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CU's Spencer Dinwiddie celebrates Fourth by playing hoops for USA in Russia

by BROOKE PRYOR brooke.pryor@gazette.com - • Published: July 4, 2013 | 8:00 pm • 0

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While his friends and Colorado teammates celebrated the Fourth of July with fireworks, cookouts and the like, junior guard Spencer Dinwiddie found a different way to honor his country.

The Buffaloes' leading scorer from last season donned a USA basketball jersey in a 94-60 exhibition victory over Russian club UNICS nearly 6,000 miles away from Colorado Springs before Sunday's opening round of the World University Games in Kazan, Russia.

"Representing your country is the biggest honor you can have," Dinwiddie said. "So to be able to do that on a stage like this, the second-largest worldwide competition besides the actual Olympics, it's just an honor and a blessing."

Dinwiddie was named to the team after a week of practice at the Colorado Springs Olympic Training Center. He competed against 29 other players from college teams across the nation for the right to represent his country.

"If you have 30 of the best players trying to make 12 people, that's a challenge in and of itself," he said after the first day of practice. "You're going against great people and there is no break."

But unlike most players trying to make the roster, Dinwiddie had a few advantages going into tryouts.

Not only was he already adjusted to the altitude, but he also had a familiar face on the court -- CU coach Tad Boyle.

Boyle was one of the court coaches for the weeklong training camp.



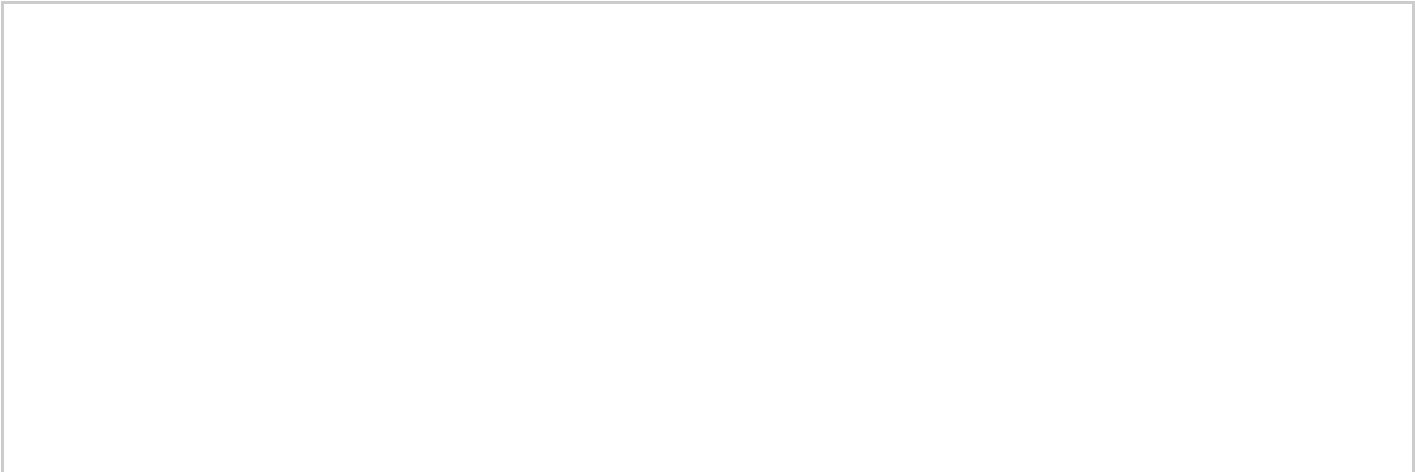
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Colorado's Spencer Dinwiddie (25) drives around Illinois' Nnanna Ekwu during the second half of a second-round game of the NCAA men's college basketball tournament Friday, March 22, 2013, in Austin, Texas. Illinois won 57-49. (AP Photo/Eric Gay)

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"It's cool, I get to talk to him while I'm doing everything," Dinwiddie said. "He gives me pointers and everything like that. It's fun seeing his face."

And Boyle, in his first time as a court coach for USA basketball, enjoyed the chance to watch and coach one of his players at a higher level.

