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college basketball

## Bzdelik: Big 12 an "awesome" opportunity

By Tom Kensler  
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Colorado men's basketball coach Jeff Bzdelik answers questions at Big 12 basketball media days in Oklahoma City. (AP | Sue Ogrocki)

OKLAHOMA CITY — Speaking today during Big 12 media day activities for men's basketball, Colorado coach Jeff Bzdelik called the conference "the most competitive situation" that he has ever faced.

That, Bzdelik said, includes his long career in the NBA.

"I've been coaching 32 years," Bzdelik told reporters, "and I spent six years in the Big Ten when that league had Lute Olson, coach (Bob) Knight, Eldon Miller, Jim Dutcher that was a great, great league. Then I had 17-plus years in the NBA.

"To take those levels aside, the Big 12 is an awesome, awesome league. That's why when I had an opportunity to partake in that, I said, 'I'd like to

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do that.' It offers a challenge that is unlike any other in basketball.

"It's such a great league with great coaches, great programs, great tradition — you have to be ready to strap it and be ready to play every single time."

Colorado, 12-20 in 2007-08, enters his second season much further ahead at this stage of preseason practices, Bzdelik said.

"Most importantly, it's (improved) skill level," Bzdelik said. "People will talk about the fact that we lost Richard Roby and Marcus Hall, who were our top scorers. Well, we're scoring the ball better right now. We can shoot the ball at every position."

In a preseason poll of Big 12 coaches, Colorado was picked to finish last. Colorado has only one senior forward, Jermyl Jackson-Wilson, and one senior guard, Dwight Thorne, on scholarship.

"We're very inexperienced and extremely young," Bzdelik said. "That makes for a very challenging season. But there's a very bright light at the end of the tunnel."

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# Bzdelik's Buffs gain respect from Big 12 coaches

## League bosses expect CU men to be improved

By Ryan Thorburn  
Thursday, October 23, 2008

OKLAHOMA CITY -- Jeff Capel's embarrassment has turned into respect.

Oklahoma's young head coach -- whose Sooners have been picked by his peers to win the Big 12 this season -- was not very happy after losing 72-58 to last-place Colorado on Feb. 9 in Boulder.

Instead of giving the Buffs credit for rising up and knocking off his NCAA Tournament-bound team, Capel expressed shame in losing to the inferior foe.

"This is the most embarrassing thing I've been a part of," Capel said outside the visitors locker room at the Coors Events Center that evening.

A month later at the Big 12 Tournament, the Sooners avenged the disappointing defeat and put an end to CU's long season with a 54-49 victory in Kansas City.

At Thursday's basketball media event, Capel was in more of a giving mood when asked by the Camera to reflect on his first two experiences coaching against Jeff Bzdelik.

"That game they beat us at their place, they were phenomenal that day and they made us look really bad how they played," Capel said. "Jeff does a really good job. He's starting to get his guys in there, and they play a style that's very tough to prepare for, especially on short notice."

The Buffs had to face OU in the second round of the Big 12 Tournament 24 hours after upsetting Baylor in a 91-84 marathon.

"They played us very close at the tournament and we were fortunate they played a double-overtime game," Capel said. "I think they ran out of gas, and we were able to move on from there."

Baylor head coach Scott Drew wasn't pleased after losing to CU, either. The March madness landed the Bears on the bubble and they were unable to recover after waiting nervously for the invitation to the Big Dance, losing in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

"All year long we haven't had a bad loss, but in the Big 12 tournament, a five shouldn't lose to a 12," Drew said after the Buffs became the first No. 5 seed to advance.

Baylor returns a very talented and experienced group -- including seniors Henry Dugat, Curtis Jerrells and Kevin Rogers -- and is tied for third with defending national champion Kansas in the preseason coaches poll.

"CU is a tough team to prepare against," Drew said on Thursday. "I know we're happy not to see (Marcus) Hall and (Richard) Roby again. I think you saw a couple seniors that didn't want to play in their last game. They executed very well and that's a tribute to Jeff."

OU welcomes back Blake Griffin, who Kansas head coach Bill Self described as "the best player in the country" on Thursday. The powerful forward from Oklahoma City is the main reason the Sooners are expected to win the Big 12 and make a run at a Final Four.

Griffin's presence in the conference will be even more imposing this season with underclassmen Michael Beasley (Kansas State), D.J. Augustin (Texas), Brandon Rush (Kansas), Darrell Arthur (Kansas), Mario Chalmers (Kansas), DeAndre Jordan (Texas A&M) and Bill Walker (Kansas State) all leaving college life to work in the NBA.

"They'll reload," Bzdelik said when asked about the departure of all the star power.

CU loses Roby and Hall, the catalysts of the OU and Baylor upsets, and Bzdelik will likely start two sophomores and three freshmen this season.

So despite finally experiencing a taste of success late in the season, the Buffs are back at square one in terms of preseason respect -- picked to finish last in the Big 12 by the coaches.

That doesn't mean the Sooners have already penciled in a "W" on the schedule Feb. 7 when CU visits Norman.

"They kicked our butts at their place," Capel said. "I think it does speak volumes about the depth of the league that a team picked that way can beat anyone on any given night."



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