



Bzdelik happy Billups is back

CU coach, former Buff building relationship

By Ryan Thorburn

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Jeff Bzdelik sent Chauncey Billups a two word text message after the Detroit Pistons traded the former NBA Finals most valuable player to the Denver Nuggets on Monday.

Welcome home.

Before he was Mr. Big Shot, Billups was the big man on campus at Colorado. During the 1996-97 seasons he averaged 18.5 points and led the Buffs to their last NCAA Tournament victory over Bob Knight's Indiana Hoosiers.

Last year Bzdelik -- the former Nuggets head coach -- attended a Detroit Pistons game at Auburn Hills in an effort to make sure Billups felt like he was still an important part of the CU program. During this past offseason, Billups returned the favor by working out with CU players at the Coors Events Center. The NBA All-Star was humbled when the coaching staff invited him into the new men's basketball locker room where a permanent locker with his name on it was added.

"It's awesome for a lot of reasons," Bzdelik said of the Billups for Allen Iverson deal. "No. 1, I think it's going to help the Nuggets with internal leadership, intelligence and professionalism, which they have lacked. It's awesome from our standpoint to have Chauncey Billups so close to be engaged in what we're doing."

When Bzdelik was thinking about leaving Air Force to take over the CU program, Billups -- a loyal friend to Ricardo Patton -- gave him a call to talk about the potential to build something special in Boulder.

"He's proud of his school," Bzdelik said. "We're glad he's home."

Schedule change

Bzdelik understands where the men's basketball program stands in the CU pecking order.

That's why he agreed to move the tip time of the Buffs' season opener against Arkansas-Pine Bluff on Nov. 14 at the Coors Events from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. to accommodate a football pep rally.

The time change gives fans a chance to participate in the Pearl Street Stampede in front of the Court House (14th & Pearl) at 7 p.m. and also attend the basketball game in its entirety. The CU football team plays Oklahoma State at 6 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 15, at Folsom Field.

"We just hope some of those fans can also come support our team," Bzdelik said.

Notable

CU will participate in a closed-door scrimmage on Saturday against Northern Colorado in Greeley. The Buffs hosted Utah for a scrimmage last Saturday at the Coors Events Center. ... Other than the standard bumps and bruises Bzdelik said the young Buffs have held up well physically during the preseason practice grind so far.



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