



# COLORADO BUFFALOES

OFFICIAL ATHLETIC WEBSITE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO



**Ben Mills clears a rebound earlier this season.**

Photo Courtesy: Tony Harman



## Brooks: Mills Contributes To Buffs In Variety Of Ways

Release: 03/20/2013 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

**AUSTIN, Texas** – I couldn't figure Ben Mills settling into the Taylor Swift genre, but then Andre Roberson probably couldn't figure he and Mills eventually settling in as roomies. Strange things happen.

If Mills and Roberson weren't The Odd Couple of Colorado men's basketball, scan the roster for another pair and get back to me.

Mills is the quintessential small-town (Hartland) Wisconsin kid, Roberson is a city dweller from Texas (San Antonio). They arrived in Boulder three summers ago as CU freshmen with very little to no idea of who the other was.

But, recalled Mills, "I think we pretty much clicked right away. We hung out together, lifted (weights) together and lived together our whole freshman year . . . when you're with someone that long, you tend to know a whole lot about them. We have a lot of stuff in common and have a good time together."

Added Roberson: "We just kind of have the same personalities. We were the only two freshmen (in that class) and were just kind of put together . . . I feel like we mesh a little bit. It's pretty cool."

Roberson's three-year mark on Buffs hoops is more easily identifiable than his buddy's. 'Dre' is a rebounding

monster; he needs 18 boards – a very attainable number if CU can play a pair or more of NCAA Tournament games – to become the school's career leading rebounder.

He currently has 1,037 – 339 of them snatched this season. Mills currently has 43, a dozen of them this season. Those night-and-day numbers offer a telling snapshot of their CU careers. But the numbers don't offer a hint of what each means to the Buffs, particularly in Mills' case. Teams, even schools' student bodies, need players like Mills.

CU coach Tad Boyle tells of having prospects on campus and at the end of their official visits asking them who they bonded with among the Buffs. Invariably, Mills' name is mentioned. "Ben's name comes up a lot," Boyle said. "He's a very out-going, fun guy to be around. You can see that in the way students react to him. His teammates love him and his coach feels the same way."

But that coach/player bonding took time to take hold. In his early days in the basketball program, Boyle recalled, Mills "wouldn't say boo around the coaches. Behind the scenes, when the coaches aren't around, that's when his personality would show itself to his teammates . . . but he's finally starting to open up around coaches."

Credit that change, said Mills, to maturity. "I definitely came in as that shy little freshman from that small town in Wisconsin," he said. "I think I've grown and matured a bunch since I got here. When I came in, I guess you could say I was pretty shy around the players and coaches. But being here as long as I have, I've definitely gotten a lot more comfortable around everybody."

That comfort level showed itself earlier this season when the team taped its version of the *Harlem Shake*, aka the *Millshake*. The starring role went to . . . right. Mills said he had to be asked more than once by his teammates (or maybe told by them) before agreeing to do it. He said he was "really ashamed of my performance," but I'm not sure I believe that.

If CU had drawn Wisconsin rather than Illinois in its NCAA Tournament opener, Mills wouldn't have minded. In fact, "I would have loved it," he said. "I've always wanted to play against them. I've got a bunch of friends who play for them and it would have been a fun game for me, for sure."

Mills won't be offended if you call him a cheese head. "I grew up a big (Wisconsin) fan, but I had family play at Wisconsin and Marquette, so I was kind of in-between," he said. "But yeah, I guess you could say I'm a cheese head."

He has been more of a locker room force than an on-court *tour de force*, which brings us back to that early mention of Taylor Swift. For some reason, when Mills was a freshman, former CU guard Nate Tomlinson – an Aussie with an attitude – and forward Austin Dufault appointed/sentenced Mills to select the Buffs' postgame locker room tunes. And for some reason, he still does.

Mills' music tastes are said to center on the '80s, so that era began showing up as well as some country, some pop and, yes, some Taylor Swift. Added Roberson with a laugh, "He's a big-time Taylor Swift guy with a little bit of country . . . there's a little bit of everything in his genre."

Mills' regular-season minutes were sparse and that might or might not change in the postseason. In CU's Pac-12 Conference Tournament game against Arizona, he came off the bench in the first half for five minutes when 6-11 junior Shane Harris-Tunks went down with a concussion. Mills hit one of two free throws and grabbed a couple of rebounds, earning Boyle's and Roberson's admiration for being prepared to play.

"The way he's played every time he's given an opportunity says a lot about him," Boyle said. "That's not an easy thing to do, coming in late in a game or late in a first half."

Said Roberson: "Coach Boyle preaches when it's your time to shine, that's what you do. And I feel (Mills) took advantage of it. He was three years on the bench and I feel like he stepped up big time in that game and gave us an energy boost."

