



Senior Tyler Hansen could be named the Buffs' starting quarterback on Tuesday.
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



04/09/2011 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

Bufs Conclude Productive Spring Under Embree

BOULDER - His team was a long, long way from entering Saturday's spring game injury-free, but when the night was complete the injury list hadn't grown. That was a small victory for Jon Embree at the conclusion of his first set of spring drills as Colorado's new football coach - and at this point victories of any size are important.

Embree walked away from the 105-play scrimmage at Folsom Field feeling good about what the Buffaloes had accomplished in their 15 spring practices.

"I'm happy with the guys who are going to be here," he said. "We know how to hit, we know how to throw a punch . . . we just need more guys. We can't do nothing about that; we have what we have. We'll have to try to stay healthy as best we can. But I'm happy with where we are . . . we just need to keep

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working and improving."

His assessment of Saturday, which saw his defense allow 44 points in the controlled scrimmage: "We moved the ball early well, but stalled out. I wish our kicking game had been a little better. (Justin Castor) was OK, but we need him to be great. We've got to improve there.

"I thought the defense played well early; I was happy with their tackling, but they got a little shoddy at the end ... That's OK, I understand that situation."

That would be the absence of numerous key players whom Embree said would have to work their way back into their positions on the depth chart: "The injured guys are going to have to come back in and compete - no one's getting a job; you have to earn your job here."

Several players appeared to make significant headway in that on Saturday night. Embree and his staff will meet Sunday and Monday to evaluate Saturday's work and the overall spring work, then announce a starting quarterback on Tuesday. And if your money's on Tyler Hansen, it's probably in the right place.

Hansen, a senior learning a new system, displayed accuracy and a command of the offense - but not from spring's Day One. Still, it was Hansen's finish, not his start, that impressed Embree.

"I wouldn't say from Day One (he was impressed), but I am happy with his productivity," Embree said. "He's done a good with his command of the offense, getting them in and out of the huddle. We need to get better with our tempo ... at times with him he's thinking a little (too much) when he's getting to the line of scrimmage. But overall, I am pleased with how he's competed."

Hansen, who was 8-for-15 for 124 yards and a touchdown Saturday night, said he just wanted to be efficient and now was "night-and-day" more comfortable with the new pro-style offense than when spring drills started.

"The coaching staff really helped me out a lot," Hansen said. "I feel really comfortable as a player and this offense is really good ... (accuracy) was my goal and I've been working on my mechanics with coach (Rip) Scherer. I feel I'm getting a lot more accurate."

As for the overall spring progress under Embree and his staff, Hansen said the majority of the Buffs have "bought in and we're going to figure out the guys who haven't bought in and they're not going to be with us anymore. But the majority has bought in."

Sophomore walk-on Josh Ford, a Mullen High School product who transferred from Barton (Kan.) Community College, was Saturday's most productive rusher. He ran 17 times for 164 yards, including a scrimmage-long 56-yard touchdown run.

"I just tried to do my part," Ford said. "I've been working hard ... I'm just trying to impress my coach (Eric Bieniemy) and do my part in the system. It feels great to have success today, but I owe it to my O-line and my fullbacks blocking for me."

With Bieniemy's help, Ford said he picked up the offense quickly: "I picked up things pretty fast because I've got a good teacher in Eric Bieniemy. He knows how to break things down; he should be a school teacher ... he just breaks it down for us. We weren't perfect every day, but we worked

hard."

Senior Rodney "Speedy" Stewart (14 carries, 55 yards) remains the No. 1 tailback, but Ford's performance might earn him a longer look in August. Asked if he believed he might have done that, he said, "I hope I did. I'm just trying to come out every day and work hard, contribute to the team, win and help bring this team back. I trust everything Coach Embree says about bringing the tradition back."

Sophomore Paul Richardson was the night's leading receiver, catching four passes for 61 yards and a touchdown. But redshirt freshman tight end Kyle Slavin caught three passes for 50 yards and a pair of TDs. Embree said Slavin had made strides in the final two weeks of spring drills. Slavin noted he entered the spring "just wanting to get back on the field as soon as possible. The year off (as a redshirt) was tough. I felt like I improved in my routes, my blocking, everything."

But Embree wants more improvement from him in snapping. Slavin hasn't snapped since he was a high school sophomore, but he's now backing up sophomore Ryan Iverson. And Embree said that mechanical part of the kicking game must improve for Castor to show the necessary improvement.

Castor's placekicking was hit-and-miss in Saturday's first half, but fairly impressive in the second. In the first half, he made a conventional PAT, a 37-yard PAT and a 49-yard field goal, but missed on three other lengthy extra point attempts. He rallied in the second half, hitting PAT tries from 41, 49 and 51 yards.

Embree's off-season advice to the sophomore: "Just keep working. You're right there . . . continue to work with the snapper and holder and get the whole operation down. He definitely has the leg and is now getting the ball up quicker, which he was struggling with early in camp. It's a work in progress with him. He just has to continue to improve because we're bringing in a guy to compete with him (Will Oliver). He has to make sure when the competition starts he's ready to go."

