



CU men's basketball: Another regional test awaits Buffs

Wyoming in similar situation as CU this season

By Ryan Thorburn

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Front Range champions?

Well, the Buffs are halfway there.

Colorado is off to a strong start in the regional portion of its nonconference schedule with road victories at Denver and Air Force last week. Next stop: Laramie.

Jeff Bzdelik's team will play at Wyoming on Saturday before wrapping up the tour of area basketball arenas on Dec. 22 at Colorado State.

The Cowboys (3-3) appear to have a lot in common with the Buffs (5-3): a new head coach, a talented backcourt and a lack of size and depth inside.

"It's a work in progress, just like the rest of the year will be as far as implementing things and getting these guys to realize that they need to have a sense of urgency," first-year Wyoming head coach Heath Schroyer said on Wednesday.

CU is excited about the future of its program with a promising five-man recruiting class signed up, but for senior guards Richard Roby and Marcus Hall, the future is now. Wyoming is also trying to rebuild on the recruiting trail, although the backcourt of Brandon Ewing and Brad Jones is considered to be the best in the Mountain West Conference.

Schroyer is obviously ex-pecting to see the Buffs who snapped Air Force's 38-game win streak against nonconference opponents at Clune Arena a week ago and not the lackluster group that was blown out at home by Stanford on Sunday.

"I think they're very good," Schroyer said. "Coach Bzdelik is a great coach, Roby is an NBA player, and Hall, I think, is going to be a first- or second-team All-Big 12 player. I think they're going to be a lot better than advertised in the preseason."

After the victory over Air Force, Bzdelik said his knowledge of his former team helped CU beat the Falcons. This week Steve McClain's fingerprints will likely be all over the game plan as the former Wyoming head coach returns to the Arena-Auditorium.

"Especially with Brandon and Brad, I think that's a huge advantage for them coming into the game," said

Schroyer, who added that he expects CU to play a zone defense for the majority of the game.

Wyoming lost to Joe Scott's DU team earlier this season. Now the Cowboys have to suffer through the ugly game film again as they prepare to face Bzdelik's version of the Princeton offense.

"Colorado has a lot more quickness and athleticism than Denver," Schroyer said. "Our new guys had no idea what was going on (against DU)."

Bzdelik did not receive a warm welcome during his return to the Air Force. According to McClain's successor, Saturday's game will be more about the two teams than the coaches.

"I haven't talked about it," Schroyer said of McClain's return. "We have so much to concern ourselves with Colorado and their quality basketball team. It's a Big 12 opponent at home and that's hard for us to get here."



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