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An Interview With:

COLORADO COACH JEFF BZDELIK

PETER IRWIN: We're now joined by Jeff Bzdelik from Colorado. Opening comments and then we'll take questions.

COACH BZDELIK: With only one senior and one junior on our basketball team, obviously we're very inexperienced and extremely young. That makes for a very challenging season ahead of us, but there's a very bright light at the end of the tunnel, because it bodes well for our future.

We haven't lost vision of how we want our basketball team to be in a few years, and we're headed in that direction. So I feel good about that. Any questions?

PETER IRWIN: Questions.

Q. What's the biggest challenges to teach young guys your system?

COACH BZDELIK: Well, just how to read defenses, and you can drill that, but once the defense is out there, you have to execute under duress. And that's the biggest challenge.

But the young players that we brought in have a high basketball IQ and a high skill level and they've picked it up extremely well.

Q. Jermyl is in a unique position as the only senior in the program. What's your vision for his role this year?

COACH BZDELIK: Just his energy, intelligence. He's a very intelligent player. He understands the offense. He rebounds well, which was a big short-coming of ours last year. He defends well. He can defend a variety of players out on the court because of his athleticism. He's an excellent offensive rebounder and provides great leadership with his example, with the way he prepares himself and the way he practices.

Q. Based on the preseason poll, looks like the coaches kind of predict this to be a pretty wide-open race in the conference. Is that the way you see it?

COACH BZDELIK: Exactly. This league -- I was just saying to someone prior to coming in here, I've been coaching 32 years. I spent six years in the Big Ten back when, gee whiz, they had Lute Olson, Coach Knight, Judd Heathcote, Eldon Miller, Jim Dutcher. It was a great, great league. And I spent 17-plus years in the NBA. And I find the Big 12 to be the most competitive situation I've ever been in in basketball.

Obviously you had the different levels, but take those levels aside, the Big 12 is just an awesome, awesome league. That's why, when I had an opportunity to partake in it, I said I'd like to do that, because it offers a challenge that to me is unlike any other in basketball.

So it's just a great league with great coaches, great programs, great traditions that you have to strap it on and be ready to play every single time you throw it up, regardless of what others might think of your team.

Q. In light of what you just said about the competitiveness of the league, what did Kansas's win of championship do for the league's reputation and everybody else? It's the old rising tide raises all ships type of thing?

COACH BZDELIK: It just gave great testimony to the power of the league and obviously helped Colorado, for example. I'm just going to talk about our school. It's helped us in recruiting.

We had a very good recruiting class last year, and we feel good about the prospects for another excellent recruiting class and why: We can offer a young student athlete a chance to play in what we think is the best league in the nation, and as we recruit internationally, in the world.

There's tangible evidence as to why. Well, our national champ is from this league. And there's many other reasons why this league is so good statistically it's been put out by the Big 12 office. And, again, it helps us so much in recruiting

and interest in our league.

Q. You talked about the challenges of implementing your system with new young players. Where do they stand as far as are they on schedule for learning that or do you have to pick it up a little bit?

COACH BZDELIK: We are so much further ahead than we were last year. The reason being is we have some players who have been through it that can help the learning curve of the younger players coming in.

But most importantly the skill level. People will talk about the fact we lose Richard Roby and Marcus Hall, two of our top scorers. Well, we're scoring the ball much better right now, because we can shoot the ball at every position. And that really makes the offense go. And we have a willingness to pass the basketball and the skill to shoot it, the skill to drive it from all positions.

And so I think that really kind of ties up all the loose ends. Last year we really only had two and a half shooters out there. This year we do a drill where we have six players, three balls and five minutes see how many threes they can make. We have six players that when they do it together they shoot anywhere -- they make about 130 threes from the new line in five minutes, and these are from all positions. We couldn't do that last year.

So we've improved our ability to shoot the ball and that's really going to help us.

Q. Your thoughts on the new line? Will it make a big difference in the game or are guys more comfortable shooting from 20 feet as they were from 19?

COACH BZDELIK: Well, shooters who can shoot will shoot and make them. Those who can't won't, regardless of where the line is.

Our philosophy is we had the vision of where we want to be and hopefully it's going to happen sooner or later, but our vision is to have a team that can shoot the ball at all positions from beyond that arc and shoot it well. And that provides good spacing and the ability to post up big guards or take people in a post for a mismatch or be able to drive the basketball and defenses have to extend.

So from our standpoint I like the line being back, and it hasn't changed our recruiting philosophy. We want to be able to shoot the ball at all positions from beyond that arc and shoot it well.

PETER IRWIN: Thank you, Coach.