



Thorburn: Burks brings swagger to Bzdelik's program

By Ryan Thorburn
Thursday, April 16, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — Don't be surprised if Jeff Bzdelik is walking around campus wearing sunglasses this spring.

There is finally some light at the end of the long, dark, cold tunnel that is Colorado basketball.

When the Buffs officially report for full-team practices in October, enough pieces will be in place for the program to finally make a move in the right direction.

Alec Burks already believes he is the missing piece. In fact, the promising prep prospect from Grandview, Mo., has been having visions of grandeur since Jan. 31.

That was the day when the Buffs were within one possession of eventual Big 12 champion Kansas with less than a minute remaining at Allen Fieldhouse.

And the Sherron Collins happened.

The fearless Jayhawks point guard put a move on Nate Tomlinson that sent his freshman counterpart sprawling to the floor. Then Collins calmly drained a floater over the finger tips of Cory Higgins and Jermyl Jackson-Wilson with a second to spare on the shot clock and 23.3 seconds left in the game.

KU escaped with a 66-61 victory over CU.

Sitting in the stands that afternoon, Burks thought about how differently the game might have turned out had he been on the legendary court in crunch time.

"It was bittersweet," Burks said of following the Buffs, who finished 9-22 overall and just 1-15 in the Big 12, from a distance. "I went and saw the game when we almost beat Kansas. If I was out there I think we would have won. Next year we should be able to win that game."

In case you hadn't noticed, Burks is extremely confident that he will be able to make an immediate impact at CU.

This is a good development for the conservative Bzdelik. Let's face it, the Buffs could use some swagger.

But what kind of Big 12 game does Burks really have?

"It's a great conference and I can't wait to play in it," Burks said. "I think my shooting, ball handling, passing and competitiveness will all translate well to college. I need to work on defense."

Burks led Grandview High to a 29-2 record last season, including a run to the program's first state championship game appearance in Missouri's largest classification. The 6-foot-4 point guard averaged 22.6 points per game

During the playoff run, Burks scored 30 points against a team that featured Missouri-bound recruit Michael Dixon, who scored 22 points.

Burks, who chose CU over Kansas State, was recently named the Gatorade player of the year in the Show-Me State.

"It meant a lot," Burks said of the honor. "It's shows you're a good player."

Burks plans to come to Boulder in June to begin taking summer classes and working out with his new teammates. He will be a part of a solid recruiting class that includes small forward Keegan Hornbuckle and center Shane Harris-Tunks, who both signed letters of intent in the fall, and Shannon Sharpe, who dotted the i's and crossed the t's on his letter of intent Wednesday as the spring signing period began.

All of the above are going to be true freshmen, which means the baby-faced Buffs are going to get even younger.

Dwight Thorne, the only member of Ricardo Patton's final recruiting class at CU, will be the only scholarship senior. And he won't turn 21 until Sept. 23.

Higgins, who led the Buffs in scoring, rebounding, steals and minutes last season, is on the verge of becoming a star. He will be a junior, along with Casey Crawford and Levi Knutson.

Tomlinson and Austin Dufault, who took their lumps as true freshmen starters against players like Collins and Blake Griffin, figure to be much improved after spending the offseason adding some muscle in the weight room.

Toby Veal, the player on the team with the most potential, and Trey Eckloff, the player on the team with the most beautiful basketball mind, should be more consistent contributors as sophomores.

"I'm looking forward to playing with Cory Higgins and some of the older guys," Burks said. "And getting to know my recruiting class."

Burks, Hornbuckle, Harris-Tunks and Sharpe should all compete for playing time in a deeper rotation and/or challenge for spots in the starting lineup.

And the departure of Ryan Kelley will mean the addition of a bigger body, perhaps 6-7 forward Marcus Relphorde, who has made a visit to CU.

Believe it or not, the Buffs are starting to look like a real Big 12 team. Does that mean they are actually going to back up Burks' bravado by beating Kansas at Allen Fieldhouse next year?

Probably not. But at least they're thinking big.

And after enduring three consecutive 20-loss seasons, the bruised and battered Buffs basketball fans out there need a ray of hope.



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Sharpe makes CU official choice by signing letter of intent

Point guard set to join Bzdelik's Buffs

Camera staff report

Wednesday, April 15, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — California's Shannon Sharpe signed a National Letter of Intent play basketball at Colorado on Wednesday.

Sharpe, a 6-0, 190-pound point guard averaged 17.9 points per game at Centennial High School during the 2007-08 season. He also averaged 7.9 rebounds, 7.7 assists and 3.2 steals per game for the Huskies.

He was named to the Division 2 all-California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) and all-Riverside County first-teams his senior year.

“Our goal during the late signing period was to add a guard who is physical and adds athleticism to our team. Shannon Sharpe fills this need,” Buffs coach Jeff Bzdelik said.

Sharpe is the fourth incoming freshman joining the 2009-10 Buffaloes roster.

Last November, CU signed Alec Burks (Guard, 6'5", 180, Grandview, Mo./Grandview High School); Shane Harris-Tunks (Center/Forward, 6'11", 240, Sydney, Australia/Australian Institute of Sport); and Keegan Hornbuckle (Forward, 6'6", 190, Fr., Los Angeles, Calif./Campbell Hall High School).

With the departure of freshman guard Ryan Kelley, CU has one scholarship available for the late signing period that expires May 20.



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THE DENVER POST

college basketball

This Shannon Sharpe signs with the Buffs

By Tom Kensler and Natalie Meisler
The Denver Post

Posted: 04/16/2009 12:30:00 AM MDT

Updated: 04/16/2009 12:47:14 AM MDT

Colorado has landed an athletic point guard who fits the late-bloomer description. Shannon Sharpe, a 6-foot, 190-pounder from Corona, Calif., signed a national letter of intent with CU on Wednesday, the first day of the six-week spring signing period for men's and women's basketball.

"Our goal during the late signing period was to add a guard who is physical and adds athleticism to our team. Shannon Sharpe fills this need," coach Jeff Bzdelik said.

Although he averaged 17.9 points, 7.9 rebounds and 7.7 assists as a senior at Centennial High School in Corona in 2007-08, Sharpe received scholarship offers from only mid-major programs. Thinking bigger, he enrolled last fall at a prep school, Laurinburg (N.C.) Academy, to

try to improve his stock. But he was homesick and returned to California after a semester.

"I'm very athletic, so I feel I can bring energy to the program," Sharpe said. "I can't wait to get out there."

The Tuesday announcement that CU freshman guard Ryan Kelley had decided to transfer from the program opened a roster spot for another signee. The Buffs seek an athletic forward with rebounding skills, and 6-7 Marcus Relphorde of Indian Hills (Junior) College in Ottumwa, Iowa, is known to be a target.

Colorado signed three players during the early signing period in November: 6-11 Shane Harris-Tunks from Australia, 6-6 Keegan Hornbuckle of Los Angeles and 6-5 Alec Burks of Grandview (Mo.) in the Kansas City area.

Colorado State: Lawrence (Kan.) High School point guard Dorian Green, a 6-foot-2, 170-pound Class 6A all-state first-team selection, signed as promised with the Rams.

"Dorian is a player. He can play with guys, off guys, score, pass and he has great elevation in his jump shot," said CSU coach Tim Miles. "He's skinny. We can fix skinny but we can't fix (not being) a player."

Green averaged 22.6 points as a senior.

Miles hopes to sign one or two more players. He also announced that Flynn Clayman, a sophomore who rarely played last season after contributing

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