

Q&A: Denver East basketball coach Rudy Carey talks Angels' prospects this winter

The longtime coach discusses East's red-hot start, key transfers to the team and much more



Denver Post file

Denver East head coach Rudy Carey yells at his team on March 13, 2015 at the Coors Events in Boulder.

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Winners of the Gojo Sports Tipoff Classic to open the season, No. 8 Denver East (4-0) is looking strong despite losing its top two scorers from last season to graduation. Denver Post preps editor Kyle Newman caught up with longtime Angels coach Rudy Carey to discuss his team's play, his thoughts on retirement and more.

Q: Considering your team's tournament victory to open the winter, how are you feeling about your squad early on?

A: I'm pretty satisfied with their play — they've been working hard and have done a good job even though we're missing some kids. The guys that are playing are playing well, and I couldn't ask any more of them.

Q: Who are the transfers that you're waiting on to become eligible halfway through the season?

A: Daylen Kountz came from George Washington, Ja'Shawn Chisel came over from Venture Prep and Jamison Washington came from Lincoln. They're all going to be big for us when they become eligible.

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Q: I know you lost quite a bit of talent from the 2016 senior class with the graduation of Jack Buckmelter and Daytonne Jennings. Who are some guys who have stepped up and filled that void early on this season?

A: Joseph Abiakam has played well, as has Scotty Wiese, Asane Diouf, Kwane Marble and Alex May. Those five have been our starters, and those five have been playing pretty good basketball for us against some tough teams in tournament play.

Q: What are your expectations this season considering the talent you already have on the floor, plus the transfer talent that will be around later on?

A: We have the chance to be pretty good. I'm optimistic, because I think our kids work extremely hard and that, along with our talent, can take us far.

Q: What are some other keys?

A: Chemistry is always a main focus here, and we've got to get better each practice and each game so that we're playing our best basketball come tournament time.

Q: Considering the tradition you've built up with this program, does that past success put pressure on your team to perform each winter?

A: We've created a culture of success here, and our kids expect to be successful and they expect to win. We don't go out hoping to win, we go out expecting to win—and as a coaching staff, we hold our players to those high expectations each season.

Q: What does this year's team take away from last season, when you went 17-9 and made it to the 5A Sweet 16?

A: We've got some experience under our belt, and now those returners have the opportunity to be leaders and impart last season's experience on the younger kids.

Q: Who else do you see challenging you guys for the Denver Prep League title?

A: George Washington, Far Northeast and Denver South will all be very good. I think those teams are the main ones we'll have to compete with for a league title.

Q: In your 40th year of coaching — and with nine state titles on your resume, three at Manual and six at Denver East — is retirement anywhere in your mind?

A: I haven't set a specific timetable for that, but I know I'm winding down. I'm probably looking at two or three more years of coaching, and then I'll retire. But for now, I'm focused on this season and the potential our team has.