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fan mail

Alfred Williams: Keep hope alive for Buffs, Broncos

By The Denver Post

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Alfred Williams. (Mark T. Osler, The Denver Post)

Ever wanted to ask a sports personality a question? Now's your chance. They answer readers' questions in The Denver Post's "Fan Mail" feature.

In this installment, Alfred Williams, recently elected to the College Football Hall of Fame, discusses the current travails of the Colorado Buffs' football program, what the Broncos should do with Tim Tebow, and his one and only collegiate pass reception.

Keep an eye out for the next installment, when new CU basketball coach Tad Boyle takes

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questions about all things Colorado sports. Send Q's for Boyle in an email to fanmail@denverpost.com.

If the Dan Hawkins regime struggles again this year and is indeed let go, I would want the Buffs to hire your former teammate Eric Bieniemy to be the head coach. What are your thoughts?

-- Willie, Windsor

Alfred Williams: I think Eric would make a wonderful head coach. He knows the game and he's got great enthusiasm. But first of all I want to say that I hope Coach Hawkins stays and it works out for him. I think he is a good man and a good coach.

The other thing about Bieniemy is that he understands what it's like to play at Colorado. He knows it can present some challenges for guys coming from outside into Boulder and he knows how to make that work.

As of today, what three things most urgently need to be addressed within the administration, coaching and player ranks, for CU to become a competitive team again?

-- Steve, Fort Collins

AW: That's a big question. One of the first things they have to do, and I guess we are talking administration here, is find a way for Coach Hawkins to keep his staff. (CU) has failed to give him the support staff he needs. Those guys can only get one-year contracts, so there is no way

to keep the staff intact. That's something he needs. I think that's a big problem.

Sports Fan Mail

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If guys only have a one-year deal, they are going to move on.

I also think CU needs to start recruiting more heavily in Texas and Southern California. I think that's important. I think maybe three-quarters of our recruited players should come from there.

And I think the university should allow for five players -- those players who are academically challenged -- to be able to come to Boulder and play football and go to school. Let those five players come in and get some direction and extra attention. It would help the team and it would help the players, too. That's what we did when I played and I think it worked well.

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Have you ever considered coaching at the college level? I know with your playing experience,

-- Drew, Denver

AW: I did think about it, and I have thought about it. But I was a very young father and I thought my family needed me at the time I was done playing. (Williams has five children.) So I went into business after my football career. I think going into coaching would have taken me too much time away. I've sometimes thought that I might try it a few years from now, but I really don't know if that will happen.

Alfred, I think I can speak for most fans that we miss that big-time great attitude you brought the Broncos back in the day! My question surrounds Tim Tebow. From what you know or hear, will Tebow's constant good attitude and positive outlook rub off on his teammates in a good way like yours or will they get sick of it? And we are hearing about his throwing, but what is the scoop on what players are saying about his size, strength and speed when he gets moving with the ball tucked away? Is his 4.7 40 going to get him killed at this level?

--Mike, Portland

AW: I was reminded just the other day that it's hard to get mad at someone or get sick of someone when they are smiling all the time. So I think his attitude will be a good addition to the Broncos. I think he will be a strong influence.

I would prefer if he could run a 4.4 or 4.5, but he is big and



Colorado's Alfred Williams took on Kansas in a Big 8 Conference game in 1989. Colorado won 49-17. (Getty Images)

strong. What I really hope is that the Broncos don't try to turn him into just a pocket passer. I hope he gets outside the pocket and runs and uses his talents. I think that's what makes him so good.

What do you think about (Broncos defensive

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end) Robert Ayers this season? I heard you talk about him last year. You said that the other players Ayers is a beast, and that once it clicks for him that he is going to be something else. Do you still feel this way?

-- Ramon, El Paso, Texas

AW: Yes, I do still feel that way. I think he's a very good player and a good pass rusher with speed and skills. But he's got to make a big adjustment that is not easy to make. It's not natural for him yet. The Broncos already have Elvis Dumervil rushing from the left side. But you can't have two guys rushing from the same side, so Ayers is going to have to adjust to rushing from the right. That's not easy to do. It's not easy to change. But I think he can do it, and once he settles in there and finds his comfortable position, I think he could be very good.