Mills called that rare first-half experience enjoyable, exciting and was overjoyed for the opportunity. Moreover,

he believed he “held my own out there. Every time I get on the court I try and work as hard as I can and be as productive as I can.”

The possibility of Mills seeing the court on Friday when the Buffs face the Illini (3:30 p.m. MDT, TNT) might have been lessened by Harris-Tunks’ return to practice on Wednesday. Harris-Tunks was “full go” in CU’s workout before the team departed for Austin, with a better determination of his game-day status probably coming on Thursday.

But Mills will be ready if called on. He draws his daily motivation from being prepared and going all-out. “Every day is a new day and going against some pretty good guys every day helps me in practice,” he said. “I’m always ready. If Shane isn’t ready to go, I will be and will look forward to it.”

Both Boyle and assistant coach Mike Rohn say Mills’ improvement this season could mean an expanded role for him next season. Mills’ scout team contributions have impressed Rohn to the point where Rohn calls him “one of our most improved guys. Ben’s had a good year, he’s really improved this season, and mostly it’s been in him catching up to the speed of the game . . .

“We play pretty fast here. It’s a change for him having to keep up with the speed, showing on ball screens and playing our aggressive style of defense and offense. This year he’s caught up more because we see him scoring more in practice; that’s something he hasn’t always been able to do. It’s giving him more confidence.

“I think next year Ben might be in a position where he really can help us. He just has to keep getting better defensively, and that’s one thing Shane has helped him with a lot. Shane is as good a team defender as you can find. That’s kind of the thing right now that separates those two guys.”

But Mills is working on narrowing that gap, and according to Roberson, “That’s one thing I respect about Ben . . . he does what’s best for the team, not just individually. I tip my hat to him for that. When it’s his time to shine like it was at Arizona, he played. He’s done a great job for us.”

Mills is a very lean 7-footer, but claims he’s up about 30 pounds (to the 220-225 range) from his freshman year. If it’s possible for him to put on more pounds, it wouldn’t hurt. “I think he’s worked hard in weight room,” Boyle said. “So who knows? The fact that he stuck it out tells me what he’s capable of.”

If his on-court capabilities now are greater than they were, his off-court contributions are holding steady. “He definitely brings an all-around personality to the team,” Roberson said. “Everyone gets along with him. Just a great guy . . . it’s great to have him in the locker room.”

Ben Mills will tell you it’s great to be there, but better to be on the court. That time might be coming, but he’s made an impact nonetheless.

Contact: [BG.Brooks@Colorado.EDU](mailto:BG.Brooks@Colorado.EDU)

SHOW MENU



## Men's basketball: CU Buffs' Andre Roberson makes his return to Texas

By Ryan Thorburn *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

Posted:

BrushNewsTribune.com

AUSTIN, Texas -- Andre Roberson assumed he would play important basketball games for the Buffs here throughout his college career.

When Colorado's junior forward committed to Tad Boyle almost three years ago, the program was still a member of the Big 12.

A few months after Roberson arrived on campus, CU announced its plans to leave for the Pac-12.

The Buffs upset No. 5 Texas in Boulder during the 2010-11 season but didn't have to make a return trip to Austin.

The bottom-feeding program Roberson joined will make its second consecutive NCAA Tournament appearance against Illinois on Friday in the East Region at the Erwin Center (2:40 p.m., TNT), which is the Longhorns' home venue.

"We've definitely emerged, especially on the defensive end," Roberson said of CU's success since heading west. "I know before, when they were in the Big 12, they had the Princeton offense with (Jeff) Bzdelik. I feel like we're a little more up and down, high tempo game, and that's what the fans want."

Roberson, despite averaging 15 points and 12 rebounds at San Antonio's Wagner High School during his senior season, was mostly ignored by Texas and other Big 12 schools during the recruiting process.

Not one school from the Lone Star State made the field of 68 this year. That doesn't mean Boyle is finished recruiting Texas.

In fact, 2013 CU signee Dustin Thomas, a 6-8 power forward from Texarkana, Texas, will make the long drive across the state to cheer his future teammates on in person against the Illini.

"We love Texas and we will always recruit down here because it's such a fertile ground," Boyle said. "We'll never forget Texas, but the fact that we're in the Pac-12, obviously our footprint is more West Coast-oriented."

Boyle recruited in Texas for six years as an assistant coach at Wichita State. Since CU's move to the Pac-12 he has signed five players from Los Angeles and added Jaron Hopkins (Mesa, Ariz.) and Tre'shaun Fletcher (Tacoma, Wash.) to Thomas' class.

