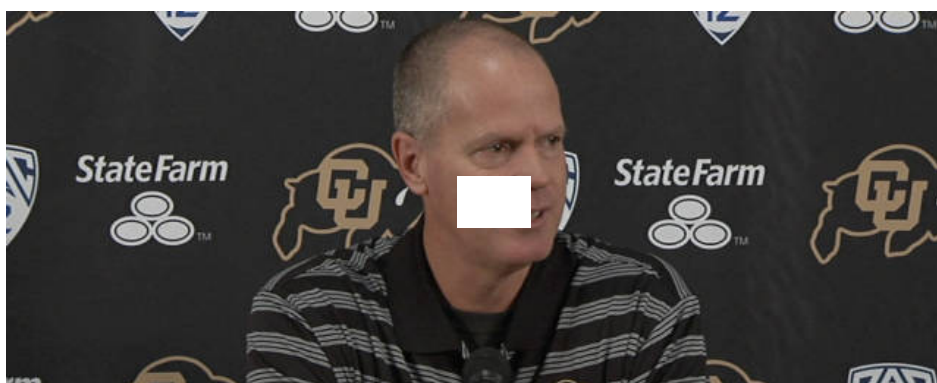




By: CUBuffs.com

CU coach Tad Boyle meets the media on Wednesday.

Brooks: So, What's Not To Like About Boyle's Buffs?

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By: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

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BOULDER – Tad Boyle “really likes” – later it was “loves” – his 2013-14 Colorado men’s basketball team, and not more than 15 seconds into Wednesday’s SRO media day he publicly declared his feelings.

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A lot of other folks out there also like/love the 2013-14 Buffs – or perhaps more accurately, they like/love what Boyle’s program has become and where it’s headed. It’s, ah, heady stuff.

The Buffs’ good vibes have gone viral. CU hoops is Boulder’s biggest buzz, and peddling it is perfectly legal.

For the first time in school history, CU sold out its season-ticket allotment (7,160). And for one of the few times in their mostly inglorious hoops history, the Buffs are showing up in preseason Top 25 rankings (No. 23 by Dick Vitale/ESPN) or just on the fringes (No. 27 by USA Today/Coaches). The Associated Press poll will be out before CU tips it off against Baylor in Dallas on Friday, Nov. 8.

On the conference scene, media covering the Pac-12 recently picked CU No. 3, behind Arizona and UCLA – a ranking Buffs guard Spencer Dinwiddie is yet to warm up to. Dinwiddie, *aka* The Mayor, believes the rest of the P12 – that includes Arizona and UCLA – should be gazing upward at the Buffs, and he said so when the media gathered in LA last week specifically to hear the kind of things Dinwiddie offered.

“It was spontaneous,” he explained Wednesday. “Sometimes the media asks me loaded questions and initially I took the approach of being politically correct. But now I’m like, if you’re going to serve it up to me, I’m going to knock out of the park.”

Boyle doesn’t mind Dinwiddie swinging (or in this case, chirping) for the fences – as long as Dinwiddie backs it up. Confidence, said Boyle, is immeasurable and he wants every guy in a CU uniform to reek of it while at the same time staying “humble and hungry.” (And, yes, you *can* be both.) Being supremely confident, Boyle noted, doesn’t mean talking smack, and in Dinwiddie’s case, “If Spencer is talking and not walking, then we’ve got issues.”

These are all good “problems” to have as October oozes toward November. Long-time CU hoops watchers (and I include myself in that long-suffering bunch) remember years upon years when the beginning of basketball seasons in Boulder tipped off winters of irrelevance. Boyle has changed that, and now he is dealing with a classic blessing/curse scenario, although it leans heavily toward the blessing side.

High expectations, particularly internally, can be a marvelous thing . . . underachieving, well not so much. Even with the most talented roster he’s had in his four years at CU, Boyle of course faces challenges –

and it's because he's overseeing his most talented roster in four years at CU.

"What I worry about day-to-day is not handling the outside expectations, but handling the internal expectations, which is coming to practice every day ready to hook it up and compete, not making excuses, staying humble and staying hungry, challenging each other every day, and just trying to get better every single day," he said. "If we do that, with the talent we have on this team, success will take care of itself. I'm not into managing expectations, but I am into trying to hold our players and our staff, and everybody involved in our program accountable to our internal standards."

That means keeping this talent-rich bunch grounded. Yes, he said, he's "seen signs that players have bought into the hype . . . people are blowing smoke up these guys' rear ends every day – on campus, every time they pick up a paper, listen to the radio, or get on Twitter."