The large number of players who missed Saturday's work - the morning medical report showed 15 definitely out with another eight questionable - offered reserves the chance to move forward. One of them might have been redshirt freshman defensive back Jordan Marquez, a walk-on whose father Mike was Buffs tailback in the Bill McCartney Era. Jordan Marquez picked off No. 3 QB Brent Burnette's first pass attempt and returned it 33 yards for a touchdown in the second quarter. It was the first interception of the spring in a controlled scrimmage.

Embree reiterated that the Buffs play 13 consecutive weeks next fall without a break. "We're going to have games where not have everybody (healthy)," he said. "It's important that people got opportunities show they can do that on a Saturday for us."

The Buffs' defensive depth, he said, is going to have to come from "some of the freshmen, some from injured guys. It is what it is; I can't draft anybody or get anybody off the waiver wire. We have to learn to play like that; it's going to have to be our rallying cry on defense."

He said throughout spring drills the defense rallied from a questionable start and "has continued to build on what they've done in the last three or four situational scrimmages. They've asserted themselves. I think we're getting to the point where we're understanding that it's about the next play . . . our ultimately our goal is to make them kick it."

Junior linebacker Jon Major believed Saturday's work "was a huge improvement from the past scrimmages. We were able to stop the run pretty well - at least the first team - and made them pass a lot. That's where most of their success was. We'll just continue to get more comfortable and playing fast."

CU LINEBACKER WALL OF FAME DEDICATION: Veteran linebackers coach Brian Cabral invited a number of prominent players and coaches back Saturday for the dedication of a wall honoring them (and Cabral) in the Dal Ward Athletics Center. This spring marks the start of Cabral's 23rd season at CU.

Adjacent to the linebackers' meeting room, the wall is a collage-type mural featuring Barry Remington and Chad Brown at either end, with Butkus Award winner Alfred Williams in the center. Pictures and brief biographical information of other prominent CU players, including Joe Romig (1959-61), are interspersed throughout the full-color collage.

Also featured is a list of the school's Top 19 career tacklers, with the No. 20 slot asking, "Who's Next?" CU's top three tacklers: No. 1 - Remington (493 tackles, 1982-86); No. 2 - Matt Russell (446, 1993-96); No. 3 - Greg Biekert (441, 1989-92). No. 11 is Cabral (297, 1974-77).

Of the 18 players (excluding Cabral) comprising CU's career tackle leaders, 10 played under Cabral.

Brown, who played 15 seasons in the NFL, said he "owed my opportunity in the NFL to Coach Cabral . . . you can't do what he's done for this long without love. Sometimes it was tough love, but it was love for everybody in the room."

Added Sean Tufts, a Buffs linebacker from 2000-03: "Cabral has been here for most of those guys on the wall . . . he's been an amazing part of my life."

Cabral introduced four of his current linebackers - Derrick Webb, Doug Rippey, Liloa Nobriga and Patrick Mahnke - and incoming freshman Brady Daigh to former CU Coach Bill McCartney. Also present were former Buffs Head Coach Gary Barnett and former CU assistant Bob Simmons, whose former players included Brown, Williams and current Buffs assistant Kanavis McGhee.

Of the LB Wall of Fame Mahnke, a senior, said, "There's some pretty ridiculous numbers up there - especially Chad Brown's. Fifteen seasons in the NFL? He was playing in the pros as long as I've been playing football."

Former linebacker Eric McCarty (1983-87), now one of CU's team physicians, didn't play for Cabral but said Cabral "has had a tremendous impact on a number of people . . . I've watched him over the years - the way he lives, the way he goes about life."

Remington said it was a privilege to be among those featured on the LB Wall of Fame: "That's a bunch of tough, talented guys . . . I feel honored to be up there."

BUFF BITS: Saturday's attendance was 15,655 - the second-biggest spring crowd in CU history . . . McCartney and Barnett coached an alumni flag football game prior to the Spring Game. Asked how it felt to be coaching again at Folsom Field, Barnett said he didn't believe he would be as "pumped" as he was prior to the flag contest, which featured former quarterbacks Joel Klatt (Barnett) and Charles Johnson (McCartney) as team captains. Of the Embree Era, Barnett said, "I'm excited for Jon,

I also understand how hard it is. He's going to have to be patient with himself and his guys, but he'll do fine. He's got a little learning curve, but he's learning it fast. The whole staff will be fine." Prior to the flag football contest, McCartney spoke at a luncheon attended mostly by former and current players.

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SHOW MENU



Rippy shines in light of tragedy

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 04/09/2011 11:58:17 PM MDT

Colorado linebacker Doug Rippy has played a different brand of football than what coaches, fans and media around the program had come to expect from him over his previous three seasons in the program.

Coach Jon Embree has regularly singled out Rippy for praise and did so once again Saturday following the annual spring game at Folsom Field.

Rippy made two tackles in the game and broke up a pass. It wasn't his best outing to be sure, but his mind wasn't entirely on football, and, truth to tell, it hasn't been over the past two weeks.