Notable

CU and Illinois only had one common opponent this season: USC. The Illini blew out the Trojans 94-64 on Nov. 19 en route to winning the Maui Invitational. The Buffs beat USC 66-60 on Jan. 10 in Boulder. ... Backup CU center Shane Harris-Tunks remains "day to day" with a concussion. ... CU was named one of the "Elite Eight" campuses in the NCAA Tournament by the Alliance to Save Energy for the university's

energy-efficient efforts. The other schools on the list are Cal, Duke, Florida, North Carolina, Oregon, Syracuse and Wisconsin.

### Quotable

"This year we're going to try to take it a step further and maybe advance into the Sweet 16. We'll just have to see how it goes," Roberson on CU's approach to its second consecutive NCAA Tournament appearance.

Follow Ryan on Twitter:

@RyanThorburn

## Men's basketball: CU Buffs' freshmen have plenty of experience

By Ryan Thorburn *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

Posted:

DailyCamera.com

AUSTIN, Texas -- Tad Boyle's baby-faced freshmen are all grown up.

Colorado's head coach believes Xavier Johnson, Josh Scott, Eli Stalzer and Xavier Talton are ready for their first Big Dance.

The No. 10 Buffs play No. 7 Illinois, a team with three seniors in the starting lineup and five players with NCAA Tournament experience, in the East Region on Friday at the Erwin Center (2:40 p.m., TNT).

"No. 1, they're not freshmen anymore," Boyle said about the four true freshmen in the rotation. "They've got 30 games under their belts, plus a European trip. I don't worry about that so much.

"We've got to play Colorado basketball, whether we're juniors or seniors or freshmen or sophomores."

Scott has started 30 games this season and is averaging 10.3 points and 5.5 rebounds.

"Awesome, exciting, kind of surreal," was Scott's reaction to CU receiving an at-large berth. "Definitely watching (the NCAA Tournament) when you're young and now being able to play in it, not many people get to say they do, especially as freshmen. I'm pretty blessed."

The 6-10 forward has averaged 4.6 points and 7.6 rebounds since returning from a concussion that kept him out of the lineup against Utah and Stanford at the end of February.

Scott will match up with 6-11 Illini forward/center Nnanna Ekwu (6.4 ppg, 4.6 rpg).

"You don't know when you're going to recover because you can't physically see any swelling going down or anything like that," Scott said of dealing with a concussion. "All I can say now is I'm back."

Johnson has saved some of his best moments for big games.

The 6-7 forward had 19 points on 7-for-9 shooting during the home win over Arizona, 22 points on 7-for-7 shooting in the win over Oregon when Andre Roberson was out, and 16 points on 6-for-10 shooting in the win over Oregon State at the Pac-12 Tournament in Las Vegas.

Talton played 10 minutes in the third meeting with the Wildcats and finished with four points and two assists. Stalzer averages 1.4 points and 9.4 minutes.

"It's kind of an advantage to know what it's like to be on that stage," Roberson, a junior, said of being a part of CU's NCAA Tournament run last year. "There's also a nervous feeling as well, it's always there. The freshmen are just going to have a little more of it being their first time."

The two other members of CU's six-man 2012 recruiting class, Wesley Gordon and Chris Jenkins, are redshirting this season and getting their teammates prepared in practice as members of the scout team.

"I have real sympathy for the place they're in," Scott said. "Even the games I was out with my concussion, it

really stunk to just be sitting there watching helpless, unable to do anything besides cheer your teammates on. As a competitor who loves the game, it's tough.

"That's what they do every single night, and then come to practice and play hard. I think there are very few things harder than what they're doing, other than maybe an injury. Because they're good enough to play this year in my opinion."

For sophomore guards Askia Booker and Spencer Dinwiddie, playing in the NCAA Tournament is just something the Buffs do every March.

The starting backcourt wants to make sure the Buffs play their best basketball of the season this weekend.

"We still have a lot of potential as a team. That's kind of awkward to say with it winding down and potentially being our last game," Dinwiddie said. "We have so much growth and room to be better. We saw that in the Oregon game when we blasted them without Dre."

With no seniors in the starting lineup and more talent set to join the program next season, the Buffs' future is bright.

That doesn't mean this young team is just happy to be here.

"It's something as a team you look forward to. You want to be in the NCAA Tournament, you want to be on the big stage hopefully," Dinwiddie said. "If all goes as planned, we could make it to the NCAA championship, which is a dream of all of ours. We don't look at this as a personal stage, we just want to go out and win."

Follow Ryan on Twitter:

@RyanThorburn

## Colorado's Spencer Dinwiddie is a difficult matchup as a 6-foot-6 point guard

By Tom Kensler *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*

Posted:

DenverPost.com

AUSTIN, Texas — As the No. 10 seed in the East Regional, Colorado enters the NCAA Tournament without much fanfare.

