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college football

New CU coach Embree vows to change way Buffs "see ourselves"

By John Henderson
The Denver Post

Posted: 12/07/2010 01:00:00 AM MST

BOULDER — When new Colorado football coach Jon Embree met his team Monday morning for the first time, he told them he wanted to make changes in them before they put on another helmet.

The former Colorado tight end and assistant coach had watched from afar as his alma mater stumbled through five consecutive losing seasons. Even as an assistant coach in the NFL, he knew what needed to be done.

"We're going to change the way we see ourselves," Embree said during his introductory news conference. "We're going to put swagger back in this program. Their job is to help return the luster of this great program. I told them about winning the national championship, that it's one of the best-kept secrets out there."

Standing high in the east stands of Folsom Field, wearing a black-and-gold tie, black suit and a buffalo lapel pin, Embree painted a picture as bright as the blue sky hovering over the Flatirons in the background.

His introductory speech interrupted numerous times by applause, Embree talked about what he learned from mentors ranging from Bill McCartney to Mike Shanahan, about his staff's recruiting prowess and his wish to get ex-players involved in the program again. He even pooh-poohed criticism of Colorado's facilities, which coaches in the past often called subpar.

But most of all, he talked about image. Frankly, he said, Colorado doesn't have much of one anymore.

"When I was at UCLA recruiting, going to schools, people don't know about Colorado like they should," Embree said. "They don't know about our Heisman Trophy. They don't know about our Butkus Award winners. They don't know about our Mackey Award winner, about our Big 12 championship. They don't know about the accomplishments we have as a program."

"People are going to know about it now, I'll tell you that."

Embree, 45, has agreed to a five-year contract worth approximately \$1 million a year and leaves his position as Washington Redskins

tight ends coach. Five years ago, he applied for the same job. Dan Hawkins beat him out, but

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Hawkins was fired last month with a five-year mark of 19-39.



From left, Brian Cabral, Jon Embree and Eric Bieniemy — all former CU and NFL players — are all smiles Monday at a news conference introducing Embree as the Buffaloes' new head football coach. Cabral, CU linebackers coach who was elevated to interim head coach when Dan Hawkins was fired Nov. 9, has been asked to stay on the staff. Bieniemy, running backs coach with the Minnesota Vikings, will become CU's offensive coordinator. (Helen H. Richardson, The Denver Post)

Embree was considered a longshot this time, too, when the initial search began. However, he received much support from Buffs 4 Life, an organization of ex-players he helped form that raises money for medical needs within the Buff family.

Then, on Nov. 27, he interviewed with Colorado and immediately shot up the chart.

"His poise and his confidence in coming across in his ability to be the CEO of our football program and have the ability to lead was dramatically different than five years ago when we interviewed him," athletic director Mike Bohn said. "From his body

language to his tone to his ability to articulate his vision was incredibly captivating and compelling."

Sitting near Embree on Monday was Eric Bieniemy, another ex-Buffalo who's leaving the NFL assistant ranks for his alma mater. As offensive coordinator, Bieniemy is one of numerous Buffs expected to fill out the staff.

Interim head coach Brian Cabral, who coached linebackers, and running backs coach Darian Hagan confirmed they've been asked to stay. It's believed Embree will ask University of Arizona

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co-defensive coordinator Greg Brown, twice before a Colorado assistant, to be his defensive coordinator.

Embree said it's important that coaches know the culture of the program.

"There's a certain passion to have success in this program," Embree said. "Does it need to be a Buff guy? Maybe not. But if it's not a Buff guy, how will they know about passion? How will they know about the details that will make this program successful?"

Embree's biggest knock during the hiring process was his lack of experience. However, other assistants pointed out that Colorado promoted Rick Neuheisel from receivers coach to head coach in 1995, and his 33-14 record (.702) is the school's best since 1915.

"I've learned about preparation and focus and sending a message from Mike Shana- han," Embree said. "I learned about relating to players and knowing how to listen to them from Herm Edwards. From Chan Gailey, I learned how to compete and never give

up even if you're short-handed. Bill McCartney: motivation, leading guys.

Post Poll - Embree at CU



[Now that it's official](#), how do you feel about Jon Embree's hiring as Colorado football coach?

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☐ **Booo, Buffs, boo.** Hoping for Bill McCartney or Les Miles or whoever. The CU hole is too deep to dig out from.



"That's what it means to be a head coach."

As Embree left for two public appearances, the impression he left went way beyond that of a position coach.

"One thing I've always kept preaching is we need someone who has learned from great coaches, and Hawkins only worked for himself," said attorney Fred Bradford, a Colorado alum and booster for 16 years. "Once he shaved in the

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morning, his day was over, because he got to see it all right at that moment. He didn't learn from a nybody, and he didn't want to learn from anybody."

Embree and Bieniemy's bond has many people optimistic. The pair worked together at Colorado and UCLA, "tag- teaming" the same recruits on the same staff and keeping in touch in the NFL.

It will be Embree's presidential leadership and Bieniemy's fire. This was planned all along.

"It started when we were at UCLA," said Bieniemy, who will continue working as the Minnesota Vikings' running backs coach until season's end. "The thing is we always said, 'What would it be like if you were the head coach or I was the head coach?' But at the time they were just dreams."

The dreams have become a reality. Now it's time to see what reality is for the future.

"I know where this place could go," Embree said. "I'm more excited about that than what's happened the last couple of years. Because I know it's going to be a great ride."

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Embree sacrifices to make sure friend Bieniemy joins him

By Natalie Meisler
The Denver Post

Posted: 12/07/2010 01:00:00 AM MST

BOULDER — Rare is the newly anointed first-time head football coach who shares the spotlight on his big day with a staff member.

Rarer still is the head coach who sacrifices some of his income to attract the right staff. But that's exactly what Jon Embree did in order to get close friend Eric Bieniemy as his offensive coordinator.

When Embree and Bieniemy interviewed for Colorado's head coaching position Nov. 27, each told athletic director Mike Bohn that should he get the job, he would like to hire his friend as offensive coordinator.

"I can't do this by myself," Embree said. "I've always been about opportunity. It's not about money. Money's not something I am concerned with. I want to make sure my assistants have

what they need in every aspect to be successful. If they are successful, ultimately this whole program will be successful."

Embree is expected to make about \$1 million a year in total compensation, less than what former coach Dan Hawkins made, with incentives that could push that figure higher.

Bieniemy is expected to make much more than the \$220,000 CU paid its offensive coordinator this past year, thanks in part to Embree taking less as the head coach to make sure he could get his friend on board. Bohn would not reveal the salaries until their contracts are approved by the university's Board of Regents, which will meet in January.


