

Colorado men's basketball: Buffs' Gordon eager to return to court

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Disappointing events can sometimes lead to a positive outcome.

Wesley Gordon, a 6-foot-9 redshirt freshman forward at Colorado, discovered that one day during high school.

"I got detention," said Gordon, who attended Sierra High in Colorado Springs. "We were sitting in the library and we started playing chess and this dude killed me at it.

"But, I got detention probably a week later and we played again and I started getting the hang of it, and started understanding what could happen and I really started liking it."

Years later, chess is still one of Gordon's favorite things to do, and he's become so good that he claims his CU teammates won't play against him.

"Nah, they're not smart enough," he said with a laugh. "I played with Josh (Scott) last year and I killed him. I played with Shane (Harris-Tunks). He said he was good and I killed him, too. After that, no one really wanted to play me."

Gordon is hoping that people eventually feel the same way about going up against him in basketball. But, to get to that point, he has to turn another disappointing event into a positive.

Last year, Gordon spent his first year as a college basketball player watching. He did get to practice with the Buffaloes, but as a redshirt player, he couldn't participate in games.

"Just to watch and then you feel like you could be out there and you're not, it's kind of hard," he said. "It'll pay off in the end."

With the Buffaloes' season opener less than two weeks away, the redshirt year already seems to be paying off for Gordon. His strength and athleticism have been routinely put on display during preseason practices, suggesting Gordon could be in line for a big year.

"Well he's more mature, so that's the biggest thing," junior point guard Spencer Dinwiddie said. "He already knows the concepts and the principles that we're looking for in somebody that's going to play heavy minutes. So, the redshirt year was big for him."

With Andre Roberson -- the country's second-leading rebounder last year -- now in the NBA, the Buffs need several players to pick up the slack. Gordon might be one of the most important Buffs in that regard. He is not a similar player to Roberson, but like Roberson, he's got natural shot-blocking ability and the athleticism to snag rebounds in bunches.

"He's probably not going to come in and set the world on fire and be a 20 (points per game) and 10 (rebounds per game) guy but, he's going to be very solid for us," Dinwiddie said.

"He's going to rebound a lot, he's going to block shots, and he's going to score, and be a great addition to our team."

Gordon spent his redshirt year learning CU's system, building muscle (he's gone from 215 pounds to 230 in the past year) and polishing his game.

"I mainly just worked out and tried to gain some more pounds, so I could be able to be more stable in the post," Gordon said. "I feel stronger and I can move people easier, so yeah, I feel the benefits of it."

It's ironic that Gordon spent the year doing nothing but practicing, because years ago, he hated to practice.

Growing up in Colorado Springs, Gordon played several different sports, but in middle school it became clear that basketball was his sport.

"I didn't really like practice or anything, so when I was beating kids that did practice hard and beating older people, it just showed me that it came naturally and that if I worked at it, I'd be good," he said.

At Sierra, Gordon became very good. He averaged 19.7 points per game as a senior, helping the Stallions reach the Class 4A state championship game in 2012. His team was defeated in the finals, 44-43, by Lewis-Palmer, which was led by current CU teammate Josh Scott.

Since arriving at CU, Gordon has spent countless hours going against Scott in practice. Gordon may have the upper hand against Scott in chess, but on the court, Scott is the one helping Gordon.

"Going against him every day just helps my defense get better and better," he said.

If Gordon can get anywhere near as good at basketball as he has become at chess, the Buffaloes could have a star on the horizon.

As far as Gordon is concerned, however, he just simply wants to get on the court and enjoy playing the game again.

"I'm real excited, just because I get to play again," he said. "It's not about showing anybody anything; I just want to play."

"I might get nervous because I haven't played in a while, but I hope I don't."

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