Rippy's best friend since early in childhood, Damiko Russell, was found shot to death March 28, in a Columbus, Ohio, alley.

"This spring goes to him, and everything that I do is for him and the lord," Rippy said, noting that they had dreamed of playing college football together since they were 5 years old.

Coaches were already wowed by the leap Rippy was making in effort and attitude well before the tragedy of losing his best friend. But the loss seems to have focused him more.

Rippy said his first one-on-one conversation with Embree back in December served as a new starting point for him and re-energized his love for the game.

"What made me a different player was the coaches," Rippy said. "They kept throwing out there that everybody's got a clean slate. If you've got a clean slate, you want to prove something. I've been here for three years now and I've got a lot to prove."

Castor coming along

Sophomore place-kicker Justin Castor wasn't perfect during Saturday's spring game and he even managed to continue the recent CU trend over the past few seasons of hitting an upright, but he had nothing to be embarrassed about his performance.

He made six of 10 field goals from 49, 37, 41, 41, 49 and 51 yards. Three of his four misses came from 41 yards and another was from 42 yards out.

"It's just a work in progress with him and he's just got to continue to improve because we're bringing a guy in to compete with him," Embree said. "He's got to make sure that when the competition starts that he's ready to go."

Spring awards

The new CU coaching staff trimmed the list of spring awards from 11 in past seasons to just six this year. The staff might move some of the former categories to the fall.

Defensive tackle Conrad Obi earned the John Wooten Award as the Most Improved Player. Center Daniel Munyer earned the Dan Stavelly Award as the top redshirt freshman-to-be, wide receiver Paul Richardson earned the Hale Irwin Award as the top sophomore-to-be, linebacker Doug Rippy earned the Fred Casotti Award as the top junior-to-be and Tyler Hansen earned the Joe Romig Award as the top senior-to-be.

Offensive lineman Ryan Miller earned the Iron Buffalo Award for outstanding performance in the strength and conditioning program.

Barnett tops McCartney

Former CU coach Gary Barnett and quarterback Joel Klatt led their team of alumni to a 20-6 win over a team coached by former CU coach Bill McCartney and quarterbacked by Charles Johnson.

Notable

Three of the top five tacklers in the game were players who might not play a lot when more members of the defense return to health in the fall. Zac Blaha led the Buffs with nine total tackles, Ray Polk had eight and Eric Richter and Alec Parker made six. Walk-on running back Quentin Hildreth is no longer with the program.

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Thorburn: QB Hansen ready to run with the Buffaloes

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 04/10/2011 12:07:44 AM MDT

I'd like start by setting a new ground rule for this column.

From now on Dan Hawkins will be referenced as Hawk-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named in this space.

Home-Run-Hire-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named was a little long. And Mike Bohn seems to have played a pretty good mulligan with Jon Embree.

Not saying H.W.M.N.B.N was a dark wizard like Lord Voldemort. But H.W.M.N.B.N, and not Gary Barnett, was actually the head coach who burnt this program to the ground if you take a look at the scoreboard over the last five years and the disconnect with the fan base and former players.

It appears Tyler Hansen is finally ready to thrive as the Buffs starting quarterback now that he is free from H.W.M.N.B.N and the never-ending position battle with Cody Hawkins.

The senior-to-be didn't officially sew up the gig during CU's spring game on Saturday night in front of an impressive crowd of 15,655 at Folsom Field. However, it will be a major upset if Hansen isn't the man when Embree announces the starting quarterback for the 2011 season on Tuesday.

After everything Hansen has gone through in Boulder -- having a planned redshirt year burned twice by H.W.M.N.B.N, playing musical chairs with Cody for three years, sustaining a ruptured spleen last season -- this is finally Hansen's team.

He even sounds like the new head coach.

"We're going to figure out the guys that haven't bought in and they're not going to be with us anymore," Hansen said after completing 8-of-15 passes for 124 yards with atouchdown and no interceptions. "The majority of this team has bought in."

In the previous two scrimmages, Hansen completed 31 of 38 passes (81.6 percent) for 407 yards with four touchdowns and no interceptions.

"I am happy with his productivity," Embree said. "He's done a good job getting command of the offense, getting them in and out of the huddle. We need to get better with our tempo ... he's still thinking sometimes."

Embree's old-school spring football session had the training room in the Dal Ward Center resembling a M.A.S.H. unit. And the defense suffered the most with six linemen, four defensive backs and two linebackers injured.

The offense was missing wide receiver Toney Clemons, running back Brian Lockridge and a host of offensive linemen and tight ends.

Hansen, known for his athleticism and running skills, was still able to pick up Eric Bieniemy's pro-style offense and operate smoothly in the pocket.

"It's real intense," Hansen said when asked about adjusting to the new coaching staff. "Coach Embree comes from the NFL, so he asks you to be professional. That's the biggest thing is to act like professionals."

The Buffs will start a new era in 145 days when the season kicks off at Hawaii.

It's not going to be all paradise.

