

Colorado men's basketball: Buffs' Xavier Johnson working to become complete player

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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Confidence on the court has never been an issue for Xavier Johnson, but the Colorado sophomore looks even more confident than ever before.

CU will expect a lot from the 6-foot-7 forward this season, and so far in practice he has delivered.

"I've always been a confident guy, but I can definitely say it's renewed," Johnson said. "Coming in freshman year is a little bit of a struggle, and it was difficult, but you learn and you get better every day. I made great strides last year as a freshman."

Now that he's a sophomore, he's hoping to make even greater strides.

Johnson started 18 of 33 games last season and averaged 24.0 minutes per contest. He finished fifth on the team in scoring (8.9 points per game), third in rebounding (4.8 per game) and, among the 10 players who saw at least 100 minutes of court time, he led the squad in field-goal percentage (51.5).

This season, he and the Buffs are hoping to get even more.

"I think he'll be more productive, yeah," assistant coach Mike Rohn said. "I think he's more confident this year, because any time you've been through the program, you know what coach is saying before he says it. That just naturally gives you more confidence."

With Andre Roberson, who finished second in the country with 11.2 rebounds per game, now in the NBA, the Buffs have a void to fill in the paint. Johnson is expected to have a key role in that regard, and Rohn sees no reason why Johnson won't grab more boards.

"A lot of that maybe depends on who he's on the court with," Rohn said. "If he's on the court with Josh (Scott) and Wes (Gordon), they're going to be competing for some rebounds, but he's got the ability. He can get 10 (per game), he can get 11. He can do what Andre did."

Johnson said he's not looking to fill Roberson's shoes, but he does feel he can put up big numbers in the rebounding category.

"I was big at rebounding last year when I put my mind to it, so if I put my mind to it again I think I can do it," he said.

Johnson will likely get rebounds in a different way, though. Roberson spent much of his time near the paint, but Johnson is an exceptional outside shooter. He hit 43.9 percent of his 3-pointers last year, and will still be a major weapon from the perimeter. All that means, though, is that Johnson will have to move a lot more to get to rebounds.

"X is going to have to play consistently hard from outside the 3-point line to keep chasing that ball down," Rohn said.

So far, he is showing a willingness to do that. He's been one of CU's most competitive players in practice and has put a more all-around game on display.

"I've been working on my game this whole summer," he said.

Johnson said he spent a lot of his time working on his ball handling ability, as well as being able to shoot off the dribble.

In addition, Rohn said Johnson is becoming a harder worker on defense.

"I think defensively his mindset is a little better and he knows that's something he's got to get better at," Rohn said.

Scott, a fellow sophomore, can already see a change in Johnson, and he's looking forward to being on the court with him this season.

"He's a lot smarter," Scott said. "He's matured a lot in terms of knowing what's a good shot, knowing he has to rebound and play defense. It's been a good change."

A lot of the change comes from maturity and experience, and it has allowed Johnson to enjoy the game a little more.

"It's good not being a freshman anymore," he said with a laugh.

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Colorado men's basketball: Buffs sell out season tickets

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For the first time in program history, the Buffs are sold out of season tickets. Capacity at Coors Events Center is 11,064, with 7,160 of those being season tickets.

"It's a huge milestone for our program," head coach Tad Boyle said. "It's something we're proud of and I'm very thankful for that our fans have responded the way they have to our team. It's something I never want to take for granted. We want to make sure that we're worthy of the support that we're getting, so it inspires me."

A limited number of single-game tickets will be available to the public, starting on Monday.

The Buffs Blast pre-sale will be on Monday. To sign up for Buffs Blast e-newsletter and be a part of the pre-sale process, visit CUBuffs.com. Whatever tickets are left will go on sale to the public on Tuesday, starting at 8 a.m.

Tickets for CU's two marquee games -- Dec. 7 vs. Kansas and Feb. 22 vs. Arizona -- will be handled differently. According to a press release from CU, "The pre-sale of any remaining single game tickets for these games is being offered via the process that is used for post-season tickets with access based on donor priority points. This process will be conducted through separate communication to eligible priority point groups while supplies last."

CU had a school-record seven sellouts last season and averaged 10,392 fans per game.

Notable

The Buffs will play a closed-door scrimmage at Boise State on Saturday. Per NCAA rules, scrimmages can be scheduled instead exhibition games. The scrimmage is closed to fans and media.

Contact staff writer Brian Howell at howellb@dailycamera.com or twitter.com/BrianHowell33.



Colorado sells out season tickets, another milestone for Tad Boyle's program

By **Kyle Ringo**
17 hours ago
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(USA Today Sports Images)

Colorado won 20 games and went to the postseason for the third consecutive year last season, a historical milestone for a school which has long favored football over hoops.

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...mining this season, coach Tad Boyle celebrated another

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"Not only is it a milestone, it's a significant milestone," Boyle said. "It's something we've been shooting for in our program. Obviously I don't talk to our players a lot about that kind of stuff as we approach it and work for it. I just talk about playing in a way that is going to make people want to come out and see you and support you.

"But the fact that we've sold out all our season tickets before the season starts is significant. Not a lot of teams around the country can probably say that."

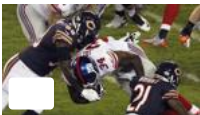
Colorado set attendance records last season for total attendance (155,884), total attendance for conference games (94,371), season average (10,392) and conference average (10,486) in an arena that holds 11,064.

The increasing support and love for the program Boyle is building has led to the Buffs winning 44 of their past 51 home games.

Last season's senior class was the last group of players that could remember what it was like under former coach Jeff Bzdelik and his predecessors when the arena often was less than half full. Boyle said it's good the program is now stocked with players who came to Boulder expecting to play in front of a full house each night, but he doesn't want them to take it for granted.

It used to be the only game each season when Colorado coaches and players could count on the arena being full was when Kansas came to town. Boyle is a Kansas alum.

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"That's why as you go through the events center and you see pictures of our arena full, I want to get rid of those Kansas pictures," Boyle said. "I want them to be against teams that are not Kansas because that shows that it's a significant change for the better."

Boyle's three-year tenure already is one of the two or three best in the history of the program. CU sent Andre Roberson to the NBA in the first round this summer, two years after Alec Burks and Cory Higgins made it to the league. Junior point guard Spencer Dinwiddie is expected to follow next June.

Boyle has put together what has been billed as the toughest nonconference schedule in memory with games against Baylor, Kansas, Oklahoma State, Harvard, Colorado State, Air Force and more.

It's easy to see why CU fans are flocking to the Coors Events Center, especially with the football program going through another rebuilding year under its third different head coach in the past eight seasons. On the gridiron, the Buffs have lost 15 of their first 20 Pac-12 Conference games by 25 or more points. On the hardwood, the Buffs are capable of contending for a conference championship. They surprised two years ago by winning the Pac-12 tournament.

Boyle says it's premature to call this season's team the deepest of his tenure because it is also the youngest. Ten of the 13 scholarship players are freshmen or sophomores.

"We're the youngest team we've had, that's for darn sure," Boyle said. "Now, do we have the ability to be the deepest team? Absolutely. But that is yet to be seen."

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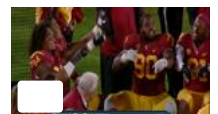
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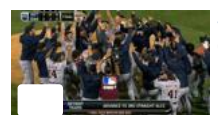
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