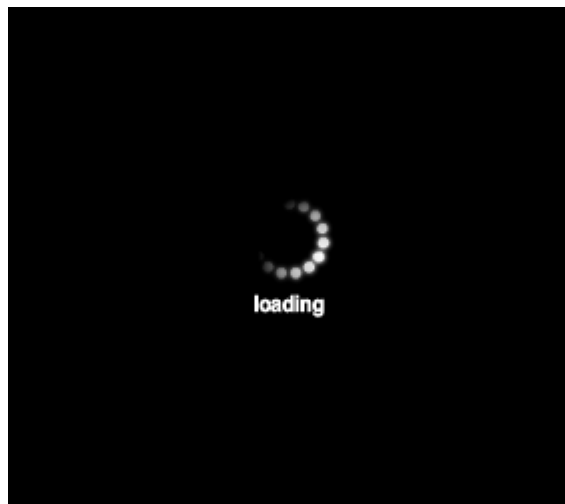


CU linebackers in need of new leader

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 03/07/2010 12:04:33 AM MST



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During a post practice conversation with longtime Colorado linebackers coach Brian Cabral on Saturday afternoon, a reporter noted that this is the first spring in years that Cabral finds himself without a stalwart returning to his linebacker corps.

In recent years, he has always had a Jeff Smart or Jordon Dizon or Thaddeus Washington to lean on. This year his most experienced linebacker is senior Michael Sipili, who has been hit-and-miss throughout his career.

Cabral said he believes Sipili is ready to shine in 2010 after a lot of ups and downs. Sipili drove home the point near the end of the first practice by intercepting a pass and returning it for a touchdown.

"No question, this should be his best year," Cabral said. "He's gone through a lot of things. He's experienced a lot of things. ... I think it's finally time for him to come into his own."

Cabral said he also is confident sophomore Jon Major is ready to emerge after contributing at times last fall. Major was one of the highest-rated linebacker recruits in the nation in the 2008 class, but tore a knee ligament during his true freshman season.

Major made 13 tackles last season. So a significant increase in production is expected.

"I'm pretty confident with the guys coming back," Cabral said.

Sipili and Major will have to prove they belong on the field. Competition for playing time, especially at the two interior linebacker positions, should be fierce now that Doug Rippy has been moved inside.

"He's a guy who, athletically, we need to try to get on the field," Cabral said. "Whether or not we can try to bring him along and try to find a spot for him, we'll see."

Cabral had some new faces in his group Saturday.

Safety Patrick Mahnke is practicing at linebacker and could be used in a variety of roles in the future because the weakside linebacker spot and the nickel back position in the secondary have similar responsibilities.

"We'll see where and how that fits," Cabral said. "That's what spring ball is for."

David Goldberg also has rejoined the linebackers after playing defensive end the past two years.

Moving on

Former CU offensive lineman Brad Bedell, who has served as an offensive technical intern in the program the past three years, has been hired as offensive line coach at Northern Colorado.

Bedell was on the field watching the Buffs practice Saturday, one day after receiving the good news. He might still be seen at times this spring in Boulder as he makes the transition to his first full-time coaching job in Greeley.

Notable

Senior wide receiver Andre Simmons was absent from Saturday's practice dealing with a personal issue off campus. He is expected to return as soon as the next session on Tuesday. ... CU hosted a large group of high school juniors on its second Junior Day of the spring semester. Some in the group traveled to CU from California, Arizona, Louisiana and Texas. ... Sophomore defensive back Steven Hicks is being held out of spring ball because he has fallen behind academically. ... Suspended wide receiver Markques Simas did not participate in the first day of practice but he was on the field watching the entire session.

CU spring schedule

March 9 -- 2:30 p.m. meetings, 4-6 p.m. practice, shorts-helmets

March 10 -- Pro timing day for 2009 seniors, 9 a.m.