Bieniemy, a 1990 All-American whose name is on the Folsom Field ring of honor, said he has no hesitation about taking the coordinator's job if he lost out on the head coaching position. He turned down an offensive coordinator's post at Southern California this past summer. But USC isn't his alma mater.

"I was hoping I'd get the call (from Bohn about the top position), but the bottom line is we're here," Bieniemy said. "It's a reality. Now we just have to make it happen."

Sources indicated Bieniemy was making an estimated \$350,000 as Minnesota Vikings running backs coach.

Bieniemy's mind was set on joining Embree, but said it still came down to a family vote.

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"My 11-year old was all excited until reality hit. He's going through a bit of an emotional struggle right now," he said.

Elijah Bieniemy is a Vikings ball boy and gets to hang with mega-stars Adrian Peterson and Brett Favre.

"That's a part of it," Bieniemy said of his son going to training camp every summer. "He's had some special privileges. Adrian Peterson always found a way to give him the newest Madden (EA video game). I think he's going to miss that more than anything."

Bieniemy's older son, Eric III, has cerebral palsy, and his care is a big factor in whatever the family does.

"He's the rock of the family," Bieniemy said. "He runs the house. I always tell people: 'Do not feel sorry because my son has cerebral palsy. We're on his schedule. He makes all of the decisions. He's doing great. He's in high school. He's one of the school favorites.' "

Embree's last season as a CU tight end was 1986, the year before Bieniemy arrived on campus. Bieniemy became one of the great sideline motivators in school history, in addition to at times physically willing CU to victory.

Although they competed for the top position, Embree said: "I probably wasn't as excited as I normally would have been when I got the job, because of the situation with Eric. I know if the situation were reversed it would have been the

same for him.

I was disappointed because of the relationship



New offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy, right, chats with friends before the media session. In the back is former player Ed Reinhardt, left, speaking with new head coach Jon Embree. (Helen H. Richardson, The Denver Post)

and respect I have for Eric. It took a while for me to truly be excited about getting that phone call."

At the outset of his news conference Monday, Embree said, "I would not want to do this without Eric by my side."

A big reason is Bieniemy's reputation as an enthusiastic recruiter. Asked about that, Embree deadpanned, "You think he can recruit?"

Bieniemy gave the Buffs an impassioned speech last fall before the Georgia game when the 1990 national championship team was honored. A few people who witnessed it thought it was a trial

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run for getting the head coaching job. Bieniemy said nothing was further from his mind. He said his focus then was strictly on the Vikings.

The Buffs played their most inspired game of the season the next day and beat Georgia 29-27.

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Who is Eric Bieniemy?

A look at Eric Bieniemy, 41, the Buffs' new offensive coordinator.

As a player.

Ran for 3,940 yards at CU from 1987-90. Was part of CU's 1990 national title team. Holds CU record for TDs (42). Earned unanimous All-America honors as a senior before being drafted in the second round by San Diego. Played nine pro seasons with Chargers, Bengals and Eagles.

As a coach.

Former assistant at Denver's Thomas Jefferson High before joining CU as running backs coach from 2001-02. Took the same job at UCLA (2003-05). Then moved to the NFL for five years with the Vikings, as running backs coach and assistant head coach of the offense.

Personal.

With wife Mia, the couple has two children: Eric and Elijah.

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Embree promises "physical" Buffs

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 12/07/2010 01:00:00 AM MST

BOULDER — From the sound of it, Colorado's next session of spring football drills may be as demanding as popping shoulder pads with, say, Nebraska or, come next fall, Stanford in the Pac-12.

"We will be physical, on both sides of the ball," newly hired CU coach Jon Embree promised Monday during his introductory news conference. "We're going to get after it in the spring. I told the players, 'It's going to be hard.' Hopefully, we get through it healthy. But we have to establish a mentality.

"When Colorado has had success, we'll line up and run you over. On defense, we'll line up and hit you until you can't take it anymore. We have to be physical."

With only a few of his assistants officially on board, the new coach said he was not ready to talk about X's and O's or how different Colorado will look on the field after five consecutive losing seasons under Dan Hawkins.

Don't expect a spread offense or a bunch of razzle-dazzle, however. Embree said his team will employ a pro-style offense. For the most part, that's also the look Hawkins favored. But Embree and new offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy are "old-school" ex-Buffs who learned from Bill McCartney that blocking and tackling is the way to win — not trying to fool people.

"We're going to be balanced (on offense), pro-style," Embree said. "We're going to have an offense where kids can come here and have success. If they want to go to the next level, they'll have an opportunity to showcase their skills."

On offense, Hawkins often utilized wide receiver "grouping" packages for various down- and distance situations. That unconventional substitution system had fans sometimes scratching their heads when a less-talented player would trot onto the field while a more-talented player went to the sideline. Substitution patterns seemed to change each week.

"The problem with that," said Jashon Sykes, CU's coordinator of football player relations, "is that you need to have an identity. When you think of good football teams, they always have an identity of who they are. You think about Oregon — everybody knows they are a spread team. You think about Nebraska — you know they're going to hit you in the mouth.

"All the good teams have an identity, both offensively and defensively. That's one thing that we're going to have. People are going to know

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what type of team we are on both sides of the ball."

Think the physical mentality of Stanford, former CU quarterback Joel Klatt said.

"Stanford is successful because they do things that good teams do. They hold the ball, they make first downs, they make you defend them," Klatt said. "They can run their offense in rain, snow, sleet, night, day, road, home. It doesn't matter. And you can do it every single year."

Count on Colorado attempting to establish a ground game, no matter the opponent.

"They're going to run the ball," said former CU tailback Cortlen Johnson, who shared tailback carries with Chris Brown and Bobby Purify on the Buffs' 2001 Big 12 championship team. "If you look at the history of CU and the teams that have been successful, they've been successful running the ball."

Defensively, the formation, be it 4-3 or 3-4, will be up to the yet-to-be-named defensive coordinator.

"But I do know that we will have to be able to stop the run," Embree said. "Our guys will get plenty of practice doing that in the spring, believe me."

Colorado has gone three consecutive seasons without a bowl game — the longest drought for CU since missing postseason play for eight consecutive years from 1977-84. The Buffs failed

to qualify for a bowl in four of Hawkins' five seasons. That's the same number of nonbowl years during a 21-season run from 1985 to 2005.

Embree said he will concentrate CU's recruiting efforts on three target areas rather than have assistant coaches scan the country.