Know this: Boyle and his staff are there to make certain when that smoke reaches their guys' craniums, it clears quickly. "It's my job to make sure they don't buy into that hype and I feel like I am the bad guy right now, but that's OK," he said. "We've watched more film of practices early in the season this year than any team we've had since we've been here because I want to show them they're not running the floor. We have freshman that we are trying to teach and they're trying to learn. I'm not saying it's been all bad, because it hasn't. They know what's ahead of them. But it's my job as a coach this year to keep these guys a little bit on edge."

Guys like Dinwiddie and Askia Booker – a pair of juniors expected to comprise the Buffs' starting backcourt – might be the perceived leaders on this team, but Boyle wants that responsibility shared. Leadership, he said, "emerges" and right now it's being done by committee, which is not a bad thing.

Boyle isn't into naming captains in November or before: "What I don't want to do is give a kid a label of captain (early) and feel like in January they aren't worthy of it and I have to take it away from them," he said. "If I name Spencer and Askia, the two most experienced players, captains, I don't want Josh Scott or Xavier Johnson, any of our freshmen, or (senior) Ben Mills to feel that since they aren't captains they can't say anything. I want everybody to have ownership in our program and everybody to have leadership opportunities in our program."

"Sometimes I think as a coach, when you name captains, you stunt that and you automatically limit kids as leaders. Leaders are going to emerge as the season progresses. When things get tough, who is going to step up and take control and be vocal? That has to emerge. But I think early, Spencer and Askia are our most experienced guys and they are two very vocal guys right now, which is good."

Dinwiddie's summer role with Team USA was priceless in the areas of leadership and beyond. And Booker appears to have matured in his approach to the game as well as in his understanding of what his coaches need from him. In the team's second go-around earlier this month with "The Program" – a crash course in team building and leadership largely conducted by former Navy SEALs – Booker was awarded a T-shirt recognizing him as the player who has power to influence others, be a difference-maker and one who creates/sustains game-day energy.

He told me later he was humbled by the recognition and the responsibility it carries. On Wednesday when I asked if he believed it falls upon him and Dinwiddie to be the load-bearers in keeping the Buffs grounded, he responded, "Oh, without a doubt. Sometimes we have to put guys in check, whether it is verbally or setting an example physically on the court. Either way it goes, Spencer and I, are going to have to set the tempo for this team, and keep everybody grounded and on accord."

Boyle and his team will find out quickly if their heads have swelled or are on straight. Baylor, like CU, was just outside the USA Today/Coaches preseason Top 25, checking in one spot ahead of the Buffs at No. 26. Boyle calls the Bears typically "long, athletic and talented. They'll be a real test for us."

But wait, as they say in the late-night info-mercials . . .

Also showing up on the Buffs' non-conference schedule are Front Range foes Wyoming, Air Force and Colorado State. Toss in Harvard, Kansas, Oklahoma State and Georgia, and you see why Boyle says, "I love our team, but then I look at our non-conference schedule. It's why I get bags under my eyes and I lose sleep at night. I may have over-scheduled; time will tell and we will find out."

Then comes the Pac-12 schedule . . .

But look at it like this: Boyle's no dummy. He wouldn't have booked the Buffs on a trail of tears with no escape route. This team can/will be good; it just needs to be good early. Late, too – and that's what will keep those bags under Boyle's eyes from being put away until maybe early April. By then, whatever the 2013-14 Buffs have achieved will have been earned – and that's exactly how Boyle wants it.

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Colorado Buffaloes Men's Basketball

Show Menu



Colorado men's basketball: No captains yet

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Every year at this time, Colorado men's basketball coach Tad Boyle waits to see exactly who will develop into the leaders of his team.

Right now, junior guards Spencer Dinwiddie and Askia Booker are taking on that role, but that could change throughout the year, Boyle said.

"I believe leadership emerges," Boyle said. "I have never been a guy that names captains early in the year. What I don't want to do is give a kid a label of captain (early) and feel like in January they aren't worthy of it and I have to take it away from them."

He also doesn't like to name captains because he feels it could prevent someone with good leadership qualities -- who wasn't named a captain -- from speaking up and helping the team at certain times of the year.

"I want everybody to have ownership in our program and everybody to have leadership opportunities in our program," Boyle said. "When things get tough, who is going to step up and take control and be vocal? That has to emerge. But I think early, Spencer and Ski are our most experienced guys and they are two very vocal guys right now, which is good."