CU's roster, even when healthy, is going to have some gaping holes. Embree, Eric Bieniemy and the rest of the staff need several more recruiting cycles to get the talent pool at a temperature suitable for the Pac-12.

The schedule -- at Ohio State, at Stanford, Oregon, USC, and so on -- is unforgiving with 13 straight games and no bye.

But Hansen has learned quite a bit about adversity at CU and is looking forward to this challenge.

Meanwhile, the last reported sighting of H.W.M.N.B.N was in Fort Collins. Sounds like the Rams need to clean a few things up.

"To me, that's as bad an offensive practice as we've had in four years," Colorado State head coach Steve Fairchild said after the spring scrimmage at Hughes Stadium. "They couldn't line up right, they couldn't stay in their stance. There were probably 25 offsides penalties. We didn't catch the ball, we didn't throw the ball. We didn't do a thing right offensively."

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CU Buffs fans like new offense, night game

Attendants at Spring Game get taste of autumn

By Erica Meltzer Camera Staff Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 04/09/2011 10:59:17 PM MDT

Bufs fans filled Folsom Field Saturday to get a taste of what the University of Colorado's football team will bring to the field as it enters the Pac-12 this fall under the leadership of new coach Jon Embree.

Embree has promised a more physical style of play, and fans at the Spring Game scrimmage said the difference is noticeable.

"The offense is looking really good this year," said Curt Tellam, 45, of Superior, who used to own Ciolo Foods.

A season ticket holder, Tellam said he liked the more aggressive style of play.

"They're more physical," said his friend John Cracraft, a construction manager, also of Superior.

Seeing the Spring Game under the lights for the first time also was a nice change, the men said. It made it easier to bring along their sons.

Tellam's son Bailey, 13, had a baseball game in Brighton Saturday afternoon that would have prevented him from going to a day game.

When Embree made the decision to move the Spring Game to 6 p.m. from its usual 1 p.m. start time, he recalled how his own sons often had to miss the game because of youth sports activities.

Stacy Skrbina, an appliance repair technician from Wheat Ridge, came straight to the game from her daughter Morgan's soccer game.

"It's exciting," she said of the team's play. "You see a big difference in the intensity."

Skrbina wasn't 100 percent sold on the timing, though.

"I'm cold," she said, when asked about the night game.

"I liked it," said a shivering Morgan, 8, as she huddled close to her mother.

Scott Starr, who played on CU's 1990 national championship team, came to the game with his father, Tom Starr, who ran track for CU in the '60s, and his four children. They crowded together on the buffalo statue in front of Folsom Field for a photograph after finding their father's name on a brick.

"I'm really excited about getting back to good, physical CU football," Scott Starr said of the play during the Spring Game. "It's exciting to see."

Starr, who now sells software for Oracle, had no interest, though, in getting back on the field for the alumni flag football game.

"I'm past all that," he said with a laugh.

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Physical attitude puts spring in CU Buffs' step

Offense puts up 44 points in Embree's 1st spring game as coach

By **Kyle Ringo** Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 04/10/2011 12:08:49 AM MDT



The final bruises of a tough month of football practices were suffered Saturday at Folsom Field during the first spring game played at night in Colorado school history in front of the second largest crowd to watch the Buffs in the spring.

Coach Jon Embree's first spring game produced 50 points -- 44 from the offense and six from the defense -- in front of 15,655 in a scrimmage formatted to be offense versus defense because of a rash of injuries that kept nearly 20 players off the field.

Some of those players are still nursing injuries from last season and were scheduled to miss all of spring ball, but the high number of injured is evidence of how difficult the past month has been on the Buffs.

First-year coach Jon Embree vowed to make spring ball a proving ground for players who hoped to contribute to the program in 2011 and beyond. It seems he came through on that promise and then some.

"This has been the most physical practicing I've ever been in," linebacker Doug Rippey said as he stood on the field signing autographs for children following the game. "It's been a long spring and I would have to say I've enjoyed going through it with these guys, and for me it was just a blessing just to come out here and play and be able to compete."

That sentiment was echoed by fellow linebacker Jon Major, with whom Rippey will likely combine on a plenty of tackles this fall.

"It's really what we needed, kind of a really physical, really tough spring," Major said. "It really allowed us to improve a lot more than something where you go slow. We installed every day. We came out and hit every day, and I think that's going to pay dividends in the fall."

Embree did not name a starting quarterback following the game but he did promise to name one by Tuesday after reviewing film and discussing the decision with his assistant coaches today and Monday.

Going into the spring game, it seemed all but decided with senior-to-be Tyler Hansen playing at a higher level with more consistency and efficiency throughout the month of practices. Hansen was named one of six spring award winners, earning the Joe Romig Award as the top senior-to-be.

Embree said after the game he has been pleased with how Hansen has played and led the offense this spring after getting off to a slow start.

It's likely safe to assume Hansen will still be the starter next fall, but redshirt freshman Nick Hirschman performed better in the spring game and did enough to at least have fans believing he could give them a chance to win if called on in the fall.