"When I look at the roster, kids are scattered from a lot of different states," Embree said. "When Colorado has won, players have come from California, they've come from Texas and, more important, they've come from the state of Colorado."

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McCartney encourages patience among CU fans

Posted: 12/07/2010 01:00:00 AM MST

Former Colorado coach Bill McCartney was excited about the program's future now that two of his former assistants are in charge.

"Prepare people for the long haul," McCartney said after Jon Embree was introduced as the new head coach and Eric Bieniemy as the new offensive coordinator. "Somebody wrote that they should have a winning season next year. That's absurd. When you change coaches and change systems it takes time."

McCartney pointed out that the last two recruiting classes of Dan Hawkins, who was fired last month with a mark of 19-39, were ranked 11th and 10th in the Big 12. Bieniemy also can't start visiting prospects until his Minnesota Vikings' season ends Jan. 2.

"These guys are great and they're going to do a good job," McCartney said, "but everybody's got to give them a chance."

McCartney said he has no immediate plans to directly help the new coaching staff.

"Right now I want to stay out of the way," he said. "These guys shouldn't have to answer questions about me. When the smoke clears, we'll see."

John Henderson, The Denver Post

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Embree makes impression on CU's players

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 12/07/2010 01:00:00 AM MST

BOULDER — As first impressions go, new Colorado coach Jon Embree couldn't have been more impressive during his initial meeting with the team, Buffs' players said Monday.

Embree met with the team early in the morning at the Dal Ward Center team facility before heading to his introductory news conference in Folsom Field's east-side suite level.

"Everyone was excited," junior quarterback Tyler Hansen said. "Everyone left with a smile on their face. They were fired up. He gave a good vision of what he wants. I can't wait to get back on the field. I wish spring practice was starting tomorrow."

Junior wide receiver Toney Clemons described Embree as "professional" in his approach. Embree played tight end for the Buffs under Bill McCartney and later, after a three-year NFL career, returned to his alma mater as an

assistant coach for 10 years before embarking on an NFL coaching career.

"He's definitely a CU guy," Clemons said. "He went through the traditions and history, and said he wants to get the program back to where it was."

Embree didn't chew on a nail or anything, but Clemons said everybody in the room realized how competitive the former Washington Redskins assistant is.

"He said we're going to have to be competitive in everything we do," Clemons said. "He wants us to be competitive on the field, in the weight room and in the classroom. That's what you need to win."

Junior offensive guard Ryan Miller said Embree did not mince words.

"He was short, sweet and to the point," Miller said. "I really like that about him. You can tell he's coming in with a purpose."

New offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy attended the meeting but did not speak to the team. However, several players said they went up to the former CU and NFL tailback afterward and introduced themselves.

Bieniemy has agreed to finish out his duties as running backs coach of the Minnesota Vikings before moving permanently to Boulder. He was scheduled to fly back to Minneapolis on Monday afternoon. Embree has been released by

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Redskins coach Mike Shanahan and already is on the job for Colorado.

"I really look forward to talking to Coach Bieniemy," Hansen said. "He's coaching a pretty good quarterback (Brett Favre) at Minnesota. I'm going to pick his brain about that."

Embree said he will meet individually with players during the remainder of the week.

"I didn't get questions today from them," Embree said, "but I'm sure I'll get some (during the individual meetings)."

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Embree provides electric atmosphere at Blake Street Tavern gathering

By Chris Dempsey
The Denver Post

Posted: 12/07/2010 01:00:00 AM MST

Before Jon Embree stepped into the Blake Street Tavern on Monday afternoon, it rocked.

Once the newest Colorado football coach arrived and addressed the crowd estimated at about 400, he took the good times and good feelings to the next level.

Embree was a smash success at his afternoon downtown Denver stop on a whirlwind publicity tour in his first official day as head coach of the Buffs.

"I'm going to restore the luster back to this program," he told the crowd, which gave him a standing ovation and starting singing the CU fight song.

Embree's hiring did in one day what had not been done in the five years before his arrival, instantly galvanizing the fan base. Former CU players Chad Brown and Brian Daniels were among those in attendance. There was a general buzz and excitement at Blake Street that had long been missing in the program.

"It's great to have his energy here, his passion for the game and the university to bring back the tradition the spirit and the 'old' mentality, you could say, of (former coach Bill) McCartney," said Jordan Ochoa, a CU fan.

CU athletic director Mike Bohn spoke to the audience, which included former U.S. senator and CU president Hank Brown.

"The excitement in here is just as it has been in the past for new coaches. It's very much there," Ochoa said. "But this is a little different, bringing in a CU alum, a former CU football player. The speech he gave was inspiring and everyone got excited. Everyone will look forward to next year. We'll see some sellouts next year for sure."

Buffs fan Lloyd Trujillo carried a black laundry bag emblazoned with a gold CU logo on one side, which he looked to get signed by any and every Buff in sight.

"It's electric, and it's going to get better because these young kids don't know who these guys are," Trujillo, 49, said. "They are polished. It's going to be electric. We are going to steal a lot of recruits from other programs right now."

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Embree drew applause when he talked about fans getting out and traveling to the more picturesque venues of the Pac-12 to watch the Buffs play. He mentioned there would be no more trips to Lincoln, Neb., to face the Cornhuskers, but added, "Let's get those guys in the Rose Bowl one of these days."

Trujillo watched with wonder.

"This is electric," he said. "And it will only get much more electric as we go."

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Jon Embree introduced as Colorado coach, emphasizes passion, history

By John Henderson
The Denver Post

Posted: 12/06/2010 11:19:15 AM MST

Updated: 12/06/2010 03:07:03 PM MST



Jon Embree talks at Folsom Field on Monday after his introduction as new Colorado football coach. **AI**

Things Buffs: Eric Bienemy, new offensive coordinator, was also on hand talking recruiting. (Helen H. Richardson, The Denver Post)

BOULDER — Saying it helps to be a Buffalo, former Colorado tight end and assistant coach Jon Embree was introduced as the Buffaloes' new coach this morning.

"There's a certain passion to have success in this program," Embree said. "Does it need to be a Buff guy? Maybe not. But if it's not a Buff guy, how will they know about passion? How will they know about the details that will make this program successful?"

Embree, 45, returns to Colorado from the Washington Redskins where he served as tight ends coach under former Denver Broncos coach Mike Shanahan.

Embree played at Colorado from 1983-86 in coach Bill McCartney's early years.

Embree also served as assistant coach at Colorado from 1993-2002 before

going on to UCLA and then to the Kansas City Chiefs. He said Colorado's 1990 national championship "is one of the best kept secrets out there."