Walking the walk

Dinwiddie has never shied away from voicing his confidence in the media, and just last week he spoke up at Pac-12 media day in San Francisco and said he believes CU should view itself as the cream of the crop in the conference.

That's OK with Boyle, with one condition.

"As long as he backs it up," Boyle said. "Confidence has never been an issue for Spencer. Part of that I like, but you better back it up. If Spencer's talking and he's not walking, we've got issues, and I've had that conversation with him."

The Buffs were projected by Pac-12 media to finish third.

Zone out

Boyle preaches defense, and has a fierce loyalty to man-to-man defense. On Wednesday, he referred to zone defense as a "four-letter word."

He did admit, though, that with the new rules on hand-checking the Buffs could see more zone defenses, and might actually have to employ a zone themselves to keep key players on the floor.

"I hope not, because I love man-to-man defense," he said. "The question I am going to be faced with at times this year maybe is, are you better off playing a zone with your better

players who are in foul trouble or do you stick with your principals and what you believe in and play man-to-man with three or four freshmen on the floor?"

Notable

The men's team will open its season Nov. 8 against Baylor in Dallas.

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

Colorado men's basketball: Freshmen will play key role for Buffs

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

There is a general perception that the Colorado men's basketball roster is filled with talented and experienced players.

There's no question the roster is loaded with talent. Experience, on the other hand, is not so abundant. It is the inexperienced players that will likely determine whether CU meets its expectations this season.

"The key I think is to get the freshmen and the guys who haven't played, the redshirt freshmen, on track fast," said junior guard Askia Booker, who started all 33 games a year ago. "If we can do that, I think we can be as good as anybody in the country. They're so talented and they're going to be able to contribute to this team, so once they get on track, we'll be just fine."

On the surface, CU does have experience. The Buffs do, after all, return four starters from a team that went 21-12 and reached the NCAA Tournament for the second year in a row.

That's why CU will be among the Top 25 teams in many preseason rankings, and it's why most expect the Buffaloes to in the NCAA Tournament field once again this season.

But beyond that foursome of returners -- guards Spencer Dinwiddie and Booker and forwards Josh Scott and Xavier Johnson -- the Buffs have six players who have never suited up for a college game and four others (seniors Ben Mills and Beau Gamble and sophomores Xavier Talton and Eli Stalzer) who played a combined 497 minutes last year.

"It's almost like coaching two teams at this point," head coach Tad Boyle on Wednesday during CU's annual media day.

CU lost one exceptional starter, as forward Andre Roberson left early for the NBA. But it could be the absence of last year's role players -- Sabatino Chen, Jeremy Adams and Shane Harris-Tunks -- that they feel the most. Especially early in the season.

"We brought in a lot of experience off of the bench last year and this year we are going to be playing a lot of guys who don't know what Division I basketball is all about," Boyle said. "But they're going to find out quick; we are going to throw them into the fire."

There certainly isn't a lack of talent among the group of freshmen.

Redshirt freshman Wesley Gordon is a 6-foot-9, 230-pound forward who could play a significant role in filling Roberson's shoes. Gordon is a talented rebounder and defender who also blocks shots.

True freshman Jaron Hopkins is a 6-foot-5 point guard who has already impressed his coaches and teammates with his athleticism and play-making ability.

The other three true freshmen -- Tre'Shaun Fletcher, George King and Dustin Thomas -- and redshirt freshman Chris Jenkins are all versatile players who can help CU in a variety of ways this season.

The real question is: When will they be ready to make significant contributions?

The Buffs hit the ground running on Nov. 8 in Dallas against a Baylor team that is as highly regarded nationally as CU, if not more so.

That's just the start of an intense non-conference schedule.

CU also faces national power and Big 12 favorite Kansas; Oklahoma State, which should challenge KU and Baylor in the Big 12 and will be on many Top 10 lists at the start of the year; Georgia, which has NCAA Tournament hopes; Wyoming, which is 2-0 against Boyle's Buffs; Jackson State, which is expected to compete for the SWAC title; UC Santa Barbara, which should contend for the Big West title; Ivy League favorite Harvard; Southern Conference favorite Elon; and in-state rivals Air Force and Colorado State.

That's not an easy schedule for a veteran team, let alone one with so many freshmen.

"I may have over-scheduled; time will tell and we will find out," Boyle said. "This team, as young as we are, there might be some bumps along the road. It's how do we handle that, how do we bounce back from that, how resilient are we? That's going to be the test this year."

