

Howell blog: D-League wouldn't be bad option for CU Buffs' Roberson

By Brian Howell, Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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Andre Roberson's father, John, told me on Tuesday that a big reason Andre decided to leave Colorado and enter the NBA Draft is to get a better opportunity to develop his game.

Some basketball fans might laugh a bit at that reasoning. After all, with millions of dollars spent on players, a limited number of roster spots and 82 games a year, the NBA doesn't seem to be in the business of teaching players. Most NBA teams want guys who can contribute right away.

Yet, that is exactly why the league has the NBA Development League. With 16 teams in the D-League, dozens of players who aren't ready for the NBA get an opportunity every year to do exactly what Roberson is hoping to do, by working on improving their game.

The reality of Roberson's situation is that he likely will have a tough time making an NBA roster for the 2013-14 season. He is projected to be taken among the last 10-15 picks in the June draft. Many players taken that late don't ever make it to the NBA, and a lot of the ones that do wind up going through the D-League first.

The NBA is the dream, but the D-League is not a bad option for a player like Roberson.

Should he spend next season in the D-League, Roberson would certainly have a better opportunity to improve his game than he would have as a member of the Colorado Buffaloes. The D-League has a 50-game schedule and, without having to worry about attending classes in Boulder, Roberson will have unlimited time to work on his game. And he can do it in an environment that doesn't bring nearly the pressure that the NBA brings.

Nearly 130 current NBA players have D-League experience, including Houston Rockets point guard Jeremy Lin, Charlotte Bobcats guard Ramon Sessions and San Antonio Spurs swingman Danny Green. Denver Nuggets center Kosta Koufos and former CU Buff Chris Copeland, now with the New York Knicks, have also been through the D-League.

Another former Buff, Cory Higgins, averaged 18.5 points per game for the D-League's Erie Bayhawks this season. Higgins got a chance to play in six games with the Bobcats this past season.

Only time will tell if Roberson winds up having a long NBA career, or if his career takes a long path through the D-League and/or overseas leagues. Regardless, Roberson feels ready to move on, and it's worth a shot. He's got a lot of skills that can help a team, whether it's in the NBA or elsewhere. It should be fun to see what Roberson does in the future.

Andre Roberson left Colorado to develop his NBA game, dad says

By John Henderson The Denver Post The Denver Post

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Andre Roberson left Colorado's basketball program a year early so he could develop his game quicker for the NBA, his father said Wednesday.

John Roberson, who played 12 years professionally overseas, said his son's announcement Sunday was his alone.

"It was definitely his decision," John said from his home in San Antonio. "People think I had a lot to do with it. Dre's his own man, and he makes his own decisions. For him, it was just development and where he saw he'd be developing more.

"You look at all the different dynamics. You have what he'd be doing in Colorado versus the NBA. We felt it best for him to forgo his senior year."

Roberson averaged 10.9 points per game this past season, shooting .480 from the field, including .328 from 3-point range, and .551 from the foul line. He finished second nationally in rebounding with 11.2 per game and was the Pac-12 defensive player of the year.

NBA scouts are unanimous in ranking him as a second-round draft pick, at best. He might have to settle for being a free agent. The 6-foot-7, 210-pounder would have been one of five starters back from a 2012-13 team that reached the NCAA Tournament for the second consecutive year. But Roberson's father didn't see his son developing on the offensive end if he stayed at CU.

"You'd have a lot of guys coming (back) next year that were demanding the basketball," John Roberson said. "Dre, not being a selfish player, it'd be hard for him to kind of say, 'I want to work on my NBA game my senior year' while the other guys are doing their thing.

"It boiled down where the best development was."

John said he consulted numerous friends who played or are playing in the NBA before giving the information to his son. Andre has not addressed the media to explain his decision and told CU coach Tad Boyle little about why he chose to leave.

Boyle used Roberson as a devastating role player in a defensive and rebounding mode. John Roberson didn't feel Colorado developed his son to play in the NBA.

"That's the struggle he was fighting," John Roberson said. "Was it more about Dre and fulfilling his dream or more about getting wins?

"I think it has to go both ways. If you're going to develop him, develop him. Don't just take the point of view of, 'We need Dre so we can have a Final Four team or a top-10 team.' Now, if you look at it that way, it's selfish as opposed to (Andre) being selfish."

Boyle, informed of Roberson's comments, said his job is not to train players specifically for the NBA.

"My job as Colorado basketball coach is to develop all of our players as much as I can," Boyle said. "That's our staff's job as well. I have great assistant coaches who I think do a very good job of development. We're trying to develop all of our players, not just Andre.

"We want to get better from week to week, month to month and year to year. Everybody develops at a different rate in their own way. With development, we get everybody on the same page playing for Colorado basketball and the name across their chests. There's a reason we don't have names on the backs of our jerseys."

Roberson said he and his son considered the value of a college degree, which Andre was on pace to achieve next spring.

"I understand that argument," Roberson said. "A lot of guys will graduate this year, but how many college graduates are making a million dollars?"

Told second-round picks don't get guaranteed money and D-League salaries are between \$15,500 to \$26,000 a year, John said: "It's not guaranteed when you graduate you get a job out of college. So this deal looks at the best possibility of maximizing what you can do. Dre knows education is important. But he has to go fulfill his dreams. This allows him to do that and come back and get his degree."

Another factor, John Roberson said, is next year's draft is expected to be stronger. He said he discounted the possibility of his son having a strong senior season, topped with a deep NCAA run, improving his son's chances of getting chosen in the first round a year from now.

"That's all speculation," he said, adding: "There's a big risk for that as well. Who knows who gets hurt? He could wind up getting hurt the first game. The deal is right now, and he wants to seize it."

Boyle said he's most disappointed that Andre Roberson won't become the school's career rebound leader. His 1,045 rebounds are nine from Stephane Pelle's 1999-2003 record of 1,054.

"Listen, I support Andre and I respect his decision," Boyle said. "But I don't agree with his decision as head basketball coach at Colorado."

John Henderson: 303-954-1299, jhenderson@denverpost.com or twitter.com/johnhendersondp