



Bzdelik has 'both eyes open' in rebuilding Buffs

By Ryan Thorburn

Thursday, October 18, 2007

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Surprised. Shocked. Confused.

Those were the three words Richard Roby used last October when asked to describe Ricardo Patton's announcement before the 2006-07 season even started that it would be his last at Colorado.

The coach made the decision on his way back from the Big 12 media days after being asked more about his contract situation — Patton was entering the final year of his deal at CU — than about his players, the team outlook or anything related to the game of basketball.

The Buffs would finish with a 7-20 record. Roby, a first-team All-Big 12 player as a sophomore, struggled to carry the freshmen-laden roster after taking his name out of the NBA draft and returning for his junior season. And Patton, now the head coach at Northern Illinois, was eventually replaced by Jeff Bzdelik.

"I think it was tough for everybody on the team because nobody expected it or had any idea that it was going to happen like that," Roby said here on Wednesday at this year's Big 12 media event. "But we all had to deal with it and we all learned a lot from the experience. ... I knew going into last season it was going to be tough. I was the only guy coming back that the opposing coaches would probably have on their scouting report in saying, 'We have to stop him.'"

"I knew it was going to be a tough challenge and I knew I'd have to come every night prepared for that challenge. And some nights I didn't come too prepared."

Bzdelik can't promise Roby or anyone else that the Buffs are going to completely turn things around immediately. But the former Denver Nuggets and Air Force head coach has proven that he knows how to get players — from NBA superstars like Carmelo Anthony to overachieving college kids like Jacob Burtschi — prepared for the challenges they will face on the court.

"They are similar in that they both try to get the best out of their players by any means necessary. They both want to see their players be successful," Roby said of the coaching transition. "I know Coach Patton still wants to see me do well, and I hope the same for him. It's just a different style of coaching. I think we're going to be a little more disciplined offensively and defensively and more sound fundamentally."

Both eyes open.

Those are the three words Bzdelik used to describe the challenge he faces in trying to build CU's basketball program into a contender in this conference.

Don't forget, Bzdelik's Big 12 peers, including some he has coached with and others he has beaten

recently (including Bob Knight), picked the Buffs to finish in the basement this season.

"I understand where we are. I understand we're looking up at the league," Bzdelik said. "And the winning and losing I'm not concerned with. I'm just concerned with my team playing with a desperate effort, playing as well as they can individually and collectively, and getting better on a daily basis.

"If we couple that with new facilities and couple that with some really solid recruiting classes, then eventually the winning and losing will take care of itself in a positive way."

It was the first time in 12 years that Patton was not representing the CU basketball program at the Big 12 media days. He finished with a 184-160 record during his time in Boulder without a lot of support from the university or fan base.

"I don't think Ricardo had everything he needed to compete at this level," said Texas head coach Rick Barnes, who has been friends with Bzdelik for three decades. "I don't know exactly what's going on, but knowing Jeff, I guarantee he would not have taken that job without the understanding and the commitment that they're going to do it right.

"Jeff had other opportunities and he didn't have to settle. If he went to Colorado it's because he believes that they can be good. And I know he knows that the administration has to be a good part of his success."

The CU athletic department has already started work on a \$950,000 basketball operations center and a \$750,000 locker room renovation project at the Coors Events Center. Bzdelik's contract calls for ground to be broken on a new basketball practice facility or he can walk after three years.

"When Chancellor (G.P.) Peterson and (athletic director) Mike Bohn came to my house to talk to me about the job, the first thing I said to the chancellor was, 'Yes, you have a beautiful location, a great academic institution, but you do have the worst facility in the Big 12,' " Bzdelik said. "And we're kidding ourselves, you're kidding yourself, if you think you can compete on a yearly basis in this league. Because let's face it, what do 18 year olds want to see? And he understands that."

So there shouldn't be any surprise, shock or confusion about where the Buffs are starting from after last season's debacle and what it's going to take to change the program's fortunes and national perception.

Top-to-bottom teamwork.



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Marshall's scoring touch returns

By Joshua Lindenstein (Contact)
Thursday, October 18, 2007

This is the Nikki Marshall that Colorado soccer fans grew to know and love last season.

After an early-season scoring slump this season that infected the whole team, the sophomore forward has scored five goals in the Buffs' last four matches, three of which were Buffalo victories.

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Marshall scored two goals in a 4-0 win over Nebraska that got the Buffs rolling again. Her goal Sunday gave CU a 2-0 lead over No. 3 Texas A&M before the Aggies rallied for the victory.

"It's definitely good to have her back," CU coach Bill Hempen said. "I don't think the effort's changed. She just keeps working at it and working at it and finally some bounces are going her way."

Marshall took the Big 12 by storm with her speed last season, leading the league in goals scored and setting CU's single-season record with 17 as a freshman.



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Despite the personal seven-match stretch without a goal this season, Marshall sits tied for fourth in the Big 12 with eight goals on the season.

"Extremely frustrated," Marshall said of the drought. "There's a lot of pressure around me, and I can't let that get to me. My team backed me up 100 percent and they were there for me, and we all found it together.

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"Really, most of the goals I've scored, it's all in the assist."

Hempen said he could see that his star player was putting too much pressure on herself to score sometimes.

"I basically told her, 'Nikki, you don't have to score all the goals,'" Hempen said. "I think maybe she understood that and she didn't have to press as hard."

