

Jazz takes Alec Burks with 12th pick

By BLAIR KERKHOFF / The Kansas City Star

Utah Jazz coach Tyrone Corbin likes Alec Burks as a shooting guard.

And a small forward, and point guard.

"He is that versatile," Corbin said. "He can play the two, some one at times, and he can play three if we go small."

The Jazz made Colorado's Burks, who played at Grandview High, its second selection in the first round, No. 12 overall. Utah picked Enes Kanter, who was enrolled at Kentucky but didn't play last season, third overall.

Corbin's assessment fits Burks' attitude.

"I'll do anything I need to do for my team to win," Burks said.

Burks worked out for the Jazz and believed when it was Utah's turn he'd hear his name.

"I had a great workout," Burks said. "I showed my complete game and an improved jump shot. The way I saw the picks going, I felt there was a chance the Jazz were going to pick me."

Corbin said he felt fortunate Burks remained available at No. 12. Most projections had Burks going anywhere from ninth to 19th, and many had Utah looking at San Diego State forward Kawhi Leonard.

"We had Alec rated higher," Corbin said. "When we got to 12, I was happy we had the opportunity to draft him."

The Jazz liked what it saw of Burks on film. He averaged 20.5 points, 6.5 rebounds and 2.9 assists as a 6-foot-6 sophomore, leading the Buffaloes to the NIT semifinals, the program's first postseason appearance since 2006.

But it was what Burks did when he wasn't scoring that impressed Corbin.

"He makes really good passes off the dribble," Corbin said. "He sees the floor well, sees guys going to the basket. His basketball IQ is really high."

Apparently the recruiting IQ of schools closest to Burks wasn't so high. Burks was a late bloomer, adding 4 inches while in high school.

But Kansas didn't recruit him because the Jayhawks were gunning for Xavier Henry. Missouri told Burks at a team camp in Columbia that it would not recruit him.



Kansas State got in on Burks late, too late.

Burks said he used the snubs as motivation and became a force in the Big 12 immediately. Two years ago, in a season that included such freshmen as Henry and Texas' Jordan Hamilton, Burks was the league's top freshman scorer and chosen the Big 12's freshman of the year.

Burks became the first area player since Kansas' Wayne Simien of Leavenworth in 2005 to be drafted in the first round. Burks joins another Grandview High athlete, football star Josh Freeman, as a first-round selection. Freeman, the former Kansas State quarterback, was taken by Tampa Bay with the 17th selection of the 2009 NFL draft.

Thursday's selection also is believed to be something of a first for Kansas City, with a first-round draft choice in each major sport.

In April, Missouri defensive end Aldon Smith, who played at Raytown High, was made the seventh selection in the NFL Draft by the San Francisco 49ers.

Earlier this month, the Royals made Gardner Edgerton High outfielder Bubba Starling the fifth pick. Starling will choose between a baseball contract and a Nebraska football scholarship.

Now, Burks.

The question is, who gets the biggest signing bonus?

In the NBA, salaries are slotted. A salary for a player drafted 12th is about \$1.736 million and jumps to \$1.866 million in the second year.

Last year's No. 7 pick in the NFL draft received a \$12 million signing bonus.

Starling, as a two-sport star, could command a \$5 million to \$7 million bonus.