

denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

colorado basketball

Dakota kid one big talent

Freshman Austin Dufault's smalltown roots yield different skills

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 10/17/2008 01:19:14 AM MDT



Austin Dufault measures 6 feet, 8 inches, but he's an adept ballhandler as he enters his freshman season at CU. (Helen H. Richardson, The Denver Post)

BOULDER — A 6-foot-8 freshman who dribbles and drains jumpers like a guard, Colorado's Austin Dufault can joke that his "shooting eye" must come from all those deer hunts in North Dakota.

That would make for a good yarn about a young man from Killdeer, N.D., who does like to hunt and fish. But Dufault would be kidding if he said jump shots were practiced at a rusty hoop nailed to a tree or that he had to chip away ice from the outdoor court.

Advertisement

FACTORY OVERSTOCK BLOWOUT!

Leather High-Back
\$219



Leather Mid-Back
\$199



Bookcases
Various Sizes
\$149-\$259



2-Drawer Lateral File
\$399





OFFICE LIQUIDATORS
Profit From Our Experience
11111 W. 6th Ave/ LAKEWOOD
Between Kipling & Simms
303-759-3375
www.OfficeLiquidators.com

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

Dufault learned the game like others on the CU men's basketball team — in a nice, heated gym — even it was in a town of about 700 few teammates could find on a map.

"The guys will say, 'Hey, Mr. North Dakota. Isn't there only 100 people in North Dakota?' Stuff like that," said Dufault, preparing for today's start of full workouts for college basketball teams. "I know it's just in all fun.

"They can't believe I came from a town that small. They're from such big areas. They can't relate to coming from a school with a graduating class of 30."

Located in far western North Dakota, Killdeer has a couple of gas stations, one grocery store and some mom-and-pop restaurants. ("No franchises like a McDonald's," Dufault said.)

Traffic lights? One. Sort of.

"It's when you first come into town and it just blinks," Dufault said. "They just want you to slow down some."

The way Dufault looks at it, Killdeer was a great place to grow up. And with his father, Rich, being the high school boys basketball coach, Austin knew where to get the keys to the gym.

The Dufault family has since moved to La Salle, near Greeley, so everybody can watch Austin's games in Boulder. Austin's mom and dad both teach in Weld County. His father hung up the whistle so he could be a fan for four years rather than a coach.

"Wherever you're from, if you can play, you can play, and it doesn't matter where you grow up," Dufault said. "That's always the way I've looked at it."

That's also the way Colorado coach Jeff Bzdelik saw it. Dufault, who chose the Buffs over Arizona State, Minnesota, Washington State and Creighton, is more talented than most inner-city ballers. Tougher, too.

Don't let that pale, 210-pound frame fool you, CU coaches warn.

"Austin is highly skilled and extremely competitive," Bzdelik said. "Here's a guy from a small North Dakota town that also played football on Friday nights, where it's extremely cold and windy."

Bzdelik must have grown goose bumps the first time he saw how smoothly Dufault handles the ball. There aren't many 6-8 guys who can bring the ball up the court.

Dufault practiced his ballhandling because he thought his future was in the backcourt — until he sprouted five inches in one summer, between eighth and ninth grade. Almost overnight, he stood 6-5.

"Before that, I was not that much taller than other kids my age," Dufault recalled. "My dad is about 5-11, 6 feet. My mom's 5-8. When I was young, I was always the point guard. I thought I'd be a guard. When I got taller, my skill to handle the ball and shoot it just stayed with me."

Dufault even remained his team's primary ballhandler throughout high school. Said Rich Dufault: "I got a lot of flak in blogs asking why in the heck did I play my 6-8 kid at point guard? I needed him there."

If Dufault doesn't earn a starting job for Colorado this season it will be a surprise. The 2007-08 North Dakota Gatorade player of the year averaged 26 points, 12 rebounds last season as a high school senior. Colorado's version of the Princeton offense requires that everybody can pass, dribble and

Advertisement

FACTORY OVERSTOCK BLOWOUT!

Leather High-Back
\$219

Leather Mid-Back
\$199

Bookcases
Various Sizes
\$149-\$259

2-Drawer Lateral File
\$399



OFFICE LIQUIDATORS

Profit From Our Experience

11111 W. 6th Ave/ LAKEWOOD
Between Kipling & Simms

303-759-3375
www.OfficeLiquidators.com

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

shoot. Dufault could be joined by as many as three other newcomers in a lineup with sophomore Cory Higgins.

