

**October 22, 2009**



An interview with:

## **COLORADO COACH JEFF BZDELIK**

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by Coach Jeff Bzdelik from Colorado.

Coach, welcome. And your comments, please.

COACH BZDELIK: Thank you. Anyone who saw us play last year, it was obvious we weren't deep enough, strong enough, mature enough with only one senior, one junior.

Our players played extremely hard. We lost 11 games last year by an average of 4 1/2 points per game. We just, like I said, weren't deep enough, strong enough, mature enough.

We've gotten deeper with the addition of five new players. We've gotten stronger through just the maturity of working hard in the weight room. And we gained valuable experience from last year with the fact that we had three freshmen and a sophomore playing 30-plus minutes a game.

We will be better. We're in an unforgiving league called the Big 12. So we'll just take it one game at a time. We will be prepared. We will play hard. We will be fearless, and we'll see where that takes us.

Any questions?

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

**Q. Speaking of depth, I just wanted to get your thought on Alec Burks and his potential and his development.**

COACH BZDELIK: Alec Burks is a player, I think, is going to surprise a lot of people. He's so young.

He grew almost three inches since high school. He's about 6'6 1/2" right now. I was kidding him in the locker room the other day because he was next to a player that hadn't shaved in a couple of days, and I said, Do you

need a razor? And Alec looked at me and said, you know, Coach, I hope someday I need one.

But he's extremely talented. Most people who have seen us practice look at him, and their first comment is, Wow, he's actually much more talented Richard Roby when Richard was a freshman. You know, lanky and skilled.

But Alec is talented. It's going to be an interesting year for him.

**Q. Does the growth change the way that you were planning on using him? 6'3" to 6'6"?**

COACH BZDELIK: Well, yeah. Alec is very versatile. He's a very willing passer. He might be as talented of a passer as there is coming out of high school. He's very unselfish. He's very skilled. You know, he can score the basketball and do something that our team lacks, and that is he can create some offense by himself.

**Q. Jeff, historically big men, freshmen big men in this league have struggled. Harris-Tunks, what do you expect from him this year?**

COACH BZDELIK: To be quite frank, he's not ready yet. If you look at our basketball team, our weakness is going to be our rebounding. It was last year. If that doesn't change, you know, to be quite frank, we're not going to change much from a win and loss standpoint. And players know that.

We're going to have to really block off strong and collectively rebound the basketball, all of us. We are much more athletic. We're much deeper. That, I can tell you for sure. If we can rebound the ball, like I said, we'll be very competitive.

**Q. Jeff, where are those rebounds going to come from?**

COACH BZDELIK: We'll find out together, Tom.

No, we're just going to have to -- our perimeters are going to have to rebound. Cory

Higgins last year had almost, I think, five, six rebounds a game. Everybody's going to have to do that.

We're going to have to block off strong. That's something that we work on every single day in practice in the beginning of practice. Right from the get-go, right out of -- as soon as we warm up, we work on defensive rebounding.

It's technique, and it's a will and a want to when the ball's up on the glass, we need to just go get it. Somehow, some way.

That's been our focus because we know if we can do that we've got a chance to be competitive.

**Q. Can you just speak to Cory's development last season and how much he improved, and then also how much it will help to have his brother around?**

COACH BZDELIK: First of all, Cory Higgins is a player who started every game as a freshman and a sophomore. So gaining wisdom and experience, for all of our players, has come at a high cost, and that is getting your tail beat.

Through it all, the experience, he understands where shots are coming from through the offense. He understands defensive positioning. He led the Big 12 in steals last year. He was one of the most frequent free-throw attempt guys.

Cory is really driven internally. And, also, what's really important about Cory is his father, being a general manager of the Charlotte Bobcats, Cory hangs around all summer with the NBA players in Charlotte. He works with them. He's on the court. He's in the weight room. He's watching, observing, you know, just hanging around people like Larry Brown and Michael Jordan. Those kinds of players. He absorbs a lot, and he takes it in the right way.

He's an intelligent player. Again, you know, he's a player now that, just heading into his junior year, he's improved his schedule. He's improved his strength. He's improved his overall game in a great way. So we're looking forward to a great year from him.

Having his brother there, there's a great bond between the two of them, and his brother being older -- his brother's not eligible, but his presence on the court every day -- you know, you should see them compete. His brother's a very good player in his own right, and he brings out the best in Cory every single day in even a greater way

just because of the way they've grown up and the respect that they have for one another.

So it's all good.

**Q. Jeff, I'm doing a style of play story and how it's changed. You were in college for many years and then went to the NBA. When you came back into the college game at Air Force, what kind of things had changed as far as the way people played the game?**

COACH BZDELIK: This is just my observation. I think the game is -- you're looking more to a game where it's more of a drive and kick game. There aren't that many great big men out there that are skilled. So I think teams are actually playing for the most part smaller.

You know, it's such a drive and kick game. People just put their head down and drive, and I think people look to have the court spaced. That's just my observation.

I think that -- has it changed much? I don't know. I think everybody has their own unique style. I'm not really answering your question. I just know that, I think, as a coach, I feel more comfortable when I have as many skilled guys out there as possible that can make shots and not clog up the lane.

You know, you talk about the so-called Princeton offense, I think that's a bad name for it. I think it's just good basketball, just team play and passing the ball to one another and cutting hard and cutting for each other. I think that's just the way that, I think personally, the game should be played, and it's the way the game should be watched, to be honest with you.

**Q. Jeff, I'm not going to try and pronounce his name, but how does Marcus look? The kid from Indian Hills. Do you think he's going to be a contributor?**

COACH BZDELIK: Yes, well, he needs to be a contributor. And what helps us with Marcus is that Marcus is about 6'7". He's very versatile. He can play all four positions on the court, one through four. He adds great experience to our team.

You know, when he left high school, he went to a prep school, and then he went to play for Coach Majerus at St. Louis, and then he went to play for Indian Hills, and they were rated number two in the nation, and he played an awful lot for them.

So he brings added experience to a team that still only has one senior on it. He fits into our offense because he's a tough person to match up with because he can make threes. He can drive it. He can post. He's a willing passer. He's very strong.

We'll play him a lot as really like a point forward to handle the basketball.

He's mature in the fact that he's all about winning. So he was a player that was recruited by a lot of other BCS schools that we were able to get. One of the rare junior college players that we could get because he is such a good student.

And so going back to my original statement about us not being deep enough, mature enough, and experienced enough, he adds depth, he adds maturity, and he adds experience to a team that needs it.

So we expect him to have a great year. You know, he's the type of player that can immediately take the pressure off of Cory Higgins having to do so much for us.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much.

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