

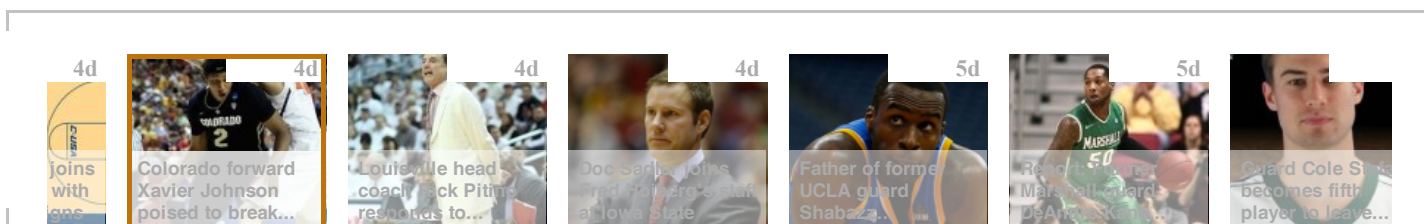
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[Colorado forward Xavier Johnson poised to break out in 2013-14](#)

[Raphielle Johnson](#)

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Under head coach Tad Boyle, Colorado has made three consecutive trips to the postseason (one NIT appearance, followed by consecutive NCAA tournament appearances) for the first time in the history of the program.

But the Buffaloes will move forward without forward Andre Roberson, who made the decision to [enter the 2013 NBA Draft last month](#). While Roberson (10.9 ppg, 11.2 rpg) wasn't a prolific scorer during his time in Boulder it was his work as a rebounder and defender that makes him one of the best players to wear a Colorado uniform.

Even with the departure of Roberson and Sabatino Chen, Boyle and his staff will have enough talent to return to the NCAA tournament and have an impact on the Pac-12 race.

Point guard Spencer Dinwiddie is one of the best floor generals in the Pac-12, with his size giving the Los Angeles native advantages on both ends of the floor that few players at the position enjoy. And there's also Askia Booker, who is more than capable of getting hot on the offensive end of the floor.

But with the departure of Roberson the focus will be on the front court, where a pair of rising sophomores will be asked to lead the way. Josh Scott gives Colorado a skilled big man, and Xavier Johnson is more than capable of breaking out in 2013-14.

"Terrific progression. He looked terrific this spring," Boyle told *CBT* when asked about Johnson's progress, noting that the 6-6 forward has been working hard on various aspects of his offensive skill set.

"If he continues the progression he was on his freshman year he's going to have a breakout sophomore season for us."

In his debut season Johnson averaged 8.9 points and 4.8 rebounds per game, moving into the starting lineup for good in the early stages of Pac-12 play. Johnson reached double figures in 12 games last season, with his career-high 22 points serving as a catalyst in the Buffaloes' 76-53 win over Oregon on March 7.

The rebounding that needs to be accounted for due to Roberson's departure will have to be handled by committee next season, with Johnson, Scott and the newcomers (redshirt Wesley Gordon and freshman Dustin Thomas being two) needing to share the load.

Johnson tallied three double-digit rebound outings during conference play, grabbing a career-high 14 in a one-point loss to Arizona State on February 16.

If he can become a more consistent rebounder in his sophomore season that will help Colorado account for Roberson's departure, while also placing Johnson among the Pac-12's best forwards.

"He's got the physical tools, the basketball skill set," said Boyle. "He has to tighten some things up, but if he keeps progressing he's going to be a terrific player."

Raphielle can be followed on Twitter at [@raphiellej](#).

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