



New football coach Jon Embree is ready to ramp up CU's 2011 recruiting efforts.
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



01/03/2011 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

Brooks: Embree Itching For 'Full Force' Recruiting

BOULDER - Jon Embree knew this day would arrive, but it seemed to take its sweet time.

After a 15-day "dead" recruiting period that encompassed the holidays, Tuesday signals the start of a five-day contact period that will see Colorado's new head football coach and six of his assistants - seven being the permissible maximum - visiting prospects in various parts of the country.

"I know people are probably sitting out there wondering (about CU's recruiting) . . . wondering if we're doing anything, why haven't we heard about this guy or that," Embree said Monday.

"But I can assure you, there's a lot of interest; we're on some really good guys. They've been calling Eric (Bieniemy) and some of our other coaches. For us, it's all about getting on the same page, figuring out who the guys are we want to recruit, seeing them, then going and getting them. (Tuesday) we'll be out full force, all over the place."

Hired by CU roughly a month ago, Embree has his staff virtually filled, although not all positions have been officially announced. Those that have been include offensive line (Steve Marshall), defensive line (Mike Tuiasosopo), defensive ends/outside linebackers (Kanavis McGhee), secondary/defensive coordinator (Greg Brown), tight ends/special teams/passing game coordinator (J.D. Brookhart) and running backs/offensive coordinator (Bieniemy).

Inside linebackers coach Brian Cabral was retained from former coach Dan Hawkins' staff.

Embree and seven assistants were on campus Monday, with Bieniemy expected to arrive in Boulder on Saturday. He will not be among coaches who are on the road recruiting this week. However, Bieniemy, previously employed as the Minnesota Vikings' assistant head coach/offense and running backs coach, received NCAA clearance to begin making recruiting calls on CU's behalf shortly after his hiring was announced last month.

Bieniemy took (and passed) the mandated written recruiting test while the Vikings' season still was underway. Jill Gainey, a member of CU's compliance department, traveled to Minnesota and administered the test at Vikings headquarters, allowing Bieniemy to at least begin making/taking calls.

Because of the coaching change, Embree and his staff are attempting to catch up on the recruiting front. Embree believes the Buffs "can make up ground, but I'm not going to be just taking people, though. I'm not just trying to fill out a class with 'X' number of guys and just have them be guys. We have to get good players, quality players."

CU's target number of signees on Wednesday, Feb. 2 - National Letter of Intent Day - is 15. However, Embree added, "There'll be room to go over that if it's a good enough player. But right now, I'd say 15."

Since his hiring, Embree said there has been "tons" of interest in CU from "all over the country" shown by prospective recruits, their parents and/or high school coaches.

That broad, nationwide interest - as well as Embree's and his staff's relatively late start - will alter the Buffs' approach in the 2011 recruiting cycle. This year's process won't necessarily reflect CU's long-term recruiting philosophy under Embree.

In future years, he intends to specifically target Colorado, Texas, California and the remaining states that comprise the Pac-12 Conference, which CU enters next fall for Embree's debut season.

But this cycle's circumstances "changes things a little bit," Embree said. "You want to focus in California and Texas, but we've been getting calls from North Carolina, Maryland, Tennessee, New Jersey, Illinois . . .

"So this is the kind of year where you kind of have to go where some players are that are kind of recruiting you - guys you're interested in that you think are good players, then get back to your core of what you want to do from a recruiting standpoint.

"We hope we can get some kids from California and Texas, but it may not be the sheer numbers this year that we want (from those states) as far as the future goes."

With spring semester classes beginning Monday, Jan. 10, Embree plans to have all staff positions filled by this weekend. Sunday marks a "quiet period," with another "dead period" running from Monday through Thursday, Jan. 13. A contact period begins the following day and runs through Saturday, Jan. 29.

"Quiet" and "dead" periods cover the four days preceding national signing day (Feb. 2).

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SHOW MENU



Embree vows to go West

Coach wants to focus on recruiting Calif., Colorado and Texas

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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The Colorado football program signed recruits from 25 different states and territories over the past five years under former coach Dan Hawkins, who adopted a national approach to recruiting from the moment he was hired in 2005.

The strategy paid dividends with a few players such as running back Rodney Stewart, who came to CU from Ohio, and defensive end Forrest West, who chose to be a Buff all the way from Connecticut.

It also produced some headaches with players such as Lamont Smith (Pennsylvania) becoming academically ineligible, and Ryan Wallace (Kentucky) getting homesick and transferring. The results are still out on plenty of players brought to CU from places such as New Jersey, Alabama, North Carolina, Tennessee and Georgia.

New coach Jon Embree says he will take a different approach. He prefers to keep the program's recruiting focused on the western half of the nation for the most part.

Embree isn't saying he will completely stop recruiting prospects from the East Coast, the Midwest or the deep South, but he will stick to a core philosophy when it comes to most recruits from those regions.

"I'll go get a player from there if he recruits me," Embree said. "So if it's player X and he's saying I want to go to Colorado and he comes out here on his own on an unofficial (visit) at some point and he shows he is truly interested, yeah, I'll recruit him.

"But I'm not going to go out there looking for those guys because you fly over a lot of good players to go get this player. Then what do you have to show for it? You're wasting resources. You're wasting time. Then you get a kid who comes out here and he's dealing with being homesick, he's dealing with it being different. It's a different culture and all that stuff."

The CU staff and college coaches around the nation are hitting the recruiting trail hard today now that a two-week dead period around the holidays is over. Embree and his staff are looking to add another 8-10 names to a small recruiting class on Feb. 2, national signing day.

The class is expected to number around 12 to 15 players mostly because the 2010 senior class was so small and there aren't the traditional 20-25 scholarships available to award. But the class also is purposely being held to that size because Embree isn't a believer in adding bodies just to meet a number or fill a quota.

He wants players who can help him win more than 19 games in five years, the number of victories Hawkins achieved before being fired in November. And Embree believes he will find enough of those players in recruiting hotspots that have yielded results for the program throughout the past.

Embree says he wants to focus on recruiting Colorado, California and Texas first because when the program has had success in the past, it has recruited well in each of those states. According to the CU sports information department, the program has signed 230 players from Colorado, 205 from California and 107 from Texas over the past 38 years.

Embree said the staff has some connections in New Orleans, which might be the furthest east the program will regularly pursue talent. Embree said the program will also recruit the rest of the west including Arizona, Utah, Pacific Northwest and Hawaii.

"It's going to be a little bit different philosophy because they went kind of all over the place," Embree said of the previous coaching staff.

Embree has had several staff meetings in the past month to discuss a plan of attack for finishing the 2011 recruiting cycle and beginning work on the 2012 class. He said making decisions about which student-athletes to pursue is the same when

it comes to evaluating them athletically and academically.

He gave his staff an interesting benchmark to keep in mind when considering a prospect who might be from outside the usual recruiting footprint he has established.

"The question you've got to ask yourself is, is it worth it?" Embree said. "Is this a kid we are recruiting in New Hampshire, who are we going to be selling his jersey in the bookstore? If the answer is yes, then let's go try to get this guy. If the answer is no, then let's not waste our time.

"That's what I've told these guys on the staff. If we ain't selling his jersey in the bookstore, then we shouldn't be wasting our time on this guy. That's how you've got to look at it. That's me. That's my philosophy."

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