Hirschman completed 11 of 19 passes for 170 yards and two touchdowns in the game. He led five of the seven scoring drives by the offense, though one of those drives was actually completed by junior Brent Burnette.

"I think that game situations are more suited to me," Hirschman said. "I'm not going to look pretty in a practice, but when the lights come on and when the fans are here, it just really raises my level of play."

Two of Hirschman's touchdown passes went to redshirt freshman tight end Kyle Slavin, who is likely to earn his first playing time with the offense next season and possibly as a longsnapper.

Hansen didn't have a bad day, but it wasn't up to the standard he set in the second scrimmage a week ago when he completed 18 of 19 passes and threw for three scores.

In the spring game, he completed eight of 15 passes for 124 yards and one touchdown covering 19 yards to Paul Richardson.

Burnette's first chance to lead the offense ended badly. His first pass was intercepted by defensive back Jordan Marquez and returned 33 yards for a touchdown. It was the first interception in the three main spring scrimmages and came on the 100th passing attempt.

Burnette completed four of eight attempts for 40 yards and a touchdown.

Walk-on running back Josh Ford led the team in rushing with 164 yards on 17 carries, including a 56-yard touchdown run late in the game.

Rodney Stewart ran 14 times for 55 yards and Tony Jones was impressive running 12 times for 55 yards and also catching a screen pass that he turned into a 31-yard gain.

Richardson was the leading receiver with four catches for 61 yards. Slavin made three catches for 50 yards and his two scores.

CU spring game

SCORING SUMMARY

Keenan Canty 15 pass from Nick Hirschman (Justin Castor kick)

Justin Castor 49 FG

Paul Richardson 19 pass from Tyler Hansen (Justin Castor 37 kick)

Tony Jones 1 run (Justin Castor 41 kick failed)

Jordan Marquez 33 interception return (Justin Castor 41 kick failed).

Kyle Slavin 7 pass from Nick Hirschman (Justin Castor 41 kick)

Kyle Slavin 22 pass from Brent Burnett (Justin Castor 49 kick)

Josh Ford 56 run (Justin Castor 51 kick)

Totals -- 7 touchdowns (2 rush, 4 pass, 1 return); Total Plays (including 12 special teams) -- 105.

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing -- Josh Ford 17-164; Rodney Stewart 14-55; Tony Jones 12-53; Tyler Hansen 1-9; Nick Hirschman 1-9; Cordary Allen 2-5; Brent Burnette 1-4. Totals 48-299.

Passing -- Tyler Hansen 15-8-0--124; Nick Hirschman 19-11-0--170; Brent Burnette 8-4-1 40. Totals 42-23-1--334.

Receiving -- Paul Richardson 4-61; Kyle Slavin 3-50; Kyle Cefalo 3-28; Rodney Stewart 2-31; Keenan Canty 2-35; Ryan Deehan 2-32; Henley Griffon 2-24; Josh Ford 1-12; Tony Jones 1-31; Will Jefferson 1-24; Evan Harrington 1-4; Tyler Ahles 1-2. Totals 23-334.



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THE DENVER POST

colorado spring game

Defense work in progress for Buffs

By John Henderson
The Denver Post

Posted: 04/10/2011 01:00:00 AM MDT

BOULDER — As Jon Embree's first spring camp ended here Saturday night, Colorado's defense finally showed a pulse. It's a faint heartbeat, but it's no longer flat-lining as it did after spring practice began a month ago.

In a controlled scrimmage strictly pitting offense against defense, Colorado's offense scored 50 points. The good news is the vast majority of that came against defensive reserves who won't be featured in technique videos anytime soon.

It all made Embree make one declaration about the defense that could be the theme of the 2011 season.

"The first team can't get hurt," he said.

One reason the defense gave up 50 is that five projected starters sat out with injuries, including safety

Anthony Perkins and tackle Curtis Cunningham.

The 15,655 fans excited about a native son turning around the worst stretch of football in Colorado history had to hide their eyes occasionally. Redshirt freshman Nick Hirschman looked like a potential all-Pac-12 candidate against the reserves, going 11-of-19 for 170 yards and two TDs.

Even Josh Ford, a sophomore walk-on from Mullen High, rushed for 164 yards on 17 carries.

However, the first defense kept the offense scoreless on the first three drives. Junior Doug Rippy appears to have filled a hole at inside linebacker, and Conrad Obi showed he has finally come into his own at nose tackle.

It's about time. He's a senior.

"The offense really had their way with the defense early in spring," Embree said, "and the defense continues to build on what they've done the last three or four situational scrimmages and kind of asserted themselves. So I'm happy the way the defense played."

The top returning starter, outside linebacker Jon Major, is trying to keep the defense together through a brutal 2011 schedule that will be like trying to stop the Indy 500 every Saturday. Yet everyone knows the defense is the key to prevent total devastation.

"We made a lot of improvement over the last two scrimmages," Major said. "We've been pretty comfortable with the base defense."

