

Colorado men's basketball: Buffs' Boyle prefers charges to blocks

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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Few things can energize a home crowd like an in-your-face block of a shot.

As far as Colorado head basketball coach Tad Boyle is concerned, though, a blocked shot is a relatively insignificant statistic.

"If we're No. 1 in shot blocking or No. 12, I don't care," Boyle said.

A year ago, the Buffs ranked 11th in the Pac-12 in blocked shots. But, they were among the top defensive teams in the conference.

"I want to be first in the conference in field-goal percentage defense, I want to be first in the conference in taking charges, and I want to be last in the conference in shot blocks," Boyle said. "If you're protecting the paint by making people take contested shots and you're taking charges and not letting them get to the rim, blocked shots don't matter."

The Buffs had a great shot blocker a year ago with Andre Roberson, but he has since left for the NBA. Redshirt freshman Wesley Gordon is also a great shot blocker, as he has displayed many times already in practice.

"That's just in my game to block shots," Gordon said. "It's natural. It just comes."

He's learning how to play defense the Colorado way, though.

"I'm trying to take more charges," Gordon said. "And, I want to be an overall good defender."

Gordon admits that, at times, his natural instincts take over and he goes for a block. That's fine, Boyle said, as long as it's a smart play.

"I'm not going to tell him he can't block shots, but if he's in position to take a charge, he better take a charge," Boyle said. "If he's in a position to contest a shot, he better contest shots."

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

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Andre Roberson was not only a great shot blocker, he was a great rebounder. In fact, he was No. 2 in the country in rebounding last year, with 11.2 per game.

As the Buffs have gone through their bubble drill during practice -- a drill that emphasizes rebounding -- it's been clear that they are lacking Roberson's nose for the ball.

"We miss Andre rebounding the basketball, there's no question about that," CU coach Tad Boyle said. "We try to challenge these guys to have everybody step up a little bit.

"Hopefully somebody can emerge as a leading rebounder on this team. If they don't, it's going to be tough, because rebounding is a big part of what we do and who we are."

The Buffs were fourth in the conference in the rebounding margin last year (plus-3.3 per game) and Boyle believes there are good rebounders on the roster.

"We'll get better at it," Boyle said. "We've got the athletes and the length; it's just we don't have the mentality yet, and that's our job as coaches."

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