He and Dumervil have that great, quick first step, something I never had. They have that quickness like Derrick Thomas or L.T. (Lawrence Taylor). So I think if Ayers can learn to rush from that right side, and with Dumerville from the left, the Broncos could have good pass rushing for the next five years.

Now that Mike Shanahan is gone, maybe you can give us a candid opinion on playing for (former defensive coordinator) Greg Robinson. I always thought Robinson got a bum rap and a bum's rush out of town after the failure of Shanahan's teams in the post-Elway years. What's your candid opinion about Coach Robinson's contribution to the Broncos winning two Super Bowls under his

defensive leadership?

Tom, Littleton

AW: First, let me say that Greg Robinson is a gentleman's gentlemen. He is an excellent person and coach. But you also have to understand that when I came to Denver, he used me in a different style of defense than I was used to. So it was a new defense for me to play in and that affected my outlook.

So just let me say this. I remember a team meeting where we were told that the offense was going to score 31 points a game. We were to keep the game in control, so our defense just kind of sat back. Late in the game, in the fourth quarter, we started attacking more. That's when would blitz. That's when we were effective. I guess the bottom line is that I thought we had better defensive players than we showed.

What was the most difficult part about transitioning out of football as a player? What helped you with the transition?

-- Elaine, Aurora

AW: For me, it took some time. I was offered a radio job real quick, right after I left football. But I didn't do that for a few years because I was angry. I was angry at ending my NFL career because I was injured. I think that happens to a lot of guys. A lot of guys feel like that.

So I stayed away from doing radio work or anything like that because I was bitter, and I think would have showed up at that time.

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It took me some time, a few years, to get over that and get close to the game again. But the thing is, all of my close friends in football came from my days to CU. Those are the guys I'm still in touch with.

I'm a big fan of the Denver Broncos and I remember when you made big plays for Denver during their Super Bowls runs. My question to you is what do you think of the QB controversy? I really like what Coach McDaniels is doing, I honestly think we're a QB away from making the playoffs. For the Super Bowl, we're a D-line away.

--Tim, Philadelphia

I really don't think the defensive line is that far away at all. And I think that the team showed some promise last year. I think if the quarterbacking had been different, the Broncos might have been a playoff team last year.

The quarterback controversy this year? Who's going to win that? I think we will have to let the competition play out.

Alfred, all of us who were there at the time remember you catching a pass against Kansas State in the 1990 season. I am assuming that was your idea, but please tell us how that came about and your memory of selling the coaches into putting you in as a receiver.

Jeffrey, Charleston

AW: That's a great memory of great times! Me and Kanavis (McGhee) had been lobbying Coach Mac (Bill McCartney) for four years to let us catch a pass. So he let us play tight end for a few plays in the fourth quarter against K-State.

What I remember is that Kanavis ran a route across the middle and C.J. (Charles Johnson) threw him the ball. But he missed it! C.J. hit him right in the chest and he missed it! It bounced right off him. I gave him hard time about that, but I gave C.J. a harder time because he never threw me the ball.

I caught my pass from Vance Joseph. It was supposed to be a corner route, but I changed up and made it a post route. It was like we were playing in the parking lot or something. Vance put it right out there for me and I made a one-handed catch (for 17 yards). We were having so much fun that day. Those were really wonderful times.

Alfred Williams was a cornerstone for two championship teams in Colorado. In 1990, he won the Butkus Award as college football's top linebacker and he helped the Buffs win the national title.

He played for the Broncos during both of their Super Bowl winning seasons in 1997-98.

Last month, Williams became the fifth CU player elected to the College Football Hall of Fame. Williams, 41, lives in Centennial and is co-host of an afternoon sports-talk show on 104.3-KKFN

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charisma, and love for the game, you'd make a



Alfred Williams, left, and Detron Smith, right, show off the Lombardi Trophy after the Broncos won the Super Bowl in 1998. (Karl Gehring, The Denver Post)

great coach. Not to mention, I think you could help out your Buffs in the recruiting world.

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