

With established sweat equity, Denver East basketball primed for another deep Class 5A state playoff push

The Class 5A No. 2 Angels (20-2, 7-0 DPL) are willing to put in whatever work the Carey coaches ask of them



Kyle Newman, The Denver Post

Denver East senior Daylen Kountz does the infamous "towel drill" during Angels practice on Thursday, Feb. 16, 2018. The No. 4 Angels are again a Class 5A state title contender.

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The basic premise behind coach Rudy Carey's infamous towel drill is this: If you want to own the building, first you've got to mop the floors. On Thursday at Denver East hoops practice, as the No. 4 Angels (20-2, 7-0) geared up for the Denver Prep League championship on Saturday and then the Class 5A state tournament, Carey put his players through the towel drill that, as he explained with a laugh, "will make a man out of you if you aren't yet." The drill, which took place at the conclusion of a short but intense practice, requires players to bear crawl (read: sprinting on all fours) with a towel underneath their hands. After one time of doing the drill from baseline to baseline, Angels assistant coach David Carey — Rudy's son, and the guy who runs [Denver East practices](#) — turns the intensity up a notch, calling for a suicide sprint with the towels that leaves each player withering for oxygen when finished. It's all in preparation for this weekend's date with the Patriots, a game the Angels lost in overtime last season — and a game which gave George Washington a momentum boost en route to their [state title game run](#). And after one in-state setback so far this winter, a 81-76 loss to No. 3 Chaparral on Jan. 5, the Angels made plenty of adjustments in order to jumpstart their current 11-game win streak. "When we

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lost to Chaparral, we knew we had some corrections to make,” David Carey said. “Since we’ve made those, we’ve gotten a better response, better results and we’re getting into the groove of how we want to play.” That “grove” was addressed by former Nuggets coach George Karl, who spoke to Denver East players at the beginning of Thursday’s practice. Karl, a longtime friend of Rudy Carey, addressed the nature of modern basketball, philosophizing: “Is basketball a me game, or a we game?” The Angels say they’ve bought into the latter. “Coach always talks about getting rid of our egos, and taking care of business as a team,” senior Chase Neagle said. “And the focus on being a student-athlete first will help our success, too, and help us get that ring.” Neagle is perhaps the biggest sleeper in the Angels’ starting five consisting of senior Daylen Kountz (CU commit), senior Ja’shawn Chisel, junior Clayton Finley-Ponds and junior Kwane Marble. Kountz is 5A’s scoring leader at 22.5 points per game, while Marble is also drawing Division I looks. But it’s Neagle that adds depth to Denver East’s offense. “He stretches the defense — they can’t help on Kwane and Daylen because he shoots the three, and they’ve got to pay attention to him too,” Rudy Carey said. “He was out for about a month due to injury, and we lost two games without him.”

Other Denver East Practice Notes

Former Manual star Chuckie Sproling, who still holds the CHSAA career record for points in a game with 74, called Rudy Carey to catch up at the start of practice — “I stay in touch with all my former players,” the longtime coach noted... Rudy Carey, who’s won nine state titles, is closing in on 800 wins. His record currently stands at 797-199, so he will likely reach the mark in the playoffs... David Carey, whose practice plans are best described as calculated improvisation, emphasized the Angels’ “trap needs to be better — we’re going to be playing against guards that are a little bit quicker and more skilled”... Denver East is withholding some of its best offensive sets for the postseason.... David Carey also put the Angels through a brick drill on Thursday, requiring players to hold a brick in each outstretched hand while working on defensive slides... Saturday’s game against George Washington is at 1 p.m. at the Thunderdome.