everything well is the goal. "There's so much to introduce," said Boyle, who wants this to be the "eyes wide" period rather than the first week of preseason practice in mid-October. June's goals for the newcomers: Working on offensive footwork, learning to play on balance, improve shooting efficiency and understanding what Boyle and his staff expect in a practice.

"There's going to be a lot of overload going on for the whole month, but it will serve them well when they come back in August," Boyle said. "Otherwise we'd be going through this process (then). Now you're into September and October, practice is starting . . . this time is critical."

"I want them wide-eyed and asking questions. They'll be able to take this stuff home with them in July and refine it. When they come back you don't have to talk about how to guard a screen, read a screen, establish your pivot foot and not get called for traveling."

Being introduced to the basics now is a fine plan. Of course, basketball isn't new to any of CU's four recruits but make no mistake, this is a new world. On Monday, they needed help in finding classes. The campus was a maze. King said junior-to-be Spencer Dinwiddie gave him an assist, and the four frosh rented bikes to help them navigate.

The last of Boyle's four signees, King believes a June arrival makes far more sense than showing up for the first time at the start of fall classes: "I know if I didn't take these two classes (an on-line sociology course, introduction to theater) now and knock some hours out, I'd come in in August and be overwhelmed."

"I mean, I'm overwhelmed now, but I would be ridiculously overwhelmed with the work then if I just showed up and – boom – it would be terrible. I'm glad I'm in here now getting used to what it's going to be like when the season starts and we're ready to rock and roll."

King's late signing and the circumstances surrounding it might have surprised some Buffs fans – but not the signee. Said King: "I wouldn't call it a surprise. Coach Boyle had seen my capabilities. I visited here like any other athlete would do and fell in love with Boulder. For me it wasn't a surprise at all. I knew where I wanted to go; that's why I signed with the Colorado Buffaloes."

King and Hopkins are listed as 6-5, Fletcher (he wants to be called "Fletch") as 6-6, and Thomas as 6-8. But standing in proximity, there doesn't appear to be three inches difference among them. As for any differences in offensive skill sets and defensive principles, more than two hours of court time are needed before Boyle offers his

critique.

"They're all very skilled (offensively) in their own way," he said. Defensively, he added, "It's hard to see that in the first week. You see more when you go four-on-four, five-on-five. Basketball is such a fluid game you don't get a feel for what that is IQ-wise until you start going up and down and they get a little tired."

That will come – quickly – in the team's sparse but structured summer workouts as well as in pickup games. For the newbies, "It's definitely a process," King conceded. "I'm not up to speed. If a guy off the street came in right now and watched me, he'd probably say, 'Oh, that's a freshman right there.' I'm pretty sure I look like a freshman.

"But eventually I'm going to get acclimated and used to the running, the drills, the workouts, the schoolwork . . . hopefully then nobody's going to notice any difference between myself and anyone else on the team."

Are King and his classmates all the same player? He grinned and answered, "I know I'm pretty versatile and the other three freshmen are, too. I see what his plan is and it makes sense. He doesn't want to switch someone out and say, 'Uh oh, there's a mismatch.' He can switch all over the place and we can still guard, still defend the point, the four man or five man if we have to. It's not a bad idea that coach Boyle's got."

Let the record show that he's had more than a few good ones during his first three seasons on the job.

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