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college football

QB Burnette brings Southern comfort to CU

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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BOULDER — Brent Burnette's first task after arriving at Colorado early last month was to check in with the CU football office. Then the new Buffaloes quarterback went looking for an outdoor clothing store.

Burnette is a native Tennessean who played junior college ball in Arizona last fall.

"Gosh, I went out and bought me a huge winter jacket right away," said Burnette with a syrupy Southern twang sure to turn heads. "I'm getting used to this Colorado weather, though. I'm loving it here."

National signing day is today, but Burnette, 6-foot-3 and 215 pounds, already is enrolled in classes at CU and will be eligible to participate in spring drills. A fourth-year junior, he has two seasons of eligibility remaining. Burnette began his career at the FBS (major college) level at Middle Tennessee State of the Sun Belt

Conference.

"One thing that attracted me about Colorado is they're starting fresh," Burnette said. "We have a great, great coaching staff here, with a lot of them having a great history as Colorado players. I'm in the best situation I could possibly be in. They said no starters are already penciled in."

Quarterback was considered to be a position of need for this recruiting cycle, with only incumbent senior starter Tyler Hansen and redshirt freshman Nick Hirschman returning on scholarship. CU coach Jon Embree also is expected to sign a high school quarterback from Texas today: Stevie Dorman (6-4, 210) of Somerset (near San Antonio), who is a nephew of former CU quarterback Koy Detmer and of 1990 Heisman Trophy winner Ty Detmer, who played at Brigham Young.

Burnette went 60-0 (that's not a typo) with four state championships as a high school quarterback at Maryville, Tenn. He picked Middle Tennessee State after visiting Virginia, North Carolina and Buffalo "so I could stay close to home." Burnette said he enjoyed MTSU, but his situation changed while he was redshirting when the Blue Raiders switched to a spread formation that featured a dual-threat quarterback.

A conventional pocket passer, Burnette showed promise in 2009 as a redshirt freshman by completing 13-of-25 passes for 160 yards and two touchdowns as a backup, including a TD pass in the New Orleans Bowl victory over Southern Mississippi. But Burnette knew he had to find a

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better fit and transferred to Arizona Western (Junior) College.

"When Colorado was recruiting me they said they were going to install a pro-style offense and bring in NFL terminology, and that really got me excited," Burnette said.

Burnette threw for 6,408 yards and 68 touchdowns during his prep career, numbers that rank second in state history. He said he figured out early in his football career that leadership is one of his attributes. He found it easy to take command of the huddle.

"The best thing I can say about Brent is he knows how to win," said Tony Franklin, Burnette's quarterbacks coach at Middle Tennessee State and now offensive coordinator at Louisiana Tech. "He's a competitor. He plays with extreme confidence. He has an aura about him."

And he looks forward to learning under CU's new staff, many of whom are former NFL assistant coaches. Those include Embree, offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy and newly hired quarterbacks coach Rip Scherer, who for the past six years was with the Carolina Panthers and Cleveland Browns.

"Can you believe the staff we have?" Burnette said. "Coach Scherer, I'm excited to have him coach me up."

Hansen said Burnette has fit right in.

"Brent is a great guy," Hansen said. "He's been

throwing with us and he's looking good. He throws the ball really hard. I'm looking forward to see what he can do during spring ball."

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Southern living

New Colorado QB Brent Burnette is a native of Tennessee. Here are the top five Southern dishes he misses most:

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3. Cornbread
4. Mashed potatoes
5. Chicken and dumplings

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nfl draft

NFL scouting combine has the attention of CU's Solder, other draft prospects

By Jeff Legwold
The Denver Post

Posted: 02/02/2011 01:00:00 AM MST

The NFL scouting combine in Indianapolis starts in three weeks, and 330 of the best college football prospects will be there to run, jump and talk to just about every head coach, scout, general manager and assistant coach in the league.

For the players coming to the combine, the next three weeks are vital to their preparation for the April 28-30 draft.

"Very important," said Colorado's Nate Solder, a consensus All-America offensive tackle in 2010. "You know where you have to be, they know you're coming and they're going to know if you've done the work or not."

Every year, NFL personnel evaluators discuss the danger of putting too much value on what players do at the combine. That is valid. All of the work is done without players wearing pads. And before they get to the combine, the players have done the drills over and over again to maximize performance in Indianapolis.

But the players' medical examinations continue to be of prime benefit for NFL. So is the opportunity to look at a player eye to eye and see what's behind the rehearsed answers.

The draft can be a negative process overall. College football players — having been recruited as high school stars and having had enough success to be invited to the combine — may not be used to so many people picking at their flaws.

NFL scouts are paid to project a player's potential for development as well as identify issues that may hinder development.

If you're a young player used to people telling you what you like to hear, it can be a disconcerting process. But Solder is a step ahead of the game because he seems to understand what's coming and is ready for it.

"I know my flaws and they want to know my flaws, that I know what I need to work on," said Solder, a projected first-round draft pick. "I'm completely honest about that. I don't see that as criticism. It's just an honest description of who I am as a player."