He told that to the players in a morning meeting.

"When I was at UCLA recruiting, going to schools, people don't know about Colorado like they should," Embree said. "They don't know about our Heisman Trophy. They don't know about our

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Butkus Award winners. They don't know about our Mackey Award winners, about our Big 12 championship. They don't know about the accomplishments we have as a program.

"People are going to know about it now, I'll tell you that."

Embree replaces Dan Hawkins, the man who beat him out for this job five years ago and who was fired last month with a five-year mark of 19-39. Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn could not get established head coaches such as Louisiana State's Les Miles and Air Force's Troy Calhoun interested.

But Embree's interview won him over.

"His confidence coming across as the CEO of our program and being able to lead was dramatically different than it was five years ago when we interviewed him," Bohn said. "From his body language to his tone to his ability to articulate his vision was incredibly captivating

and compelling."

Post Poll - Embree at CU



Now that it's official, how do you feel about Jon Embree's hiring as Colorado football coach?

☐ **Buffaloes are back!** Embree. Eric Bieniemy. Pride. Passion. History. They're all back in Boulder.

☐ **Let's wait and see.** It's a long road back to the big time for CU. Give them some time to prove it.

☐ **Booo, Buffs, boo.** Hoping for Bill McCartney or Les Miles or whoever. The CU hole is too deep to dig out from.



Embree said he will run a pro-style offense and will formulate his staff this week. He said he would retain linebackers coach Brian Cabral, a Colorado assistant for 21 years and who led the Buffaloes to a 2-1 record as interim coach.

Embree has a five-year contract worth around \$1 million, not including incentives.

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Jon Embree's enthusiasm spreading to CU Buffs players

New CU football coach briefly addresses team

By **Chris Shelton** Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 12/06/2010 08:52:32 PM MST



Take a snapshot of Monday's players meeting with new football coach Jon Embree and here's a sampling of what might go into the scrapbook:

Respect for his focus on academics.

Excitement over his theme to return the swagger back to CU.

And the generation of discussion about topics such as race, Embree's ties to the NFL and his emphasis on landing the top in-state high school recruits.

"The players are just as excited about it as the fan base and the alumni," said Colorado safety Makiri Pugh. "We really felt his enthusiasm, his passion for the team and for being a Buffalo."

Embree met with his players for about 10 minutes before later being introduced as CU's 24th head coach.

Although short, Embree's talk left a strong impression.

"He just emphasized ... that we come into this offseason ready and prepared to work and prove ourselves for next year," junior offensive lineman Shawn Daniels said. "He even said we need to focus on finals and finish up strong in school. That's completely on-point to where our team needs to be. Really, there's not much else you can do right now except let us finish up school."

Players believe Embree will relate well to them since he too once suited up in a black and gold uniform.

After helping Cherry Creek win the states title in 1982 and 1983, Embree came to CU and played as a true freshman in 1983 and then earned first-team All-Big 8 honors his sophomore year in setting school single-season records for receptions (51) and receiving yards (680) -- as a tight end.

The Buffs switched to the wishbone the following year, taking away much of Embree's receiving role, but he went on to become a sixth-round pick by the Los Angeles Rams in the 1987 draft. Two years into his pro career, Embree suffered a career-ending elbow injury while with the Seahawks.

Embree told players he wants to bring back a swagger that existed when he played and when he served as an assistant coach at CU from 1993-2002.

"He mentioned that we need to go on the road and prove to people that we can win," Daniels said, referring to CU's 17-game road losing streak. "We need to protect our house. ... He brought a new attitude into the meeting room. It opened up a lot of guys' eyes."

Embree is the fifth African-American head coach among the 66 BCS schools and the 15th minority coach among the 120 Football Bowl Subdivision programs.

When Pac-12 play begins next fall, Embree will be the fourth African-American coach in that conference's history, joining Dennis Green (Stanford, 1989-91); Ty Willingham (Stanford from 1995-01 and Washington from 2004-08) and Karl Dorrell (UCLA, 2003-07).

Pugh, an African-American from Charlotte, N.C., agreed with a statement Embree made Monday in which the coach said there is no category for how many games a black coach wins or how many games a white coach wins.

"That's what he's here to do -- win football games and run the program correctly," Pugh said. "You have some kids who have grown up in an area where they haven't been around a diverse group of people. It might help on that front, or it might be easier to relate to some of those kids."

"But I think most of the guys on our team, or most of the guys they recruit, will understand it's not about that."

The fact that Embree played high school in Colorado and made it a point to emphasize the need to keep top in-state players also struck a chord.

Daniels and sophomore offensive lineman Bryce Givens came to CU from Mullen High School in Denver.

"There's nothing like playing in your home state in front of all these fans that love you and have watched you grow up from high school," Givens said. "(Embree) knows what it's all about. I think it's going to be very good for us Colorado guys."

One other bullet on Embree's résumé that players expect to help in recruiting is Embree's NFL experience. He was an assistant coach with the Kansas City Chiefs for three years before joining Mike Shanahan with the Washington Redskins this season.

Also, newly hired offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy spent five years as an assistant coach with the Minnesota Vikings before returning on Monday to the school for which he set the all-time leading rushing record in a career that spanned 1987-90.

"Coming out of high school," Givens said, "if your head coach and (members of) your coaching staff has ties to the NFL, that's definitely a plus if you're looking to play at the next level."

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Jon Embree's career path has always pointed back to CU

Colorado's new coach tells Buffs it needs to bring 'swagger' back to Boulder

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

Posted: 12/06/2010 09:59:29 AM MST



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There won't be any more excuses for not getting the job done in the Colorado football program under coach Jon Embree.

If there was a single, resonating message from his first day on the job as the 24th head coach in the program's history on Monday, that was it.

It was the message he shared with his players in a morning meeting at the Dal Ward Center. It was at the heart of his comments during a picturesque press conference on the club level at Folsom Field. And it was the core of his remarks to two groups of fans and boosters, first at a mid-afternoon shindig at the Blake Street Tavern in Denver and later at the Omni Interlocken Hotel in Broomfield.

"It's important for players to understand who we are, where we're going, and how we're going to get there," Embree said. "The vision and the message have to be clear. You do not have to worry about what the vision and what the message is; it's excellence. It's returning the luster to this program."

He rode a Buff bus from place to place on a whirlwind day of shaking hands and fielding questions with most of the athletic department brain trust, his wife Natalyn, daughter Hannah, and his mother by his side.