Keep in mind we haven't mentioned cornerback yet. We make this omission because it makes new defensive coordinator Greg Brown break into tears. Atop the depth chart is sophomore Parker Orms, a nickel back coming off major

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knee surgery.

Don't be surprised to see a true freshman lining up against Hawaii's stable of receivers come the Sept. 3 opener.

"Corner," Brown said, "is the great unknown."

The best news coming out of camp is the best player may have been senior quarterback Tyler Hansen. The returning starter went 8-for-15 for 124 yards. It included a quick out to freshman backup Keenan Canty, who turned sophomore cornerback Jered Bell into a pretzel in going untouched 15 yards for the first touchdown.

Embree said he will announce the starting quarterback Tuesday. Not that Hansen is a shoo-in, but Embree also plans to announce that Ralphie will run around the field again this fall.

Hansen said of his improvement since the start of spring: "It's night and day. Just working with these guys and (quarterbacks) coach (Rip) Scherer and (offensive coordinator Eric) Bieniemy has really helped me a lot. This offense is really good."

One remaining question mark is kicker. Sophomore Justin Castor missed two of his first six field goals, from 41 or 42 yards, before hitting his last four from 41, 41, 49 and 51.

In the fall he must fight off incoming freshman Will Oliver, California's No. 5-ranked kicker from Harvard-Westlake High in Los Angeles.

"(Castor) was OK," Embree said. "We need him to be great."

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mark kiszla

Kiszla: Time for CU seniors to leave their legacy

By Mark Kiszla
The Denver Post

Posted: 04/10/2011 01:00:00 AM MDT

BOULDER — Remember when Colorado football mattered, and the Buffaloes could block Oklahoma, score on Notre Dame or tackle any lofty goal? Do you recall the buzz of how sweet it felt when CU finished No. 1 in the nation?

Then you're old.

The Buffaloes are trying to rekindle that football-loving feeling.

But it won't be easy.

Eric Bieniemy, whose footprints are all over the Colorado record book as a running back, was standing on Folsom Field, signing autographs upon completion of the first spring practice under the direction of new coach Jon Embree.

A young boy, maybe 5 years old, approached Bieniemy on Saturday night.

"Are you a football player?" the kid asked a CU athletic legend.

"I used to be," said Bieniemy, now 41, with the middle-aged tummy to prove it. "But a football player? Not anymore. Well, I guess maybe I could be a nose guard."

The official title of Bieniemy with the Colorado football program is offensive coordinator. But his

real job is to make Buffs believe in greatness again.

"In order to appreciate winning you have to despise losing," Bieniemy said.

Embree, who was named CU coach when athletic director Mike Bohn failed to get Les Miles of Louisiana State or Troy Calhoun of Air Force interested, has been hard at work for 125 days.

Is the job bigger and tougher than Embree imagined?

"No, no. It has been everything I thought it would be. I knew coming in it was going to be hard. I watched (Colorado) from afar. And I knew it was going to be a difficult task. Obviously, if it was going to be easy, I wouldn't be here," said Embree, a 1987 CU graduate who learned to believe all things are possible in Boulder from Bill McCartney.

How do we begin to quantify the renewed enthusiasm for Colorado football, now that Dan Hawkins is out of the equation and trips to Manhattan, Kan., have been replaced by road games in Los Angeles?

Attendance for the spring scrimmage was 15,655, an increase of more than 70 percent

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from a year ago, when Hawk love had turned as bitter as an imminent divorce.

That's the good news. Want the bad? Embree must play a Pac-12 Conference slate, which will include dates featuring legitimate Heisman Trophy candidates in Stanford quarterback Andrew Luck and Oregon running back LaMichael James, with a defense built from players recruited by Hawkins' staff.

The Buffaloes desperately need defensive end Chidera Uzo-Diribe to blossom into a pass-rushing star. Jon Major should be solid at linebacker. But the defensive secondary? Don't ask.

"I can't go draft anybody. I can't go get anyone off the waiver wire," Embree said.

What Embree can immediately bring Colorado football as a coach is a decrease in bluster and an increase in competency.

With a season-opening trip to Hawaii, the Buffaloes play a 13-game schedule in 2011. Whose brilliant idea was it to take a payday from Ohio State in return for a beat down in Columbus? All in all, I'd rather be seeing red in Lincoln, Neb.

But come back from Honolulu with success and there are definite opportunities for CU to win at home against California, Washington State and Arizona, not to mention in Denver against a Colorado State program going nowhere under the direction of Steve Fairchild. The Buffaloes also could steal victories on the road at Washington and UCLA, where by November the Bruins could well be looking for a replacement for Rick Neuheisel.

"I told the seniors they have a chance to leave a legacy. They have nine months to create one. And they haven't done one so far. So this is their opportunity," Embree said.

Can the Buffaloes really finish with a 7-6 regular-season record and go bowling in Embree's first season at the helm?

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college football

Spring forecast for CU football

Posted: 04/10/2011 01:00:00 AM MDT

Here's an overview of where Colorado stands under new coach Jon Embree and his staff after spring drills, taking into account injured players who could not participate and incoming signees due to arrive in August. Player's class standing is as of this fall.

