

Men's basketball: CU Buffs' Jaron Hopkins eager to improve

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Colorado freshman basketball player Jaron Hopkins doesn't have a favorite TV show, but he does mostly limit himself to one channel.

"I'm pretty much watching ESPN all day long and what's going on with basketball," he said.

A LeBron James fanatic and Kevin Durant admirer, Hopkins said he watches the game to learn, as much as he does to be entertained.

"I look at a lot of shooting techniques and dribbling techniques and how guys penetrate," he said. "As a point guard, I like to look at how point guards get big men the ball in the right positions."

Colorado, which will be seeking a third consecutive trip to the NCAA Tournament next year, is hoping all of Hopkins' NBA viewing pays off.

"He's a guy that if he shows that he's a good decision maker, he'll play a lot of point guard for us," Buffs head coach Tad Boyle said.

Hopkins, who graduated from Dobson High School in Chandler, Ariz., this past spring, could provide some significant minutes in the backcourt during the 2013-14 season. He averaged 22.2 points, 4.5 rebounds and 2.4 assists per game last year, while also picking up 2.1 steals per game on defense.

"Basically, a player that can score, a player that can get other teammates the ball in the right areas and a defender, as well," he said of what CU fans can expect out of him.

CU already has a star at point guard. Junior-to-be Spencer Dinwiddie is a 6-foot-6 floor general who led the Buffs in scoring (15.3 points per game) and assists (3.0 per game) last year. Dinwiddie is widely regarded as a potential first round selection in the 2014 NBA Draft if he leaves school early.

Listed at 6-foot-5, Hopkins brings similar ability.

"I liken him a lot to Spencer," Boyle said. "He's a big guard. He's more athletic than Spencer, he's stronger than Spencer was when he came in, but he's got a good feel for the game. He can pass, dribble, shoot ... and he can play three positions."

In addition to Dinwiddie and Hopkins, sophomores Eli Stalzer and Xavier Talton will also vie for playing time at point guard, but Hopkins won't be limited to that spot. Much like CU's other incoming freshmen -- Tre'Shaun Fletcher, George King and Dustin Thomas -- and several others on the roster, Hopkins has the ability to play multiple positions and could wind up on the floor next to Dinwiddie or Talton at times.

"I'm probably a point guard most comfortably, because that's where I played in high school and

most of my career," Hopkins said. "As of a right now, I'm playing a lot of (point guard) in workouts, but I'm also running the wing."

Because CU's roster is full of versatile players, Hopkins said he's excited for the upcoming season, regardless of who winds up in particular spots.

"In workouts, we're competing and everyone is fighting for a spot," he said. "I think our team as a whole is going to be pretty good, so we'll get a lot of Ws."

Getting wins is a big reason why Hopkins came to Boulder. CU was one of five Pac-12 schools he considered -- along with Arizona, Oregon State, Washington and Washington State -- and he had scholarship offers from at least a dozen schools.

"I picked CU because it's not too far from home," he said. "It's a good place to be. Coach Boyle is a really good coach and he's doing good things with the program. And, I feel like I can come in as a freshman and make an impact."

Especially if he keeps his TV tuned to ESPN and continues to learn from the pros.

"I've always been told in high school that I improved each year, so I just hope to keep improving throughout college," he said.

Follow Brian on Twitter: @BrianHowell33.