

colorado basketball

Jackson-Wilson builds for future

By Tom Kensler The Denver Post

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BOULDER — The way Colorado forward Jermyl Jackson-Wilson had always pictured it, his "senior night" celebration would offer an opportunity for fans to wish him and the team good luck in the upcoming NCAA Tournament.

Oh, well.

"Nobody wants to be in a rebuilding year, especially in your last year," Jackson-Wilson said. "You're not always given the best cards to play with. But you make the best with what you have.

"Even with the losses, I know I have to put things in perspective. Not many people have the opportunity to play Division I basketball. I think I've been blessed regardless."

Colorado (9-19, 1-13 Big 12) will try to snap a nine-game losing streak Wednesday night in its home finale against Texas A&M (21-8, 7-7). Whatever farewell remarks Jackson-Wilson makes afterward are sure to come from the

heart.

"I have great pride for this program and for this school," said Jackson-Wilson, who earned one bachelor's degree (in ethnic studies) in August and is working on another. "I want the program to succeed even when I'm not here anymore. Losing all these close games, the players will know how to win next year. Because of that, I'll know I contributed."

It has been a long road for Jackson-Wilson. The Milwaukee native was recruited from Fork Union Military Academy (Va.) by Ohio State coach Jim O'Brien.

Oh, well. O'Brien was fired for recruiting violations before Jackson-Wilson arrived in Columbus. Under Thad Matta, Jackson-Wilson rode the bench for all but 25 minutes during his freshman year and asked for his release.

He then gave a call to Colorado's Ricardo Patton, who almost signed him out of high school. After sitting out the required transfer year, Jackson-Wilson played just one season for Patton before Jeff Bzdelik became the new coach. Jackson-Wilson adapted again and has become a two-year starter under Bzdelik. He averages 5.5 points and 3.9 rebounds this season.

"Everyone in that locker room loves that guy," sophomore guard Levi Knutson said of Jackson-Wilson. "He's a great team player. He's one of the most unselfish guys I've ever met. He's always battling."

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Jackson-Wilson has no choice but to battle. At 6-feet-6, he's often matched against an opponent 4 or 5 inches taller.

Said Bzdelik, "Although Jermyl might be undersized for his position, he's never undersized with his heart and his desire."

Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280 or tkensler@denverpost.com

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