Kidd finished

Just as one of the Buffs' two seniors is finally getting back to 100 percent, another has seen her collegiate playing career end.

Forward Allison Kidd tore an anterior cruciate ligament in her knee against Texas A&M on Sunday and will miss the rest of the season. The injury comes as defender Brittany Dornseif has been gradually seeing more playing time lately as she recovers from a foot injury.

The torn ACL is the third for Kidd since she's been a Buff. The first came just before her freshman season began and the other came during the spring of her sophomore year.

Hempen was sad for his player, whom he said exemplified the work ethic he'd like to see in all of his players.

"She never was really allowed to, because of injuries, to be the player she was projected to be," Hempen said. "But when she was healthy, she gave everything she had all the time."

Bubble the fun

The CU football team isn't the only squad benefiting from the new practice bubble north of Folsom Field.



The soccer team had become known for toughing out its frigid early-morning practices as the season progressed. But with frost on Prentup Field on Tuesday morning, Hempen had the Buffs practice in the bubble on the artificial turf so as to not kill the grass on their game field.

"I always thought that was kind of a badge of honor," Hempen said of the sometimes snowy practices in late October and November. "But I got over that in about 15 seconds after I walked in here. It's nice."

Formidable foes

Hempen cautions that not too much credit should be given just for playing a difficult schedule if you're not winning some of the games. But a brief glance at this week's soccer coaches poll might make Buff fans look twice.

Three teams the Buffs have played already this fall are ranked in the top four — No. 2 Stanford, No. 3 Texas A&M and No. 4 Virginia. A trip to No. 6 Texas is on the schedule Nov. 2.

The Buffs lost close matches to Stanford and Texas A&M and were beaten 4-0 by Virginia.

CU closes out its regular-season home schedule this weekend with games against Kansas Friday at 3 p.m. and against No. 16 Missouri Sunday at 1 p.m., both at Prentup Field.

Dig for the Cure

The CU volleyball team will host its first "Dig for the Cure" at its 6:30 p.m. home match against Oklahoma on Wednesday to help raise money for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation.

Fans can pledge an amount per dig the Buffs record in the match or a flat amount. Pledges can be made at Coors Events Center at the match or online at www.cubuffs.com.

Coming up

The CU tennis team plays at the ITA Central Regional and the University of New Mexico Invitational this week. ... The cross country team will send a contingent to the Air Force Invitational on Saturday. ... The men's golf team plays at the Pepperdine Club Glove Intercollegiate on Monday and Tuesday. ... The volleyball team plays at Baylor on Saturday before hosting Oklahoma and Texas next week.



CU spikers drop to 0-10 in Big 12

By CJ Powell, For the Camera
Thursday, October 18, 2007

Colorado set a team record for blocks (26) and Lauren Schaefer recorded her first career double-double Wednesday night, yet the Buffaloes still fell to Iowa State in volleyball 3-2.

Colorado (5-13, 0-10) has lost 10 straight matches dating back to Sept. 12.

Now with eight different five-game losses under the Buffs' belt, it's becoming routine for Colorado to fall in the fifth game.

In this version, the Buffs were defeated 24-30, 30-24, 25-30, 30-19, 15-13.

"Part of it, I think, is just getting confidence," coach Pi'i Aiu said. "Right now, the kids are shaking. We've got to find some confidence, regardless of who we're playing."

Schaefer said that entering the fifth game she was confident her team would pull off the victory.

"It's frustrating because out on the court, it felt like we were going to win. There was no doubt in my mind," said Schaefer, who had 13 kills and 12 blocks. "I think it comes down to — especially in the fifth game — minimizing the errors."

Colorado handled Iowa State (10-10, 3-7) in the first game 30-24. The Buffs outblocked Iowa State 5.5 to one while hitting .286.

The second game was a different story.

Leading 10-9, Iowa State went on a run that included three Lauren Cummings kills and increased the Cyclones lead to 21-14. Though the Buffs fought back to make it 24-20, they just dug themselves into too big of a hole and lost 30-24.

Colorado won eight of the final 12 points in the third game, prevailing 30-25.

But the Buffs again got comfortable and gave away the fourth game, 30-19.

"I think it's frustrating when we go out and win the first game, then go out in the second game and slack off," junior Alex Buth said. "And then in the third game, we decide to come out (and play hard). Then the fourth game it's the same (pattern)."

Buth, who had a team-high 15 kills while also recording 11 digs and eight blocks, said the team is getting close to finishing out a match.

"We really need to start believing in ourselves, and I think that will get us a win," Buth said. "It's just right there in our hands — it's just so close — and we're letting it fall every time."

Aiu said it comes down to playing better in crunch time.

"We've got to play a little bit better when the game's on the line — from the first touch of the ball to the termination," Aiu said.

Erin Boeve played outstanding for the Cyclones, recording a game-high 19 kills while also chipping in 13 blocks and eight digs. Lauren Cummings also contributed for Iowa State, tallying 16 kills and 10 blocks.

Colorado starts the second half of its conference schedule on Saturday at Baylor (10-10, 3-7), and Schaefer said the team isn't going to let its record affect its play.

"We've stopped talking about our record," Schaefer said. "We have plenty of season left to go, and I think it would be really sad if we wasted it away."

When asked if he's spoken to his team about the 10-game losing streak, Aiu said, "I don't know anything about any (losing) streak."



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