

Men's basketball: CU Buffs' Dustin Thomas determined to prove nay-sayers wrong

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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Dustin Thomas was supposed to be a football player.

At least, that's what he was told while growing up in Texarkana, Texas.

"The football coach actually told me that I'd never go (to a Division I university) in basketball out of this city because it's a football city," said Thomas, a 6-foot-7 freshman forward on the Colorado men's basketball team.

Of course, seeing the type of athlete that Thomas is, the football coach had hoped Thomas would play for him. Thomas had other ideas.

"I committed myself to basketball my sophomore year," he said. "I wanted to prove him wrong. I was ready to work. People telling me I can't do something just motivates me to do it."

That's part of why Thomas is in Boulder now. CU head coach Tad Boyle loved what he saw on the court from Thomas at Pleasant Grove High School and in the summer season. But, he also loved the determination Thomas exhibits.

"Dustin, without a doubt, has an inner drive about him that is very evident and he wants to be a player," Boyle said. "In terms of work ethic, he's got it. He's got everything it takes. He's very determined and very committed."

Last year, Thomas led Pleasant Grove to a 29-2 record and he was named MVP of Class 3A Region II District 15. He averaged 20 points, 14 rebounds, five assists and five steals per game, while also connecting on 48-percent of his 3-pointers.

Thomas is hoping his all-around game will be an asset to the Buffs this year, as they aim for a third consecutive trip to the NCAA Tournament.

"They expect me to come in and make an impact as soon as I can," he said. "For me, I'm expecting to come in and do whatever I can to help the team win, whether that's rebounding, going outside, shooting the ball or taking a little man to the post."

Boyle sees Thomas as more of a frontcourt player, but said, "Dustin can play inside and out. He's comfortable around the basket, and he's also a very good 3-point shooter. He's very skilled in terms of handling the ball and shooting the ball."

Thomas' main goal, he said, is to win games this year, regardless of how it happens.

"I'm looking forward to winning, like they've been doing in the past years," he said.

Along the way, he hopes to keep proving people wrong.

Thomas was born in McLeod, Texas, where "all they had was a post office." Because of his small-town roots, he is humble. He's also determined.

"I've been working my whole life and I'm just going to keep working and see wherever that takes me," he said. "People still doubt me. That's what I'm here for. I want to prove people wrong on the D-I level, something that nobody has done for my city.

"I'm trying to put (Texarkana) on the map. I need to get some scouts down there and check out the other kids that are down there."

Follow Brian on Twitter: @BrianHowell33.