

Frei: CU Buffs' Roberson siblings dealing with disappointment in NCAAs

By Terry Frei *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*

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BOULDER — It was a disappointing couple of days for the Roberson family.

First, on Friday, junior forward Andre Roberson was on the floor in his home state of Texas as the Colorado men's basketball team fell to Illinois in its opening game of the NCAA Tournament in Austin.

Less than 24 hours later, his younger sister, Colorado redshirt freshman forward Arielle Roberson, went through a more surprising letdown. Seeded fifth in the Norfolk Regional and playing at home, the Buffaloes lost to unheralded and No. 12 seed Kansas in the first round of the women's tournament.

After the men's team exited Friday, Arielle — the Pac-12 freshman of the year and the Buffs' second-leading scorer — received texts from her brother, offering encouragement.

"It was more a 'get it done' type of thing," Arielle said Saturday. "He was definitely kind of upset about his loss. Everybody wanted us to win, especially since they hadn't beaten Kansas either. It was, 'Go get 'em, I know you can do it.' "

But the Robersons were one and done in the NCAA Tournament. Twice.

Arielle had 11 points and 12 rebounds in the loss to Kansas. That came the day after Andre had nine points and eight rebounds against Illinois. Their parents, John and Lisa Roberson, journeyed from their home in San Antonio to Austin for the CU men's game Friday, then — despite the Colorado snowstorm and many flight cancellations — managed to get to Boulder to see Arielle play too.

The women's loss meant that CU's risky decision to bid in advance and be locked in as the host school for first- and second-round games was only partially vindicated.

Monday night at the Coors Events Center, fourth-seeded South Carolina will face Kansas for the right to advance to the four-team regional field in Virginia. The Colorado fans who bought tickets for both sessions in advance will have to decide whether to show up anyway, and the local "walk-up" might be negligible.

Meanwhile, with both CU teams done for the season, Andre Roberson faces a choice — whether to enter the NBA draft or return for his senior season. The exploratory and evaluation process should come down to this bottom line for the nation's leading rebounder this season: Although the guaranteed money in the final half of the first round is eye-popping, also, if he isn't going to be among the 14 lottery picks, it makes economic sense for him to return, to try to move up. If he is ... hello, NBA, and it doesn't mean he can't ever pick up a book the rest of his life, or even obtain his degree after turning pro.

As a basis of comparison, two years ago, CU guard Alec Burks entered the draft after his sophomore year and went 12th overall, to the Utah Jazz, and his first deal was for \$6.3 million over three years. I'm among those who originally thought he should have stuck around for at least one more season, but his draft spot and contract slotting validated his decision — even if it could be argued that his game might have been enhanced with more collegiate experience.

In San Antonio, John Roberson is a teacher and Lisa Roberson works in the office, both at Wagner High School, Arielle's and Andre's alma mater. So this is a grounded family that will offer considerable perspective in discussions about Andre's choices.

Arielle definitely will be back. She had to sit out her true freshman season because of a hip injury that eventually required surgery. As frustrating as that experience was for her, it enabled her to treat her first year on campus as indoctrination, both in the program and in school.

"It opened my eyes to a lot more," Arielle said. "Just in life, to be grateful for every little thing that you get to do, from waking up in the morning, to being able to go to sleep at night. ... I think that was the biggest change in myself — not taking everything for granted."

This season, her pent-up energy and the knowledge gleaned from watching was evident as she immediately was one of the top players in the Pac-12. But the season didn't end well, and Roberson was emotional in the aftermath.

"This was a special group of girls, a special team," she said. "Sure, we didn't end the way we thought it would be, but I think we did a lot of great, uncommon things here. We can continue to build on that."

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