

Men's basketball: Jenkins ready to contribute to Boyle's Buffs

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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After sitting out last season as a redshirt, Chris Jenkins is eager to see how he can help the Colorado men's basketball team this year.

Head coach Tad Boyle is interested to see what role Jenkins fills, too.

"Now it's time to step up," Boyle said. "He's got the ability, there's no question about it."

A 6-foot-7 guard/forward from Detroit, Jenkins didn't exactly enjoy sitting out the season to redshirt, but he does feel it benefited him.

"It was real tough," he said. "I had to miss a year of what you love, basketball, so I've just got to come out stronger."

He said that redshirting allowed him to get more comfortable with Boyle's system. It also allowed him to get stronger -- physically, but also mentally.

"When I first came in, I wasn't all with the system," he said. "I wasn't really a good thinker, but I'm a better thinker this year."

Jenkins didn't get as strong as Boyle would have liked, however. At 185 pounds, he's still smaller than the Buffs want him to be.

"I wish he would have gained more weight," Boyle said. "I wish he would have gained more strength in the weight room. He didn't, but he's got the physical tools -- the length, the athleticism, the shooting ability, the ball-handling ability, the passing ability -- to help this team."

Jenkins had to battle through an offseason shoulder injury, but has, at various times, looked quite capable of playing a major role for CU.

"I thought in June that Chris Jenkins was one of the bright spots of this team, the way he was playing, the way he was exerting himself -- his will on the game -- making plays," Boyle said.

A pre-med student with a goal to attend the CU Denver medical school and then become an anesthesiologist, Jenkins comes into the season knowing he's got plenty of competition on the team. He also comes in confident he can contribute.

"I've got a chip on my shoulder because I have something to prove," he said. "I feel very confident. That's one thing I also bring to the table. Last year I didn't really have it."

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Starting practices on Sept. 30 gives the Buffs six weeks to prepare for the season opener on Nov. 8 against Baylor. That's a lot of time, but the Buffs have a few scrimmages planned during those six weeks and those should keep them sharp.

"I think they've got enough things over this 42-day period that will keep their attention and keep them dialed in," Boyle said. "We just have to make sure we don't lose practices from lack of effort and lack of being dialed in mentally. You always fight that."

Overwhelmed

CU's four true freshmen -- Tre'Shaun Fletcher, Jaron Hopkins, George King and Dustin Thomas -- are getting a crash course in CU basketball right now.

"We've thrown the kitchen sink at them," Boyle said. "We've put things in quicker this year than we ever have before. Our four freshmen, I don't expect them to be very good right now because their minds and their wheels are turning.

"I told them all they may get worse before they get better, and we have to understand that as coaches, but they're all four talented and going to be good players for us."

Turning heads

Senior guard Kevin Nelson is doing well for the Buffs. A walk-on who transferred from Missouri State University West Plains, Nelson missed last year with a broken ankle.

"He's making the coaches take notice, in terms of what he's doing in practice," Boyle said. "He and Askia (Booker), in my mind, are our two hardest workers off the (practice) court on their own game."

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