"I'm proud of him," Boyle said during training camp. "Just having this opportunity and what he's going to learn from it and gain from it."

As a court coach, Boyle's role was finished after training camp while Dinwiddie continued on to Russia, almost a 12-hour flight away from Colorado Springs.

"I'm not a geography major, so I don't know if this is the farthest I've traveled," he said. "I've been to Belgium, France and Amsterdam to play basketball, so if you have a map for me, I can tell you if it is or not."

Dinwiddie and the rest of USA's team arrived in Russia last Sunday, a week before their first international competition. The team is settling into the time change and different rules emphasized, but the ultimate goal remains the same.

"Hopefully the best part about this experience will be winning a gold medal," Dinwiddie said of the team's primary focus.



Thunder Draft Pick Roberson Boasts Impressive Family Of Athletes

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By Luke McConnell, News9.com - email

OKLAHOMA CITY - When you think of famous families of athletes, several immediately pop into your mind. The Mannings and the Matthews of football fame; Serena and Venus Williams on the tennis court and the Alomars, Hulls and Barrys are just a few of the families that immediately pop into your head.

The Oklahoma City Thunder drafted Andre Roberson out of Colorado in the first round of last week's NBA Draft, someone who comes from as impressive a family of athletes as you can find in today's world.

Roberson is the son of John and Lisa Roberson. John played basketball at New Mexico State and then played professionally overseas for 12 years. Lisa was no slouch herself, playing volleyball for four years for the Aggies.

Then came the kids—seven of them in all—each as competitive and athletic as the one before. Andre is child No. 3, the older of two boys. Lisa says because of her and her husband's experiences as athletes, there was no way they could contain the love for sports the kids exhibited.

"We kept them going," Lisa said at the Thunder's press conference introducing her son and two other draft picks last Saturday. "I couldn't curtail it and so we just continued on. Upward Basketball was one of the programs that we went to. We didn't think about it, we just did it."

Three of Roberson's five sisters have already made a name for themselves in college athletics. The oldest, Ashlee, played basketball at Texas Tech for three seasons before playing overseas. Amber played four years of volleyball at Texas, including a standout junior season in which she helped the Longhorns reach the Final Four.

Andre's younger sister Arielle is coming off her freshman year playing basketball at Colorado. Besides teaming with Andre to form one of only five brother-sister combinations at the same school in all of college basketball, Arielle won Pac-12 Freshman of the Year honors by averaging 12.1 points per game, second on the team.

With all that athletic ability in one family, the competitiveness naturally runs rampant. However, Lisa wasn't able to say where exactly Andre fell in the hierarchy of most competitive in the family.

"All of them are very competitive," Lisa admitted. "It's in our blood because my husband and I are very competitive. As he's (Andre) gotten older, he's (become) very, very competitive. He's got a humbling, meek spirit, but he's very competitive. Don't let that fool you."

Growing up, Andre always wanted to be an NBA player, a desire Lisa says started when Andre was in second grade.

"He had a collage and his main this was playing in the NBA," Lisa recalled. "As a parent, you're like, 'Yeah!' What can I say? He fulfilled it. He did it; he put his mind to it, believed and never looked back."

Lisa has always encouraged her children to think and dream big, and then go chase those dreams with an energetic spirit. Even though very few children who aspire to play any professional sport actually do, Lisa never discouraged Andre from pursuing that dream.

"Being an athlete, I understand that," Lisa said. "You want to maximize your ability and go to the top. I would never discourage that in any of my kids, never, for whatever situation they want to pursue. As long as it's right and they're not harming themselves, I'm 100 percent behind them."

The Robersons reside in San Antonio, Texas, so Andre grew up a fan of the San Antonio Spurs. He went to many activities sponsored by the organization and idolized the biggest players in the city.

"Tim Duncan, David Robinson, those were his mentors growing up," Lisa recalled. "He always looked up to them and now he's kind of followed suit. His demeanor, his meekness, he's not a big flamboyant personality. He really liked the Spurs. As he grows and matures, I'm sure he's really happy here with OKC."

Andre's new teammates may be giving him some playful ribbing thanks to Roberson's former fandom, but with one glance at his family's history, they should have nothing but respect for his ability to play the game.

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