

Men's basketball: Tad Boyle happy to watch his players excel in classroom

By Ryan Thorburn *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

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Fans are thrilled with Colorado's recent inclusion in March Madness.

Tad Boyle is just as proud of having so many Buffs march during graduation ceremonies at Folsom Field every May.

The two departing CU players from this year's NCAA Tournament team -- senior guard Sabatino Chen and redshirt junior center Shane Harris-Tunks -- were both named to the Pac-12's all-academic teams on Tuesday.

Chen is on the first team for the second consecutive year. The former Monarch High School standout was honored for a 3.51 grade-point average and will graduate from CU with a degree in mathematics.

Harris-Tunks was selected to the second team. The final Jeff Bzdelik recruit in the program will graduate with a degree in advertising from the College of Journalism and carries a 3.39 GPA.

"We talk all the time about guys like Sab and Shane being the epitome of the student-athlete experience," Boyle said. "These kind of awards confirm those thoughts. We've had some guys here that have been terrific in the classroom, as well as on the court."

The list of scholarship players who have left CU with degrees in hand since Boyle was hired includes Cory Higgins, Levi Knutson and Marcus Relphorde in 2011 and Carlon Brown, Austin Dufault, Trey Eckloff and Nate Tomlinson in 2012.

Two walk ons, Trent Beckley and Javon Coney, also graduated from the program. Current redshirt junior guard Jeremy Adams is also going to graduate this May.

"That makes us 12-for-12 since we've been here," Boyle said of graduating players who are seniors or fourth-year juniors in eligibility.

Two years ago, Alec Burks left the program early for the NBA draft. But the future millionaire still stayed in classes through May and left CU in good academic standing.

The men's basketball program produced its second consecutive perfect APR score of 1,000 when the most four-year cycle was released by the NCAA last summer.

Boyle is not a fan of the APR because 50 percent of the formula is retention of players, which is something coaches can't always control.

"Our APR is in great shape," Boyle said. "I still don't think it has relevance as far as players graduating. The NCAA already has progress towards degree rules. It's your job as a staff and a university that players finish their degrees when they get to be seniors."

To be eligible for selection to the Pac-12 all-academic teams, players must have a minimum 3.0 overall GPA

and be either a starter or significant contributor.

Chen started 20 of 32 games for the Buffs, averaging 4.4 points, 2.2 rebounds 1.3 assists per game. Harris-Tunks made one start and averaged 1.3 points and 1.6 rebounds over 32 games.

Stanford placed six players on the academic teams. Arizona State and Utah each had one.

This is the first time since the 2005-06 season (Billy Boidock, first team; Scott Senger, second team) CU has been represented with multiple players on a conference all-academic team.

Eckloff was on the Big 12 all-academic first team in 2008-09 and 2009-10.

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