"We're going to be young, but we're going to come out with the attitude that teams are going to have to play their best game to beat us," Dufault said. "That's going to be the way we think this year. Age is just a number."

Apparently, so is one's zip code.

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

Advertisement



FACTORY OVERSTOCK BLOWOUT!

Leather High-Back \$219		Leather Mid-Back \$199	
Bookcases Various Sizes \$149-\$259		2-Drawer Lateral File \$399	

OFFICE LIQUIDATORS
Profit From Our Experience
11111 W. 6th Ave/ LAKEWOOD
Between Kipling & Simms
303-759-3375
www.OfficeLiquidators.com

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™



Bzdelik's Buffs ready to go downtown

3-point line moved back one foot

By Ryan Thorburn
Friday, October 17, 2008

Jeff Bzdelik says he's looking forward to having the Buffs take a step back.

The NCAA will move the 3-point line from 19 feet, 9 inches to 20 feet, 9 inches for men's basketball this season. The change should be an advantage for teams like Colorado that have put an emphasis on recruiting shooters.

Right, coach?

"One of the goals in recruiting is really to put together the best shooting team in the country. I mean, that is really our goal," said Bzdelik, whose Buffs officially begin practicing for the 2008-09 season tonight. "If you can't shoot the ball we're not going to recruit you, and I think we've accomplished that. We'll see. I'll say that and we might have clang-bang, who knows. ...

"I feel really good about our ability to shoot the ball and that is really going to help out our offense."

Last season the Buffs, who competed hard defensively, were unable to shoot well enough to avoid the Big 12 basement. Bzdelik's offense was last in the conference in scoring (62.4 ppg.) and seventh in 3-point field goal percentage (34.3 percent).

Shooting guard Richard Roby shot a respectable 38.2 percent from 3-point territory but only made 47 shots from behind the arc in 32 games. Point guard Marcus Hall led the team with 53 made 3-pointers but ranked only 15th in the conference in that department.

Meanwhile, Kansas shot 39.7 percent from 3-point territory as a team with 81 more made 3-pointers than CU for the season, including Mario Chalmers' famous shot in the national title game.

"I think the new distance spreads out the floor more," CU sophomore shooting guard Levi Knutson said. "The defense has to extend to cover shooters and that just opens up more driving lanes, more backdoor passes and makes it hard on the defense when the floor is spread like that."

One confusing aspect of the new distance is the fact that the women's teams will be using the old distance, which means two 3-point arcs will be present on the new court at the Coors Events Center.

"You don't even notice it," Knutson said. "You practice for a week or two on it and you're used to it."

Bzdelik's first season in Boulder was frustrating for a lot of reasons, most notably the 20 losses, but not having a big man who could knock down a 3-pointer really limited the progress that could be made at

CU on the scoreboard.

Having all five players on the court ready, willing and able to shoot from any distance at any time is a key to Bzdelik's offense. Yet centers Jermeyl Jackson-Wilson and Marcus King-Stockton only attempted the 3-point shot on rare occasions (both players were 0-for-2 from the old distance).

Enter, Casey Crawford.

The sophomore transfer from Wake Forest is going to be counted on to knock down wide open 3-pointers this season if the Buffs are serious about taking a step forward.

"It's there all too often," Crawford said. "I don't want to get too trigger happy out there, but in our offense we always have guys cutting through the middle and the opposing big man wants to come in there and try to guard that cut. And I'm sitting there by myself with no one within seven feet around me. That happens all the time in our offense."

Jackson-Wilson, the only senior in the program, has been working extremely hard on his jump shot during the offseason. However, Bzdelik clearly views Crawford as the player with the skills to be CU's version of Nick Welch, the former Mountain West Conference player of the year at Air Force.

"That's what we were missing last year. We always had the guy open last year, but they didn't have the confidence to shoot the ball," Crawford said. "That allowed for that big man to sit back there and guard our guards cutting through the middle of the lane and create havoc when they were trying to do layups and everything."

If Crawford is consistently knocking down 3-pointers, quicker players like Cory Higgins will have clearer paths to the rim and more opportunities for backdoor layups.

"It should be an advantage for us," Higgins said of the new 3-point distance. "It will spread the floor out more and those big men on the other teams that just clogged up the paint, this year we might have a little more space to penetrate."



© 2006 Daily Camera and Boulder Publishing, LLC.