

Celestine not returning to Buffs

WR leaves team for second time, others may be on way out

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Wide receiver Kendrick Celestine has parted ways with the Colorado football program for the second time in two years and several of his former teammates might also be on their way out for academic reasons, coach Jon Embree said.

Embree said he informed Celestine he would not be back with the program during a recent one-on-one meeting. The newly hired Colorado coach conducted individual meetings with every underclassman on the 2010 roster over the past two weeks.

Embree was not specific regarding why he made the Celestine decision, but he addressed the situation during a conversation regarding his philosophy on mandating high academic standards from his players.

During a team meeting on the day he was announced as the 24th head coach in the program's history earlier this month, he told the entire team that some of the players in the room would not be returning to the program because they weren't getting the job done in the classroom.

Embree said he was not aware of any players who have decided on their own to leave the team during the semester break.

"I said, 'Some of your teammates here aren't going to be back. That's just the reality of it,'" Embree said. "Now will there be guys who go home and decide they don't want to come back? I don't know.

"I do know that almost every guy who sat on that couch (in his office), was excited about coming back and wanted the opportunity, including some of the guys who knew they were in academic situations and were trying to save it at the last minute."

Celestine played in 11 games as a true freshman in 2007 but was used sparingly in the offense. He continued to be rarely used in 2008 and quit the team in the second half of the season. He left school in December that year academically ineligible.

He later said he lost focus during the 2008 season when he learned he was going to be a father. He returned to CU in the summer of 2009 and convinced former coach Dan Hawkins to allow him to earn back his scholarship.

Celestine, a product of Mamou, La., paid his tuition and housing costs in the fall of 2009 and succeeded in the classroom. Hawkins rewarded him on Christmas Eve last year by putting him back on scholarship for 2010.

Celestine played in the Colorado State, Cal and Baylor games this season but he did not record any statistics. He did not dress for four of the final five games of the season.

Staff nearly finalized

Embree said he expects to have his coaching staff finalized by Jan. 3, which is the final day of the regular season in the NFL.

Embree is close to settling on a quarterbacks coach and a wide receivers coach. He was not prepared to name them Tuesday. CU sources said it is likely that the next Buffs quarterbacks coach will come from an NFL team.

Change in philosophy

Former strength and conditioning coach Jeff Pitman emphasized lifting heavy weight in his training programs and what

players call an "old school" approach to building bigger, faster and stronger bodies in the offseason.

Embree said he wants a strength coach who incorporates a more modern approach to the game and one who takes the movements within the game into account in training.

"You don't play football on both your feet," he said. "I know it sounds crazy, but when you watch the game, you're on one foot, you're on one leg. You play the game outside of your frame.

"You start in a perfect position, but as soon as the ball is snapped, things are changing. I want to incorporate training that does that."

Embree might also look to the NFL, perhaps an assistant strength coach there, to fill the vacancy at CU.

"I want someone who has been around elite athletes and understands that, and understands the importance of flexibility and understands the importance of functional strength and understands the importance of putting them in positions where they have to compete against one another."

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