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CU's Knutson takes great pains to play

By Patrick Ridgell

Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Levi Knutson hopes his sophomore season on Colorado's men's basketball team will be better than his freshman year. It probably will be, but it won't be easy.

Knutson dealt with a painful hip condition as a freshman last year that he said included bones grinding on one another and cartilage tearing. Knutson said he really hadn't experienced it before but saw it grow gradually worse through 2007-08. Spring surgery fixed the condition.

On Monday, Knutson acknowledged that his other hip is now sore with what could be a similar problem. It could also require surgery. He pledged to play through it, though, and he and his coach, Jeff Bzdelik, said the guard is "100 percent."

"It's been a little sore, but right now, the plan is just to go," Knutson said. "I've been playing with it through all the preseason stuff. So right now, the plan is just to play."

Said Bzdelik: "Technically, he is (100 percent) from the standpoint that when he's on the court, it doesn't affect him."

Knutson's shooting is the stuff people tell stories about. One time, in the fall of 2007, he hit 72 3-pointers in one 5-minute drill. Such shooting skill was a big reason why he averaged 28.6 points at Littleton's Arapahoe High during his senior year, when he was Mr. Basketball in Colorado.

He shot 42 percent from the floor last season, including 33 percent from 3-point range, while averaging 4.6 points. He appeared in all 32 games.

Knutson said he was on crutches for two or three weeks last spring before walking, then running, then shooting, then jump shooting. He went 1-for-5 from the field, all 3s, in CU's season-opening 76-56 defeat of Arkansas-Pine Bluff on Friday.

The shot, Knutson said, "is all there."

"On Friday, I missed a few shots I thought I should hit," Knutson said. "Everything felt good. I was just a little short or a little long. For a shooter, as long as you're not missing left or right, you stay confident with your shots."

"A couple, I thought, were in and out. They'll start to go down."



Colorado's Levi Knutson finds an open man behind him as Arkansas-Pine Bluff's Terrance Calvin defends at Coors Events Center in Boulder on Friday. **Joshua**

Buck/Times-Call

Tonight's games

Montana State (0-1) at Colorado (1-0)

When/Where: 7 p.m. tonight, at Coors Events Center in Boulder

TV/Radio: No TV/760-AM.

The series: Montana State leads, 5-1. Montana State has won five straight, including the last meeting, a 78-75 decision on Dec. 29, 1998, in Boulder.

Leading scorers: MSU – Divaldo Mbunga (16 points in opener); CU – Casey Crawford (14 points in opener).

Notes: Montana State lost its opener, 72-63, at home to Nevada on Saturday. ... CU coach Jeff Bzdelik said his team's rebounding must improve. Arkansas-Pine Bluff outrebounded the Buffs, 38-31, in Friday's opener. ... CU shot 52 percent while beating Arkansas Pine-Bluff.

-Patrick Ridgell

Northern Colorado (0-1) at Colorado State (1-0)

When/Where: 7 p.m. tonight, at Moby Arena in Fort Collins

CU's offense needs as many good perimeter shooters as possible to thrive. Knutson said his comfort in that, as well as his returning teammates' comfort, is much further along than a year ago, in Bzdelik's first season.

Bzdelik said he expects from Knutson, as he does from all his players, good, solid play that adheres to a team concept. Bzdelik said he expects Knutson to shoot well this year, too.

"He played well the other night," Bzdelik said. "He missed a couple of shots he normally would make. We have confidence in him. He was fine.

"Offense is a variable. Sometimes those shots go down, sometimes they don't. You give him those shots consistently, he's going to make three out of five, or four out of five."

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TV/Radio: No TV/560-AM and 1310-AM.

The series: CSU leads, 60-34, including 42-11 in Fort Collins.

Leading scorers: UNC — Jefferson Mason (15 points in opener); CSU — Andy Ogide (20 points in opener).

Notes: Last season, UNC beat CSU, 72-59, in Greeley. It was the Bears' first win against CSU since 1986. ... CSU beat Montana, 85-55, in its opener last Friday. ... UNC lost at Oregon, 66-64, in Friday's opener.

-Brian Howell



Bufs won't overlook Bobcats

Bzdelik aims to avoid Hawkins' fate vs. Montana State

By Ryan Thorburn

Tuesday, November 18, 2008

With 10 underclassmen on his roster Jeff Bzdelik isn't going to overlook any opponent on Colorado's schedule this year.

CU's second-year head coach points to Portland's victory over Washington, Mercer's upset over Alabama and VMI's stunner over Kentucky as early-season examples of national parity in college basketball.

And Bzdelik is also familiar with the Buffs' recent football history.

"We have tremendous respect for everybody," Bzdelik said before Monday's practice. "And we all know what happened the last time Montana State came to town."

The Bobcats, of course, defeated the Buffs 19-10 in the 2006 opener at Folsom Field, spoiling Dan Hawkins' CU debut in a stunning Big Sky triumph over a BCS opponent. The hardwood rematch is scheduled to tip off at 7 p.m. today in the Coors Events Center.

CU is coming off a 76-56 victory over Arkansas-Pine Bluff. Montana State lost 72-63 at home to Nevada in its opener.

"They're a really aggressive team and they shoot the ball well and definitely crash the offensive boards," CU point guard Nate Tomlinson said after watching film of the Bobcats.

Casey Crawford led four Buffs in double figures with 14 points against the Golden Lions. The sophomore transfer missed everything on his first shot in a CU uniform but was 6-for-7 from the field after taking a deep breath.

"I was extremely nervous, to say the least," Crawford said. "I went out there and air-balled my first shot by like three feet, so that kind of broke the tension for me a little bit. I got that one out of the way. I made my next one and it just felt good to play again."

Arkansas-Pine Bluff played zone defense for most of the game, and the Buffs responded with 10 3-pointers from behind the new line of 20 feet, nine inches. The only numbers the players heard about during practices were getting out-rebounded 38-31 and having the visitors match them 36-36 on the scoreboard in the second half.

"Defense and rebounding are areas that really disappointed me the other night," Bzdelik said. "And we worked very hard over the last several days to do a better job of that."

The Bobcats were only 4-for-22 (18.2 percent) from behind the arc against the Wolf Pack but are expected to continue shooting from long range tonight.

Tomlinson made his first four 3-pointers to score 12 points and also had three assists with no turnovers in his CU debut. Freshman forward Austin Dufault (13 points) and sophomore guard Cory Higgins (12 points) added to the balanced attack.

"We're extremely balanced. None of us are selfish," Crawford said. "Nate's in control of the ball and it's ultimately his job to distribute the ball and get it where it needs to be so a large portion of the credit goes to him. But I've been practicing with Nate for two or three months now so it doesn't surprise me."

Dwight Thorne added eight points. Levi Knutson had some open looks off the bench but only finished with three points on 1-for-5 shooting from behind the arc.

"I have confidence in him," Bzdelik said of Knutson. "You give him those shots consistently, he's going to make three out of five or four out of five. I'm not concerned at all."

Montana State leads the all-time series, which dates back to 1924, 5-1 with a 1-1 record in Boulder.



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