It's a test the Buffs are eager to take, because they can't wait to see if their freshmen are as good as advertised.

"I think the overall talent level is very high so that impresses me," Dinwiddie said. "As long as their learning curve is up to speed by the time Nov. 8 hits, then they all have a shot at playing. They are just very talented."

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

Tad Boyle wants CU Buffs "humble and hungry" despite high expectations

By John Henderson The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — Colorado men's basketball coach Tad Boyle said his biggest chore this season is keeping his upstart Buffaloes from believing the hype.

The media picked Colorado to finish third in the Pac-12. The highest it had ever been picked in preseason is sixth in the Big 12 in 2003-04.

"No. 1, we want to stay humble and we want to stay hungry," Boyle said at Wednesday's media day. "Humble and hungry is what it's all about. We try not to talk about expectations."

The expectations were expected. The Buffaloes have four starters returning from a 21-12 team (10-8 Pac-12) that reached the NCAA Tournament. They have finished in the top five in the league three years in a row. The last time that happened was in 1969-71 in the old Big Eight.

"There's people blowing smoke up these guys' rear ends, every day," Boyle said. "On campus, every time they pick up the paper or listen to the radio or get on Twitter. It's my job to make sure they don't buy into that hype. I feel I'm the bad guy right now."

"But that's OK."

The players say they don't buy the hype but some are making it. Junior guard Spencer Dinwiddie highlighted Thursday's Pac-12 Media Day in San Francisco by saying, "We don't view Arizona as the top, the cream, and everybody is the rest. We view ourselves as the cream and everybody else can fight for the rest of the spots."

On Wednesday he didn't regret saying it even though he got buried on Twitter by Arizona fans.

"It was really spontaneous," he said. "Sometimes the media asks me a loaded question and initially I took the approach to be politically correct. Now I'm like, if you're going to serve it up to me, I'm going to knock it out of the park."

Colorado opens the season Nov. 8 against Baylor in Dallas.

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Tad Boyle's CU Buffs enter season with high hopes, 3 areas of concern

By John Henderson *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — The decibel level of Tad Boyle's voice has shot up this fall. From the inner sanctum of Coors Events Center, he can probably be heard on Colorado's football practice field, which offers a stark contrast in coaching approaches.

First-year football coach Mike MacIntyre, trying to squeeze every last drop of ability from an outmanned team, is nurturing and patient. Boyle, in his fourth year as basketball coach, with a team picked third in the Pac-12, has a squad on the verge of national prominence.

"It's my job," Boyle said during Wednesday's media day, "to keep them on edge."

With four starters back off a 21-12 team, here are three areas of concern as the season opener against Baylor approaches Nov. 8.

Defense. Andre Roberson, the best defender in the league, left early for the NBA. At 6-foot-7, Roberson could guard Utah's 6-10 center, Jason Washburn, one night and lock down Cal's 6-6 All-Pac 12 guard, Allen Crabbe, on another.

Can Spencer Dinwiddie, a 6-6 point guard, do that? He'll need help. Defense has been the foundation of Boyle's program. He won't miss Roberson offensively. He will defensively.

"We were No. 2 in the conference in field goal percentage defense and we always want to be in the top three," Boyle said, "but we want to be first."

Inside toughness. This has been a finesse team. They struggled against big, physical presences like Arizona State's 7-2 Jordan Bachynski, who led two wins over the Buffs last season.

It's the big reason sophomore Josh Scott bulked up 20 pounds to 6-10, 245. He's not only noticeably bigger, but also stronger. He pushed his bench press from 205 pounds ("Once and probably not even once sometimes," he said) to 240 three times.

"It was hard," he said. "I was constantly eating. I'd get text messages from (strength coach James) Hardy: 'Go eat. Go get a protein shake.' I lifted every day. I was sore all summer. But it paid off."

Outside shooting. The Buffaloes shot only .433 last year, ninth in the league, including .344 from 3-point range. Guard Askia Booker faded in conference play, hitting only .327 and .253 from long range.

He spent the offseason with a personal trainer working on everything from his athleticism to conditioning. But mostly he worked on his jump shot.

Every day he made 500 jumpers (out of about 800 attempts, he said). On Sundays he made 1,000.

"It's more consistent," said Booker, who's getting over a stomach virus that knocked him out for three weeks. "I watched a lot of film this summer. I wasn't holding my follow through. I was rushing my shots. I made sure I'm holding my follow through and I'm taking the right shot at the right time."

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