Embree, 45, has spent his life in football and he has pointed the bulk of that time and his effort at earning the job he began Monday. The former Buff tight end is the first black head football coach in CU history and will be only the fourth in the history of the Pac-12 Conference. CU will officially join that league next summer.

"It's a great honor and a great responsibility, because my success will help make a path and create opportunities for more African-American coaches," he said. "It's a subject people don't like talking about, but it's there, and I understand what it means. I understand the responsibility."

"At the end of the day, I'm a football coach. There is no category for how many games a black coach won, or how many games a white coach won. It's how many games did you win. It's just a W and an L there, and I have to stack up W's."

He grew up playing the sport in the youth leagues of Cherry Creek in Denver. He attended Cherry Creek High School where he won back-to-back state championships in 1982 and 1983 before joining the CU program as part of former coach Bill McCartney's first recruiting class in 1983.

Embree helped lay the foundation in the mid-1980s for three consecutive Big Eight Conference championship teams, the 1990 national championship team and the most successful decade in the program's history through the 1990s. And he spent his first 13 years in coaching in the program as well.

"He's a Buff," athletic director Mike Bohn said. "He can rally all of the Buffs together. He can attract top coaches to join him. He has the ability to pull that together."

It was McCartney who turned Embree toward a life in coaching when Embree's playing career ended in the National Football League and he was laying in a hospital bed recovering from Tommy John surgery.

McCartney called him and requested a meeting. When Embree was finally healthy enough to report to McCartney's office, the coach immediately put him to work.

"After my first practice, he said, 'What do you think?'" Embree recalled. "I couldn't tell him what I thought, because what I thought was, 'I want to come back and take your job, do what you're doing,' but I couldn't say that. I told him he was right, that this was what I wanted to do."

Embree worked for free for his first two seasons before McCartney hired him as a full-time assistant in 1993. Seventeen years later, he more than made up for his donated time.

Embree agreed over the weekend to a five-year contract will pay him more than \$700,000 annually in guaranteed compensation but achievable incentives related to player academic performance and citizenship will bring the total to just shy of \$1 million. Other incentives for on-field success would push the total above the \$1 million mark.

Offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy also was given a five-year deal that will pay him \$500,000 annually with a \$150,000 signing bonus. Both contracts must be approved by the Board of Regents. Regent Steve Bosley said the latest that would happen is the next scheduled meeting Jan. 7-8. He said it could happen sooner if the regents believe it is necessary.

Embree met with returning players Monday morning at the Dal Ward Center. Players said Embree talked to them about responsibility and accountability and recapturing the swagger the program had during its proudest moments.

Quarterback Tyler Hansen said players were not told who would be hired as assistant coaches other than Bieniemy and linebackers coach Brian Cabral. He said players responded well to their first meeting with their new coach.

"It was just that we've got to get the swagger back at Colorado," Hansen said. "We've got to establish that attitude that we used to have. When we go on the road, we've got to win on the road. We've got to protect this house."

"I thought everything he had to say, he had a very clear vision."

Embree interviewed for the job five years ago but was ultimately passed over in favor of Dan Hawkins who was fired last month after going 19-39 in nearly five full seasons. CU engineering professor, Dr. David Clough is one of the men who interviewed Embree during both searches.

He defended the decision not to hire Embree five years ago saying Embree was not as polished and experienced as he is

now. Clough said Embree has come a long way and knocked the search committee's socks off this time around.

Embree is in the process of completing his coaching staff. Sources said Embree was considering retaining Darian Hagan, Eric Kiesau and Ashley Ambrose from Hawkins' staff and was in talks with Arizona defensive coordinator Greg Brown to fill the same position in Boulder. Brown coached defensive backs for four seasons under Hawkins.

Embree vowed to bring a more physical style of play back to Boulder and promised to compete for top-notch recruits with the most prestigious programs in the nation. Above all, he said he would return the program to its roots and re-establish the Colorado brand.

Embree said his biggest challenge will be instilling that identity and building a new level of confidence in current players that will allow them to succeed on Saturday afternoons and return the program to prominence as it begins its future in a new conference.

"When I watched Colorado play, I told them I didn't sense that they really believed they could win. They hoped, but they didn't believe. I didn't sense that competitiveness I was used to seeing in this great program. So that is going to be a challenge," he said.

President Bruce Benson said he believes in hiring and promoting from within the university and said Embree and Bieniemy are great examples of "growing our own talent."

Chancellor Phil DiStefano challenged Embree and Bohn to improve the product on the field, match it with academic success and ensure each student-athlete is "fully engaged in everything the university offers."

"If Jon Embree doesn't understand CU's traditions, CU's expectations, and CU's values, then nobody does," DiStefano said.



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Jon Embree announced as head coach for CU football

Buff alumnus hopes to bring “swagger” back to football program

By Caryn Maconi on December 6, 2010

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Jon Embree knows a little something about CU football – it is capable of so much more than it has recently shown.

Embree was a tight end for the Buffs in the 1980’s and an assistant coach for CU for ten years. He worked with three different Colorado head coaches: Bill McCartney, Rick Neuheisel, and Gary Barnett. During the 2001 season with Barnett, Embree saw the Buffs win their only Big 12 Conference title. He coached the receivers at UCLA in 2003, and was the assistant coach, offensive coordinator, and tight ends’ coach there for the 2004 and 2005 seasons. He left his job as tight ends’ coach with the Washington Redskins to return to Boulder.

Embree has seen the CU football program grow since he was a player, but decline in recent years.

“Yeah, we’re not where we were, but we’re a heck of a lot better than when I got here,” Embree said. “It was hard watching what happened with the program [over the past two years.] I have nothing against Dan Hawkins, but we need to improve things.”

According to C.U. Chancellor Phil DeStefano, when it comes to returning Colorado football to glory, Embree is fit for the job.

“He is the right person to lead our program at a key moment in its history,” DeStefano said. He will make it possible for “the student athletes to compete in the winning tradition of the Pac 12 and return [the team] to its national prominence.”

For University of Colorado president Bruce Benson, selecting a coaching staff from within the Colorado family was a crucial decision.

“[Embree] is a great example of growing our own talent. He will lead our effort to go ‘back to the future’... and return CU football to greatness,” Benson said.

CU’s athletic director Mike Bohn also remarked on Embree’s strong potential.

“He has leadership, integrity, and a commitment to academic focus,” Bohn said.

Embree is not the only CU Buff returning to the program, however. Colorado football's all-time leading rusher, Eric Bieniemy, will be taking over as offensive coordinator.