March 11 -- 2:30 p.m. meetings, 4-6 p.m. practice, pads-NT; Coaches clinic

March 12 -- 2:30 p.m. meetings, 4-6 p.m. practice, pads; Coaches clinic

March 15 -- 2:30 p.m. meetings, 4-6 p.m. practice, pads

March 16 -- 2:30 p.m. meetings, 4-6 p.m. practice, pads-NT

March 18 -- 2:30 p.m. meetings, 4 p.m. scrimmage, pads

March 20-28 -- Spring break

March 29 -- 2:30 p.m. meetings, 4-6 p.m. practice, pads

March 30 -- 2:30 p.m. meetings, 4-6 p.m. practice, pads

April 1 -- 2:30 p.m. meetings, 4-6 p.m. practice, pads-NT

April 2 -- 2:30 p.m. meetings, 4 p.m. scrimmage, pads

April 5 -- 2:30 p.m. meetings, 4-6 p.m. practice, pads

April 6 -- 2:30 p.m. meetings, 4-6 p.m. practice, pads-NT

April 8 -- 2:30 p.m. meetings, 4-6 p.m. practice, shorts-helmets

April 10 -- Spring game, 1:30 p.m.

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Longmont, Colorado
Wednesday, March 17,
2010

Publish Date: 3/7/2010

Buff's amp intensity as spring play gets rolling

By Patrick Ridgell
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BOULDER — Finding flaws with a 3-9 football program usually isn't too difficult. As Colorado starts spring ball, it thinks it has found a big one it can fix now.

According to players and coaches, energy and enthusiasm were so lacking in 2009 that they'll be a big point of emphasis this spring. CU asks media covering practice to refrain from reporting specifics. But it's safe to say that at Saturday's spring opener, energy and enthusiasm abounded.

"It was missing a lot," junior quarterback Tyler Hansen said. "I think we needed that.

"Last year, we had guys that were more laid back and easygoing, and that's OK. But this year, we have more fiery guys, guys that will get in your face and kind of yell a little bit, which is good."

Offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau said the coaching staff has to set the tone. He believes that if the players see more energy from the staff, the players will have more enthusiasm in their workouts.

"Last season, in every Friday night meeting in the hotels, we were trying to show them clips of guys having emotion and showing it," Kiesau said. "Every college game day, there's always guys having fun and winning games and bumping, and that's just part of the emotion of the game. It's an emotional game, and you have to create that culture and cultivate it within your system.

"And that's what I'm getting on the coaches about. We have got to build that system and let them know it's OK. I think sometimes they feel like if they score a touchdown, (and) they come to the sideline and bump chests or show a little emotion, it might be looked down upon. It's college football; it's what it's all about."

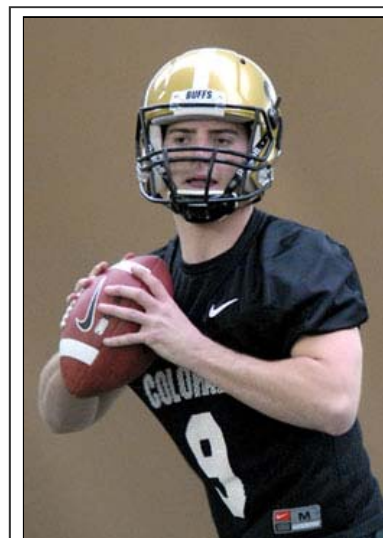
Kiesau said a barrier in past seasons was that players thought that showing such emotion would be deemed "weird" by teammates. He said they can't care about that.

Kiesau said that on a scale of 1-to-10, the enthusiasm within the program was a 3 for the first four years.

"It's a 15 now," he said. "It's off the charts."

Said Hansen: "(Saturday) was a good day, intensity-wise. We got out there and got after each other."

Read Patrick Ridgell's [CU sports blog](#). He can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.



University of Colorado quarterback Tyler Hansen looks for a pass during a 2009 spring practice in Boulder. Hansen says the Buffs are showing more intensity this year than they did last spring. **Times-Call file**