"I feel like if I know

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the things I need to work on, I have the potential to get better. If I don't know, then I'm lost, I'm never going to get better. If they're going to pay

Blog: All Things Broncos



The Denver Post's NFL reporters post analysis, notes and minutiae on this blog devoted to the Denver Broncos.

you to do something, they're going to evaluate you in every part of that. I completely expect what's coming with that."

Beyond Solder's obvious physical gifts, his view on the draft process is why so many scouts who have met him like his chances as an NFL player. On draft day, teams are looking for players who are ready to improve.

Solder said he will prepare for the combine by training in Irvine, Calif.

"You want to be ready," Solder said, looking ahead to the draft. "It's one big four-month interview."

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CU's '11 class heavy on D

By Brian Howell
 © 2011 Longmont Times-Call

Jon Embree's first recruiting class at the University of Colorado may not wow anybody.

The Buffaloes hope there are a few hidden gems in the bunch, though.

Today is national signing day, and the CU football team is expected to announce a class of nearly 20 recruits.

As of early Tuesday afternoon, Rivals.com rated CU's class as the 11th best in the Pac-12 — ahead of Washington State. CU and Washington State were the only teams in the Pac-12 without a four- or five-star commitment.

Of course, nothing is set in stone until today, when national letters of intent are signed. And CU still has a pair of four-star recruits on its radar.

Mullen High School linebacker Leilon Willingham (ranked as the No. 2 overall prospect in Colorado) and wide receiver Devin Lucien of California are four-star recruits who were undecided as of Tuesday.

The pair have received scholarship offers from several BCS schools around the country, including Colorado.

Regardless of what Willingham and Lucien decide, Embree's first class will have an emphasis on defense.

Of the 16 verbal commitments CU had Tuesday, there are four defensive backs, three linebackers and a defensive end. Athlete Jermaine Clark also could play defense, and the Buffs are hoping defensive end Stephan Nembot of California signs with CU. Nembot has verbally committed to Washington but was still wavering between Washington and CU on Tuesday.

Two quarterbacks are expected to be a part of this class. Junior college recruit Brent Burnette already has signed, while Stevie Dorman of Somerset, Texas, has verbally committed to the Buffs.

CU's class won't have much local flavor. Of the top 20 in-state recruits, according to Rivals.com, just two have committed to CU: Arvada West offensive lineman Marc Mustoe (ranked No. 5) and Mullen linebacker Brady Daigh (No. 10).

CU appears to have lost out on most of the top in-state recruits. Chaparral lineman Brendon Austin (Stanford), Valor Christian quarterback Brock

Player update

A look at the players expected to sign with the University of Colorado football team today:

ALREADY SIGNED

QB Brent Burnette: 6-3, 210; Arizona Western C.C.

VERBAL COMMITS

ATH Jermaine Clark: 6-2, 198; Oak Ridge (N.C.) Academy
 LB Brady Daigh: 6-2, 220; Mullen H.S.
 QB Stevie Dorman: 6-4, 215; Somerset (Texas) H.S.
 LB Woodson Greer: 6-2, 225; Junipero Serra (Calif.) H.S.
 RB Rashad Hall: 6-0, 195; Oak Ridge (N.C.) Academy
 DB Will Harlos: 6-4, 200; Somerset (Texas) H.S.
 DB Sherrard Harrington: 6-1, 168; H.D. Woodson (D.C.) H.S.
 DB Gregory Henderson: 5-10, 180; Norco (Calif.) H.S.
 OL Alex Kelley: 6-3, 295; Vista (Calif.) H.S.
 OL Marc Mustoe: 6-7, 273; Arvada West H.S.
 K Will Oliver: 5-10, 190; Harvard Westlake (Calif.) H.S.
 DE Juda Parker: 6-2, 245; St. Louis (Hawaii) H.S.
 WR Nelson Spruce: 6-2, 190; Westlake (Calif.) H.S.
 LB K.T. Tuumalo: 6-3, 210; Punahou (Hawaii) H.S.
 ATH Kyle Washington: 6-1, 190; Florence (Ariz.) H.S.

UNDECIDED BUT CONSIDERING CU

OL Paulay Asiata: 6-5, 285; St. Louis (Hawaii) H.S.
 RB Malcolm Creer: 5-11, 200; Palisades (Calif.) H.S.
 WR Devin Lucien: 6-1, 189; Crespi (Calif.) H.S.
 DE Stephan Nembot: 6-7, 270;

Berglund (Kansas), Thompson Valley running back Dorian Brown (Colorado State) and Denver East athlete Ezekiel Bishop (Arizona State) are all top-seven in-state recruits who have committed to other schools. CU offered scholarships to all of them.

Montclair Prep (Calif.)
LB Leilon Willingham: 6-2, 240;
Mullen H.S.

Source: Rivals.com

CU may wind up with the top two recruits — and three of the top five — from Hawaii. Defensive end Juda Parker (No. 2) and linebacker K.T. Tuumalo (No. 5) have committed to the Buffs.

Offensive lineman Paulay Asiata (No. 1) has committed to Washington, but the Buffs still hope he'll change his mind and come to Boulder.

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