Embree and Bieniemy worked together in the 2001 and 2002 seasons under head coach Gary Barnett.

Embree is looking forward to working with Bieniemy again to bring the luster back to Colorado football.

"We have the same goals and the same passions," Embree said. "We speak the same language when we talk football."

For the new coaching staff, the biggest challenge will be making the Buffs believe that they can win again.

"It's not going to be easy, but it'll be worth it," Embree said. "There are no excuses... we're going to be disciplined on both sides of the ball."

Assistant coach Brian Cabral, who took over as interim head coach after Hawkins' firing, will also remain on staff.

Embree emphasized the need to have someone with a history in the program as head coach.

"If [the coach] is not a Buff guy, how are they gonna know about the passion and the details. We got a glimpse of that when Cabral took over," Embree said.

As Colorado prepares to join the Pac-12 Conference, Embree and the rest of the coaching staff will work to recruit talented players and raise the bar in practice.

"Colorado is a well-kept secret, but it won't be that well-kept for long," Embree said. People are gonna know about us."

Contact CU Independent Staff Writer Caryn Maconi at Caryn.maconi@colorado.edu.

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CU football head coach profile: Jon Embree

Former Buffs tight end and assistant coach to replace Hawkins for 2011 season

By CU Independent on December 7, 2010

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Just in time for the Buffs' move to the Pac-12 Conference, newly-named CU football head coach, Jon Embree, aims to raise the bar.

"We're going to get swagger back in this program," Embree said.

Called "a true Buff in every way" by C.U. Chancellor Phil DiStefano, Embree had an impressive collegiate career as a tight end for the Buffs from 1983-1986.

A graduate of Cherry Creek High School, he made his mark immediately, earning CU's Lee Willard Award for the most outstanding freshman in 1983. As a sophomore, he set two single-season records for CU, in receptions (51) and receiving yards (680), and earned All-Big 8 honors.

He continued to be a crucial tight end for the Buffs through his junior and senior years, landing in the top five in the record books in catches (80) and yards (1,116). Twenty seven years later, his stats keep him in the top 20 in these categories.

After graduating, Embree was a sixth-round draft pick for the Los Angeles Rams in 1987. He played there for two years, then joined the Seattle Seahawks for part of the 1989 season, before suffering a shoulder injury that ended his career as a player.

Embree's first return to Boulder was as a volunteer coach under Bill McCartney in 1991. His head-coaching dreams began during his first practice with McCartney.

"After my first practice, [McCartney] said, 'What do you think?' I couldn't tell him what I thought, because what I thought was, 'I'm gonna come back and take your job,'" Embree said.



Jon Embree speaks at his press conference introducing him as the 24th University of Colorado head football coach at Folsom Field on Monday morning. (CU Independent/Patrick Ghidossi)

From that practice on, he kept his coaching dream alive, beginning a long career that eventually brought him back to Folsom Field.

"It's like I tell my team: 'If you don't believe in you, no one else will,'" Embree said. "I never doubted in my mind that I would be standing here one day."

After a one-year job as assistant coach at Douglas County High School in Colorado, Embree returned once again to CU, this time with a paid coaching job. He was the tight ends coach for McCartney's Buffs from 1993-1994.

When Rick Neuheisel took over in 1995, Embree switched to coaching the defensive ends. With the start of Gary Barnett's career with the Buffs in 1999, he returned to the tight ends for two seasons and finally worked with the receivers and place-kickers in 2001 and 2002.

After the 2002 season, Embree left Colorado to coach the receivers at UCLA under head coach Karl Dorrell. In 2004 and 2005, Embree moved up the ranks to assistant coach, passing game coordinator and tight ends coach.

Embree then moved on to the Kansas City Chiefs, where he worked as tight ends coach from 2006-08. He next accepted a position as tight ends coach for the Washington Redskins in 2010.

After just one season with the Redskins, Embree is taking the opportunity to return to his roots as he replaces Dan Hawkins as head football coach of the Buffaloes.

"I am honored and humbled to be chosen to lead this great program," Embree said. "The biggest challenge is going to be raising the bar ... It's not going to be easy, but it's going to be worth it."

That challenge is certainly a difficult one. For the past two seasons, under Dan Hawkins, the Buffs went 2-6 in the Big 12.

With a move to the Pac-12 Conference approaching in July, that level of performance will not be tolerated.

"A lot of people out there are doubting us; they're not sure about us," Embree said. "And that's okay, it's a process. But I want you to know that I'm not a patient person, so I'm gonna try to speed this process up."

He was part of the CU coaching staff during the 2001 season, in which the Buffs were Big 12 Conference champions, so he knows what potential Colorado football has.

"You can't get to where you want to go if you don't know where you've been," he said. "I know where this program can go, and I'm more excited about that than what's happened in the past two years."

Raising the standards of his team is not the only challenge Jon Embree will face. When the Buffs join the Pac 12, he will be the fourth African-American head coach in that conference's history.

Embree said this is an honor and a responsibility, but it does not define him as a coach.

"At the end of the day, I'm a football coach," he said. "I understand the responsibility, and if I didn't understand it ... I never would have asked to be in this position ... And one day, you won't have to ask that question [about race]."

Embree will be working with assistant coach Brian Cabral, who took over as interim coach during the search process following Hawkins' firing.

The new head coach said he looks forward to working with an assistant coach who is familiar with the Colorado football program.

“If [the coach] is not a Buff guy, how are they gonna know about the passion?” Embree said. “How do they know about the details that were put in this program that made it successful? I think you got a little glimpse of that when Cabral took over.”

Eric Bieniemy, CU’s all-time leading rusher and assistant head coach and running backs coach for the Minnesota Vikings, will step in as offensive coordinator. Embree and Bieniemy worked together at CU from 2001-2002, under head coach Gary Barnett, and in the 2001 season they helped the Buffs win their only Big 12 Conference title.

“[Bieniemy] thinks like me, he knows what I want, so there will be no gray areas,” Embree said.

Chancellor Phil DiStefano said he has high hopes for the Buffs under the leadership of a new coaching staff and as part of a new conference in the coming season.

DiStefano said he wants “to improve the performance and consistency of our team on the field while cultivating the talents of our student athletes to achieve a winning tradition in the Pac-12 and return to national prominence.”

President Bruce Benson said adding two Buffs to the coaching staff is a promising start to a successful year of CU football.

Benson said, “Part of the plan for building a successful program is having a passion for CU and Colorado, and Jon and Eric have that passion.”

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Contact CU Independent Staff Writer Caryn.maconi@colorado.edu.

