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cu basketball

Bzdelik era beginning of home improvement

By Tom Kensler
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BOULDER — Colorado men's basketball begins tonight with a new look on and around the court.

The 7 p.m. exhibition game against a Canada-based team called Basketball Travelers marks the debut of first-year CU coach Jeff Bzdelik and also features the unveiling of a new student section intended to make the Coors Events Center intimidating to visiting teams.

"If you want to make it a home-court advantage or give yourself a chance for a home-court advantage, you have to put the students in a position where they can make an impact; everybody else does," said Bzdelik, the former Nuggets coach who guided Air Force to a two-year record of 50-16 before being named CU coach on April 5.

The student section and pep band were moved to the south "end zone" seats, not far from the visiting team's bench. There will be room

for as many as 4,200 students, some sitting on court level along the baseline behind the south basket. That's where opponents will run their offense in the second half.

Previously, most students sat in sections across the court from the team benches. The pep band had been tucked into an isolated area near the service tunnel, on the north side.

"This will bring enthusiasm and excitement to the game," CU athletic director Mike Bohn said. "That's what college athletics is all about."

Bohn said approximately 350 season-ticket accounts were displaced by the new student section. Most season-ticket holders who had been seated in the south end were moved to the north end. Bohn said he heard complaints from some displaced ticket-holders and a few chose not to renew.

"Our intent was not to alienate any of our fans," Bohn said. "Every fan is important. But this was an important change for us."

Colorado returns four starters - seniors Richard Roby and Marcus King-Stockton, junior Jermey Jackson-Wilson and sophomore Xavier Silas - from a team that went 7-20 in Ricardo Patton's final season. Also returning is senior point guard Marcus Hall, a 2005-06 starter who was suspended last season by Patton for academic reasons. Hall has recovered from thumb surgery and has been cleared to play tonight.

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Three scholarship freshmen are expected to make their debuts tonight: 6-foot-5 guard Cory Higgins, from Danville, Calif.; 6-4 guard Levi Knutson, from Arapahoe High School; and 6-11 forward Caleb Patterson of Ringwood, Okla. Bzdelik said he plans to spread the minutes among players in the Buffs' two exhibition games.

CU hosts Regis University in an exhibition on Tuesday. The regular season begins Nov. 9 at home against New Mexico.

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Buffaloes ready to see results on court

Team spent offseason learning Bzdelik's system

By Ryan Thorburn

Thursday, November 1, 2007

This state will rally around a winner.

The Colorado Rockies proved that during their wild (card) ride to the World Series in October.

And Jeff Bzdelik experienced a similar feeling four years ago when long-suffering local NBA fans had the Pepsi Center buzzing after he guided the Denver Nuggets to their first playoff appearance in 11 years.

So the new Colorado men's basketball coach understands that if he builds a program in Boulder the way he wants to, eventually the Coors Events Center will be sold out and college basketball will be cool in these parts again.

"Without question," Bzdelik said at the Big 12 media days in Kansas City when asked by the Camera if he thought there was room for CU hoops to be embraced in a competitive sports market. "I really believe our fans want something to cheer about. And I want very badly to give them something to cheer about because they deserve that." All I can promise everyone is that I will do the very best I can to make sure that happens. Can I wave a magic wand and have it be done? No, I can't. And I hope they don't expect that because we need to just keep making progress on a daily basis."

Bzdelik will make his home coaching debut tonight when the Buffs host the Basketball Travelers in an exhibition game. Tip off at the Coors Events Center is scheduled for 7 p.m.

CU, coming off a 7-20 season, was picked to finish last in the Big 12 coaches poll. But there is a quiet confidence about the 2007-08 Buffs on campus.

Bzdelik and CU women's coach Kathy McConnell-Miller headlined a basketball tip-off luncheon on Wednesday in the Balch Fieldhouse. CU Chancellor G.P. "Bud" Peterson was there as a sign of the university's commitment to supporting both programs.

"I remember visiting Jeff at his house with (athletic director) Mike Bohn and he said, 'The rub on CU is that they can't support basketball,' " Peterson recalled. "And we're doing everything we can to change that."

Construction is underway on a new basketball operations center and the men's locker room remodeling project should be completed by the time Big 12 play begins.

The athletic department is also trying to "pack the house" for the Buffs' regular-season opener against

New Mexico on Nov. 9 at the Coors Events Center.

"We've worked hard in the offseason. We want to show it on the court now," Richard Roby said Wednesday after mingling with some of the program's most loyal fans. "We've learned the offense up and down. Now we have to do it against somebody else and see how it works."

Bzdelik ran a version of the "Princeton-style" offense, often to perfection, during an impressive two-year run at Air Force. A member of the audience asked him to explain how it will work in Boulder.

"Princeton is in New Jersey. We're running the 'Colorado offense' here," Bzdelik said. "It's about team play and sacrifice. Those can't just be words. They need to be a feeling. They need to be an action."

If you want to start matching the names of the players to their faces tonight, buy a program. Bzdelik has removed the last names off the back of the Colorado jerseys to stress his point about this group needing to play as one in order to enjoy any success.

"I love challenges," Bzdelik said when asked why he decided to come to CU when other job opportunities were out there. "Being in the NBA, you're playing and coaching against the very best every night. And in college it's the same way in the Big 12. For me, to compete at the highest level is the ultimate challenge."

Marcus Hall, who underwent thumb surgery two weeks ago, also attended the luncheon and reported that his hand is fine and he expects to play tonight.

2007-08 schedule

Thursday, Nov. 1 — BASKETBALL TRAVELERS (Exh.), 7 p.m.

Tuesday, Nov. 6 — REGIS (Exh.), 7 p.m.

Friday, Nov. 9 — NEW MEXICO, 7 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 15 — Florida A&M, 4:30 p.m.*

Friday, Nov. 16 — Savannah State, 3:30 p.m.*

Saturday, Nov. 17 — at Wisconsin, 6 p.m.*

Tuesday, Nov. 20 — COLORADO CHRISTIAN, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, Nov. 27 — at Denver, 7 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 29 — at Air Force, 7 p.m.

Sunday, Dec. 2 — STANFORD 2 p.m., ESPNU

Saturday, Dec. 8 — at Wyoming, 2 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 12 — NEW ORLEANS, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 22 — at Colorado State, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 29 — GRAMBLING STATE, 2 p.m.

Friday, Jan. 4 — SMU, 8 p.m.

Monday, Jan. 7 — TULSA, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 12 — at Texas A&M, 2 p.m. ESPN Plus

Tuesday, Jan. 15 — NEBRASKA, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 19 — at Texas, 6 p.m., ESPN Plus

Wednesday, Jan. 23 — KANSAS STATE, 7 p.m., ESPNU

Saturday, Jan. 26 — MISSOURI, 2 p.m., ESPN Plus

Tuesday, Jan. 29 — at Iowa State, 6 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 2 — KANSAS, 1:30 p.m., ABC

Wednesday, Feb. 6 — at Oklahoma State, 6 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 9 — OKLAHOMA 2 p.m., ESPNU

Saturday, Feb. 16 — at Kansas, 11:30 a.m., ESPN Plus

Wednesday, Feb. 20 — TEXAS TECH, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 23 — at Missouri, 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 27 — BAYLOR, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, Mar. 1 — IOWA STATE, 4 p.m., ESPN Classic

Tuesday, Mar. 4 — at Kansas State, 7 p.m., ESPN Plus

Sunday, Mar. 9 — at Nebraska, 1 p.m.

March 13-16 — Big 12 Tournament Kansas City, Mo., TBA, ESPN Networks

* America's Youth Classic tournament in Madison, Wis.



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