



Bufs' Thorne rebuilding his confidence

Guard ready to step in as Bufs' leader on, off court next season

By Ryan Thorburn
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BOULDER, Colo. — Dwight Thorne has experienced 62 losses during his three seasons at Colorado.

Sixty-two!

Needless to say, Thorne was thrilled to hear that CU head coach Jeff Bzdelik -- despite a young roster and a difficult schedule -- believes the Bufs can have a winning season in 2009-10 if they take care of business during the offseason and during practices this fall.

"Whenever you see confidence or enthusiasm from your head leadership, all it does is trickle down and everybody else can get enthusiastic and excited," Thorne said during an interview with the Camera on Friday. "It's up to us to make it happen, but with his leadership and him feeling that way, I think that's extra motivation for everybody."

The key for the Bufs will be to remain confident, no matter what happens from the Maui Invitational to the Big 12 Tournament. Thorne admits that all of the losing messed with his psyche as a younger player.

"I learned last year that confidence is a big thing," said Thorne, who averaged 12.0 points per game and shot 48.1 percent from the field as a junior. "I've always been a confident individual, but my first two years at CU, I have to admit that my confidence was shaken a little bit. But last year my confidence rose because I figured, 'If I don't do it, who else is going to do it?' "

Thorne emerged as Bzdelik's starting shooting guard and was the only consistent scorer the team had to support Cory Higgins (17.4 ppg.). Nate Tomlinson and Austin Dufault, who started as true freshmen, should be more confident and consistent this season.

Despite the addition of five new recruits, including four freshmen, Thorne believes the Bufs will take a big step forward instead of another step back.

"I think the guys see me as a leader and as someone who does what they're supposed to do," Thorne said. "I play hard and work hard. If they see that I'm enthusiastic and out there busting my butt every single day and doing the best I possibly can, all they really can do is follow suit.

"If not, they're going to be exposed."

Thorne recently returned from a trip to Poland and Germany where he played on an Athletes in Action team. Bruce Weber, the head coach at Illinois, guided the under-21 squad to a 4-1 record against international competition.

"When you play against good competition you have no choice but to raise your level of play," Thorne said. "When you're playing against great players you want to stay up with them and beat them. Competition is always good. You can always work out by yourself and get your shots up, but real competition is always the best."

That's what Bzdelik, entering his third season at CU, might finally have in practices this October.

Three of the newcomers -- Alec Burks, Marcus Relphorde and Shannon Sharpe -- are already on campus taking classes and working out with some of the veterans. Levi Knutson is close to returning from offseason hip surgery. Strength and conditioning coordinator James Hardy appears to be creating some Big 12 bodies.

And the lone senior is tired of losing.

"We didn't really win and do what we wanted last year, but we did log a lot of minutes," Thorne said. "As coach Bzdelik says, we learned a lot through those battles. You get beat down and you have to get up. I think all of us together can help make the transition for the new guys easier than it was for the freshmen last year."



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