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McCartney steered Embree into coaching

By Brian Howell
© 2010 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Before Jon Embree got into coaching in 1991, he had never really entertained that career path.

Yet, Bill McCartney, then the head coach at the University of Colorado, called him up, told him to get out to the field and coach the tight ends.

“I was like, ‘Well coach, I’ve already got a job lined up and I’m not really interested,’” Embree said. “He said, ‘Well that is what you’re going to be; that’s who you are.’ Anyone who knows Mac knows that that’s the end of that debate.”

After that first practice, Embree said, “I told him he was right, that this was what I wanted to do.”

Embree has been a coach ever since and on Monday he got his dream job. The former CU player and assistant coach was introduced as the 24th full-time head coach in school history.

“I’m honored and I’m humbled to be chosen to lead this great program,” he said.

Embree, 45, replaces Dan Hawkins, who was fired on Nov. 9 after going 19-39 in nearly five years on the job. Embree received a five-year contract that will pay him nearly \$1 million per season.

Athletic director Mike Bohn said the search to replace Hawkins was “truly a national search.” In the end, however, four of the five candidates who were interviewed — Embree, Eric Bieniemy, Brian Cabral, McCartney — were in the CU family. Alabama offensive coordinator Jim McElwain was the only coach without CU ties to receive an interview.

Embree played at CU from 1983-86 and was a CU assistant coach from 1993-2002.

Hiring a Buff was important to many former players, who applauded Embree’s hire.

“I couldn’t be more excited,” former CU quarterback Joel Klatt said. “I think it is a crucial time. In this day and age in college football, it’s becoming increasingly evident that if you had past success, not only the fan base but the alumni base loves to have that be embraced. The past five years has been kind of a separation from what we all believe to be the core values of our program. There was an intense desire to have that be restored.”

Klatt was asked if he and other alums felt disconnected from the program during Hawkins’ tenure.

“There’s no question,” he said.

That will change under Embree, who has vowed to restore the tradition of the CU program. He also vowed to include former Buffs into the everyday culture of the program.



New University of Colorado head football coach Jon Embree answers questions during a news conference on Monday at Folsom Field in Boulder. **Richard M. Hackett/Times-Call**

"I'm going to call them and tell them I want them back," Embree said. "Another thing is I'd like to have former players, not just the guys with names in the stadium, but some players that have gone on to do some great things in their lives, and have them as honorary captains, and have them around the team during game week. I think it's important."

Embree has already displayed an ability to pull Buffs together. He has hired Bieniemy to become his offensive coordinator and will keep Cabral on the staff as an assistant coach.

"We've got to be united and that's why Jon Embree ultimately was selected, because he has the ability to pull everybody together and pull those Buffs together," Bohn said. "He's a Buff. He can rally all those Buffs together."

In the early days of the search, Embree wasn't talked about as a leading candidate. Coaches such as Troy Calhoun at Air Force, Les Miles and LSU, McCartney and Bieniemy seemed to be front-runners.

Embree, however, impressed the search committee right from the start.

Bohn and David Clough, the chairperson for the seven-person search committee, weren't even present during Embree's first interview, but Clough said those that were there gave a glowing review.

Once all involved in the hiring process got a chance to talk with Embree, they got on board, too.

"In the end, there was this feeling — it's almost as if it swept across us — that this felt right," Clough said. "In the end, the search committee was truly unanimous behind the decision. I think the committee was particularly impressed with Jon's presence and his vision for the program within the context of the university. He seemed to have a very good feel for the university as a whole, it's mission as a whole and then his vision for the football program moving forward."

Embree is eager to move the program forward.

In 2005, the Buffs were Big 12 North Division champs. In the five seasons since, the Buffs are 21-40, and Embree wants to change that.

"When I met with the players (Monday) morning, I told them there's going to be a new standard of how we do things," Embree said. "There are no excuses. We're going to change the way we see ourselves. We're going to get swagger back in this program."

Junior quarterback Tyler Hansen said the players liked what Embree had to say.

"I thought he had some really good visions of where he wants to take the program," Hansen said. "That was one flaw of coach Hawkins is that he didn't really understand the tradition, he didn't really have the passion of Colorado."

"(Embree, Bieniemy and Cabral), they all know what it's about. That's what it's going to be like — we're going to be a very emotional, a very energetic, crazed team."

Embree, who has also coached at UCLA, said he is looking forward to leading CU into its transition to the Pac-12 Conference next season.

"As we embark on this adventure of going to the Pac-12, one of the things I told the search committee is that I want this university to be the flagship university of the conference," he said.

While recruiting for UCLA, Embree said he noticed that recruits didn't know much about CU's tradition — the 1990 national title, Big 12 North Division titles, individual trophy winners. He said CU is "one of the best-kept secrets out there."

"They don't know about the accomplishments we've had as a program," he said. "People are going to know about it now, I guarantee you that."

"It's a well-kept secret, but it won't be well-kept for long. People are going to know about us."

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Bieniemy eager to get started

By Brian Howell
© 2010 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Eric Bieniemy and Jon Embree coached together at Colorado, and they coached together at UCLA.

When Embree was offered the head coaching job at CU last weekend, he didn't wait long to make his first hire.

"I would not want to do this without him by my side, because he thinks like me," Embree said of Bieniemy, who will join Embree's staff as CU's offensive coordinator. "He knows what I want. He can help get the message through to the players."

Bieniemy, who is in his fifth season as the running backs coach with the Minnesota Vikings, wanted the head coaching job. But, when Embree was hired, he knew he'd be coming back to Boulder.

"It was such an emotional roller coaster, going through the experience," said Bieniemy, who will finish the season with the Vikings before joining CU full-time. "What better person to lose to than a mentor, a very good friend? Was it tough? Nah, it wasn't tough. Was I disappointed? Yes, I was disappointed."

Bieniemy is CU's all-time leading rusher and also coached at CU from 2001-02.

"It means a lot (to come back)," he said. "Black and gold have always been my favorite colors. I can't express how excited I am."

Bieniemy has never been a coordinator, but said he's learned from great coaches, including Karl Dorrell, Tom Cable, Brad Childress and Mike Tomlin.

"No, I haven't been a coordinator, but (not) being a coordinator doesn't necessarily mean you don't have input in the game plan," he said. "I had input with the run game and that was very important to me. Have I had the opportunity of having the offensive coordinator title? No. Have I had the responsibilities of an offensive coordinator? Yes."

Bieniemy said Buffs' offense will be physical. Although he's got a running background, he said he understands the importance of a good passing game.