OFFENSE

Quarterback: For the first time in his college career, senior Tyler Hansen doesn't have to look over his shoulder for Cody Hawkins. It shows. Hansen looked more relaxed and confident than ever during the spring. The downside is that Hansen hasn't been pushed. Redshirt freshman Nick Hirschman still appears raw, and junior college transfer Brent Burnett has struggled. Incoming freshman Stevie Joe Dorman will have an opportunity to show what he can do in the fall.

Running back: One of the goals of the spring was to develop some depth behind starter Rodney "Speedy" Stewart and Brian Lockridge, who was held out of the spring as he recovers from ankle surgery. Tony Jones, a small (5-foot-7, 180) but strong redshirt freshman from New Jersey power Don Bosco Prep, impressed with his north-south running style, and on Saturday he took a screen pass and broke tackles for a 31-yard gain. Sophomore walk-on Josh Ford, a former Mullen athlete, scampered for a 56-yard touchdown Saturday against defensive reserves and could figure in. But the opportunity is there for incoming recruits Malcolm Creer and Rashad Hall.

Tight end: One of the deepest positions on the team, with senior Ryan Deehan backed up by several talented youngsters, including sophomore DaVaughn Thornton (Denver East) and redshirt freshman Kyle Slavin (Chatfield). Slavin caught a touchdown pass Saturday.

Wide receiver: Scotty McKnight is gone, but Colorado can build around budding star Paul Richardson, who caught 34 passes last season for 514 yards and six TDs. With senior Toney Clemons, who missed most of the spring with a hamstring pull, the Buffs may have one of the Pac-12's top wideout tandems. They are among the team's fastest players. Senior Kyle Cefalo and junior Will Jefferson will get their opportunities, and redshirt freshman Keenan Canty caught a TD pass Saturday.

Offensive line: All-American and Outland Trophy finalist Nate Solder must be replaced at left tackle. Fortunately, sophomore David Bakhtiari (6-4, 295) was able to move over from right tackle, where he was a starter last fall. Former Chaparral all-stater Jack Harris (6-5, 295) looked solid at right tackle. Guards Ryan Miller and Ethan Adkins are back as seniors, and redshirt freshman Daniel Munyer got a ton of reps during the spring at center while returning starter Mike Itlis rehabbed a repaired knee.

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Place-kicker: This has been a continuing concern since Mason Crosby headed off to the Green Bay Packers following the 2006 season. Justin Castor, a sophomore from Arvada West, made just two of his first six field-goal attempts Saturday before converting his next three, from 41, 49 and 51 yards. Embree has already said incoming freshman Will Oliver of Los Angeles will get a shot, and a walk-on could factor in.

DEFENSE

Defensive line: There's some experienced depth, but a sophomore, defensive end Chidera Uzo-Diribe (6-3, 240), is a future star to build around. Exceptionally quick out of the blocks, he might have had a couple of sacks Saturday if quarterbacks hadn't been off-limits. Also rising this spring was senior Conrad Obi at nose tackle. With veteran tackles Will Pericak and Curtis Cunningham and defensive ends Josh Hartigan and Forrest West, this can be a solid unit.

Linebacker: Junior "sam" (outside) linebacker Jon Major looks to have a breakout year. CU may need him to play to the level of the Pac-12's upper echelon, because for the first time in several years, this unit lacks proven depth. Senior Patrick Mahnke, who played his first two seasons at safety, ended the spring as the starter at "will" (outside) linebacker. A pleasant surprise has been the development of junior Doug Rippy at "mike" (inside) linebacker. He will be in a battle with sophomore Derrick Webb in the fall. Liloa Nobriga showed potential last fall but was sidelined with a hamstring injury during the spring. It would not come as a surprise if incoming freshmen Brady Daigh (Mullen) and Woodson Greer (Carson, Calif.) get a shot in August.

Defensive back: Cornerback has been a strength of the defense for several years. Now, this could be the weakest unit of a rebuilding program. Former Wheat Ridge star Parker Orms had been pegged as a nickel back but is listed on the official spring-game depth chart as a starting

cornerback — and he was held out of the spring. A terrific opportunity awaits a trio of incoming freshman cornerbacks. Safety is solid, with returning starters Ray Polk and Anthony Perkins, backed up by senior Travis Sandersfeld.

Punter: Sophomore Zach Grossnickle got off a good punt early in Saturday's spring game. However, Grossnickle must continue to show more consistency to hold off expected competition during August drills.

Tom Kensler, The Denver Post

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cu

CU alums have a ball in tuneup

By Natalie Meisler
The Denver Post

Posted: 04/10/2011 01:00:00 AM MDT

BOULDER — The two biggest plays in the Colorado alumni flag football game carried the telltale marks of pure coaching genius.

On one side stood CU coaching legend Bill McCartney, who brought out his old coaching shoes for the occasion. On the other, former CU offensive coordinator and former head coach Gary Barnett was equally animated.