But the Buffaloes do have something that few teams in the field of 68 can claim: A 6-foot-6 point guard who can make life miserable for the opposition.

"Spencer Dinwiddie is not fun to play against," Arizona coach Sean Miller said, "because he attacks the game in so many ways."

Colorado (21-11, 10-8 Pac-12) opens Friday against No. 7 seed Illinois (22-12, 8-10 Big Ten) at the Erwin Center, giving first-year Illini coach John Groce another day to fret over what to do about Dinwiddie.

Does Groce put his point guard, 6-1 Tracy Abrams, on Dinwiddie?

Does Groce look for a better physical matchup and risk having his best player, 6-4 Brandon Paul, try to stick with Dinwiddie?

Or does Groce bring one of his 6-6 reserves, Joseph Bertrand or Myke Henry, off the bench?

A point guard who is as big as a forward but with the ball handling and passing skills of a conventional distributor can give a defense headaches. Most likely, CU will go as far as a Dinwiddie can take them.

Just a sophomore, Dinwiddie is a budding star who plays the game like a veteran.

"If you put a bigger guy on him, he'll go by him; and if you put a smaller guy on him, he'll obviously have an advantage with his size," Colorado coach Tad Boyle said. "Spencer is very comfortable with the ball. He's a good decision maker. He can see over defenses. That size really helps him in the pick-and-roll and to find guys. He can pick them out because he is 6-6."

Boyle recruits hard in Los Angeles and knew that Dinwiddie, as a junior, was already ranked among the most promising point guards in the state despite averaging a modest 5.9 points on a Taft High School squad that featured college-bound seniors.

Boyle was sold on Dinwiddie while watching him play in the prestigious "adidas Super 64" summer tournament in Las Vegas before Dinwiddie's senior year.

"What struck me was, his team always won and he could affect the game by doing different things," Boyle recalled. "I saw an AAU game where he scored 25 points and dominated the game. I saw him play another AAU game where he didn't take a shot, and they won."

Dinwiddie was named the most valuable player of the tournament after leading Double Pump Elite to the under-17 championship.



"Spencer's team had good players, but not the real blue-chippers that other teams had," Boyle said. "But Spencer just kept everybody involved. The first time I saw him play, I knew he was a guy we needed to get. I've never recruited a player harder. You can build a program around a player like that."

Everything Boyle saw then has transpired.

"I just try to do what our team needs," Dinwiddie said. "When we're struggling on offense, I try to produce offense. If people are going off, I try to get the ball to them or get them open shots. You see what the team needs at the time."

Boyle connected with Dinwiddie and his family, and the Buffs coach thought his biggest recruiting threat might come from UCLA, but Bruins coach Ben Howland hadn't offered a scholarship by the time Dinwiddie committed to CU in November 2010.

"UCLA would have scared me to death if they had come on strong," Boyle said.

Two years later, it's Dinwiddie who is coming on strong. He recently was named to the 10-man, all-Pac-12 first team and has improved his scoring average from 10 points as a freshman to a team-leading 15.6 as a college point guard for the first time.

Dinwiddie added 15 pounds to his lanky frame during the offseason and is using that strength to drive to the hoop more often than he did as a freshman. He has made more free throws (194) this season than all but a handful of Pac-12 players have attempted.

"If you just think about that (free-throw) statistic, it shows what a terrific player Spencer Dinwiddie is," said Arizona's Miller.

Dinwiddie's defensive prowess often goes overlooked, but not by Boyle. It could be the difference against Illinois, with Dinwiddie matched against Paul. Boyle said he probably will have Dinwiddie and Andre Roberson take turns checking Paul.

CU players say Dinwiddie makes everything go.

"Spencer is our catalyst. We just have to feed off him," freshman forward Xavier Johnson said. "He pushes the ball up the floor and that creates defenses to give a lot of help. Defenses have to do that because nobody can guard him one-on-one. So he just dishes to us for open shots. It all starts with what Spencer does."

Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280, [tkensler@denverpost.com](mailto:tkensler@denverpost.com) or [twitter.com/tomkensler](https://twitter.com/tomkensler)

---

A look at dinwiddie's biggest games this season.

Date, Opp., Points, Assists

Dec. 5, Colorado State: 29, 3

Nov. 27, Texas Southern: 24, 3

Feb. 16, Arizona State 24, 3

Dec. 1, Wyoming: 24, 4

Feb. 10 , Oregon State: 24, 4

Jan. 12, UCLA: 23, 2

Feb. 14, Arizona: 21, 7

March 13, Oregon State: 20, 2