"You score touchdowns when you throw the ball," he said. "We will be a well-rounded offense that's going to be effective, but more importantly be efficient."

Bieniemy said he likes a lot of the talent CU has on board.

"It's about what they know and what they do," he said. "That's why we want to make sure that we simplify our schemes, but also give our kids the best opportunity to win."

CU's talent includes running back Rodney Stewart, who has 2,744 career rushing yards. He needs 1,197 yards in 2011



New CU coordinator Eric Bieniemy addresses the media Monday in Boulder. **Richard M. Hackett/Times-Call**

to break Bieniemy's school record of 3,940.

"Records are made to be broken. I have been looking forward to that day," Bieniemy said. "I have no problem with that. That would be great for him."

HAWK TALK: Embree was hired to replace Dan Hawkins, who went 19-39 in nearly five years at CU. Although Hawkins struggled in the win column, Embree praised Hawkins and said he would like to connect with the former coach.

"I'd like to talk with Dan," Embree said. "I'd like to thank him for all that he's done. A lot of times you get fired, people want to talk about the negative. He's done a lot of good things here. He's put some infrastructure here that's going to give me an opportunity to be successful. I know in his heart he knows he did the best he could. Unfortunately it wasn't what they wanted."

BUILDING THE STAFF: As of Monday, linebackers coach Brian Cabral is the only current staff member that is assured of being retained by Embree.

"I want to finalize some other things first, spend some time with those guys and get to know them," Embree said.

Running backs coach Darian Hagan was the only other current coach on hand for Monday's press conference. He expressed his desire to stay.

"I haven't talked to (Embree) at all," Hagan said. "I would love to be on the staff, but he has to figure out what he wants to do and how he wants to accomplish it and if I'm a part of it, I'll love it."

If Hagan is retained, it would probably be in a different position, since Bieniemy is likely to coach running backs.

FAVRE TO INFLUENCE HANSEN?: Bieniemy said he has learned a lot from working with Vikings quarterback Brett Favre in the past two years.

"I know he's struggling this year, but more than anything he's been a great leader of men in that locker room, just showing them how to be a professional," Bieniemy said. "You can take a great deal of experience from just being in the room with him, being in the building with him, and just sitting down and studying tape with him."

Bieniemy said he hopes to teach some of those lessons to CU junior quarterback Tyler Hansen. Hansen is eager to learn those lessons.

"I love that. I have a Brett Favre poster in my room right now," Hansen said. "I've always loved Brett Favre and the way he plays. Anything coach Bieniemy can share with me to reflect that I'm going to take it in."

EXTRA POINTS: Hagan's 19-year-old son, DeVaughn Levy, committed suicide last weekend. Hagan was in good spirits Monday, though. "I'm holding up, considering everything," he said. Levy, a former standout at Cherry Creek High School, was playing defensive back at Garden City (Kan.) Community College. ... Hansen, whose season ended with a ruptured spleen on Oct. 23, is back to working out, and he even went snowboarding last week. "I'm getting back to normal," he said.

Brian Howell can be reached at bhowell@times-call.com.

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Tuesday, December 7, 2010

Colorado Buffaloes season recap

By David Ubben
ESPN.com

Colorado wasn't the worst team in the Big 12 this season, but in the final weeks of Dan Hawkins' tenure, the Buffaloes played like it. They also lost starting quarterback [Tyler Hansen](#) for the year in the middle of the season after he injured his spleen and had to spend a few days in the hospital.

Colorado was blasted by Oklahoma and blew a 28-point lead to their main competition at the bottom, Kansas, in just 11 minutes.

That loss meant Hawkins would be shown the door (and handed \$2.1 million to walk through it). That gave way to one of the best stories in the Big 12 this year: the Buffaloes' resurgence under interim coach Brian Cabral.



Colorado rocked an Iowa State team desperate for a win to achieve bowl eligibility, and [Rodney Stewart](#) ran for 195 yards in a win over Kansas State. The Buffaloes ran into a Nebraska team in Lincoln with a lot to play for in the season finale, and couldn't win to qualify for a bowl, but Cabral had the team playing good football at the end of the season.

It sounds like Cabral will be retained under the new staff, and he won't be forgotten any time soon for his efforts to close the season.

Offensive MVP: Rodney Stewart, RB. No competition here. Stewart ran for 1,316 yards and 10 touchdowns on the year, and finished third in the Big 12 in rushing. He also had six 100-yard games and three more with at least 85 yards rushing. Next time, when the Buffaloes are up 28 points in the fourth quarter, they should give him the ball.

Defensive MVP: Michael Sipili, LB. Sipili led an average at best defense in tackles with 74 tackles for a solid junior season, and also made eight tackles for loss with 2.5 sacks.

Turning point: The loss to Kansas and subsequent coach firing. The Buffaloes were never the same team afterward, and that's a good thing. Instead of Kansas going winless in conference play, the Buffaloes looked likely to do it after the Kansas loss. They didn't come close, and even got to play for a chance at a bowl game after Cabral helped rally the team.

What's next: A move to the Pac-12 with brand-new coach Jon Embree. Embree is a former Buff who wanted the job badly. He is a first-time head coach, so it's hard to say what to expect. Stewart should be back, and so should Hansen. Receivers [Paul Richardson](#) and [Toney Clemons](#) should give the Buffaloes a solid group of targets next year, and offensive lineman Ryan Miller will return as well.

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Monday, December 6, 2010

Colorado Buffaloes get a pair of big returns

By David Ubben
ESPN.com

Colorado was already moving to the Pac-12 with a new coach.

It could have needed a new right guard and receiver, too. That won't be the case.

Receiver [Paul Richardson](#) and offensive lineman Ryan Miller remained non-committal immediately following the season, but both pledged commitments to the Buffaloes in 2011 over the weekend.

Miller could have tested the NFL draft waters, and Paul Richardson could have made the decision to transfer. Both will stay.

"I'm with the black and gold regardless of what coach is hired," Miller said in a statement. The Buffaloes hired Jon Embree, making the announcement official on Monday morning. "I didn't want to talk about this immediately following the NU game because it was neither the time nor the place. I will play my senior season in a University of Colorado jersey."

Richardson [told Brian Howell of the Longmont Times-Call on Saturday](#) that he'd stick with the Buffs move west, too.

"I'll be back," he said. "I've been getting a lot of love [from teammates] and I feel like this is where I should be and I should finish out my college career here."

As a true freshman, Richardson caught 34 passes for 514 yards (a Colorado freshman record) and six touchdowns, but just seven catches for 64 yards came in the first half of the season.

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