The McCartney team's highlight Saturday included the longest TD pass he had witnessed since the "Miracle in Michigan" in 1994. He celebrated as wide receiver Blake Anderson (who tipped the famous 64-yard pass from Kordell Stewart that landed in Michael Westbrook's hands on the last play of that game) slipped behind the "secondary" for a 60-yard pass from Bobby Pesavento.

Barnett's team still edged McCartney's team for the win and was led by former quarterback Joel Klatt, who had promised he would have the last word all week on the radio show he co-hosts with Charles Johnson, who quarterbacked one series on the losing team.

Klatt's team executed one pitch after another until the ball came back to Klatt and he took it the last few yards for the final 20-6 score.

Barnett wouldn't take credit for drawing up the re-enactment of the legendary TD play from the 1982 Cal-Stanford game (minus the Stanford

band being on the field).

"No one was listening to us. We had enough trouble getting them to listen back then," Barnett said.

Klatt wasn't giving any coaching credit.

"We just ran down the field pitching the ball to each other," he said.

The preliminary to the spring game was just a good time for all and a celebration of one of their own, Jon Embree, taking over the head coaching job.

There also were more ex-Buffs on the sidelines sitting out than actual spring weekend warriors.

"I have everything still attached, and I don't want anything falling off," ex-Buffs receiver Jeff Campbell said of his reason not to play.

Mike Marquez, a running back on the 1985 team that gave McCartney his first bowl trip, had second thoughts before deciding to play. His son, redshirt freshman walk-on safety Jordan Marquez, taunted him about it.

Jordan Marquez turned in one of the defense's top plays with an interception return for a

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touchdown.

The senior Marquez was far from the oldest to hit the field. Steve Cowell, an aviation safety consultant, got in for one play. "I was the 'Rudy'," he said of walking on and making the 1971-72 rosters.

The best news, according to team physician and ex-Buffs linebacker Eric McCarty, was that no one was seriously hurt.

"They are going to feel it tomorrow," McCarty said.

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All Things Colorado Sports — Blogs — The Denver Post

APRIL 9, 2011, 9:22 PM

McCartney addresses Buffs in vintage form

By **NATALIE MEISLER** |  No Comments

Bill McCartney might be a more frequent visitor to Colorado football team now that his own former player, Jon Embree, is running the show.

McCartney, who retired in 1994, was invited to address the current team before the spring game when he coached an alumni side. Several ex-Buffs were invited to the speech.

McCartney talked to the Buffs about expectations surrounding the program. Recalling how CU teams traditionally dominated the line of scrimmage, in a vintage “Mac-ism” the ex-coach told the team to make your “own line of scrimmages.”

It was as if “Coach Mac” never left the Folsom east sideline. He had his game face on, paced the sideline, and carried a notebook.

Although he autographed jerseys for fans before the flag game, McCartney quietly ducked off the field, avoiding any interviews.

Embree has also made a point of reinstituting traditions allowed to lapse under the Dan Hawkins regime. The fired coach covered up a Dal Ward Center wall of gold-painted cinder blocks signifying major wins. Embree is restoring the tradition.

There was also a dedication Saturday honoring linebackers of CU’s past. Ex-Buff Barry Remington posed in front of his portrait signifying his school record for tackles.

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APRIL 9, 2011, 8:51 PM

CU players excited about spring game performances

By **TOM KENSLER** |  No Comments

BOULDER — Some random observations from Colorado players immediately following Saturday night's spring game:

Sophomore defensive end Chidera Uzo-Diribe: "I would have had two sacks (if quarterbacks were not made off-limits to contact), but it's all good. This year (on defense) we're going to take the mentality that we're going to hit you in the mouth first."

Senior quarterback Tyler Hansen: "I thought we were efficient on offense, just a couple of penalties that we have to clean up. I think some of they young guys (including running backs Tony Jones and Josh Ford, wide receiver Keenan Canty, tight end Kyle Slavin) showed some things. Hopefully, they can help us out."

Junior linebacker Jon Major: "Coach Brown (defensive coordinator Greg Brown) is an energetic, aggressive guy. But it always starts with stopping the run first."

Sophomore tailback Josh Ford: "It makes me feel good (that people now know who I am, as a walk-on). I'm just trying to do my part. I've been working real hard. Why not? I'm just trying to reflect my coach Eric Bieniemy and do my part in the system. I feel that I picked up things fast this spring because I have a good teacher in him. If he were my schoolteacher, I'd have a 4.0. It feels great to have success today, but I owe it to my O-line and my fullback out there blocking. I want to be a team player, and I want to win. I want to help coach (Jon) Embree bring the tradition back here. I'm all for it. I'm on-board with it. This was definitely an audition for me. We have two good running backs coming in. This was definitely my chance to get a head start on the competition."

Redshirt-freshman tailback Tony Jones: "It went good today. Coach Bieniemy harping on me, making sure I do everything that I'm supposed to do, on and off the field. That's the key thing. I just needed to learn the playbook and come out here and perform. To be coached by a guy like that, it feels great to be coached by a former NFL coach and a former NFL player."

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