

Embree vows to put best players on field

Some spent more time on sidelines than expected under Hawk

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 01/05/2011 11:36:20 PM MST

Warning: Colorado football fans who read this story could be prone to spontaneous outbursts of joy as if the Buffs just scored a touchdown. Impromptu celebrations might include leaping and fist-pumping to rival a 1980s "Oh what a feeling" Toyota commercial.

So what's all the fuss about? It might be best to let coach Jon Embree explain.

"I want to play the best players," Embree said. "If the best player can't do something we want to do within our system, then we need to have within our system what it is he can do so that he can play.

"I think you don't have a good system if you can't play your best players. Then what you're doing is you're running plays. That is not a system."

Confess, brought a tear to your eye didn't it?

It's no secret one of the biggest problems with CU football over the past five losing seasons has been the lack of an offensive identity which has led to the Buffs ranking among the worst Big 12 teams in points scored and total production in each of those seasons.

It's also no secret that former coach Dan Hawkins stubbornly kept some of his most talented players off the field at times in favor of players with lesser physical ability but a better grasp of the entire scheme.

Former five-star recruit Darrell Scott was probably the most famous example of that approach. His uncle, wide receiver Josh Smith, played more often but also spent far too much time on the sidelines watching. Both ultimately transferred to other schools.

Watching the team struggle and lose while bigger, stronger, faster players stood on the sidelines produced much consternation among CU fans, and it's something Embree says won't happen while he is coaching in Boulder.

That doesn't mean Embree won't hold a player out if he isn't studying his playbook or if he isn't meeting expectations in other areas.

"If you have a really good player and he's better than a guy who is on the field, then you've got to ask yourself, 'Why is he standing next to me?'" Embree said. "Now sometimes that happens. Sometimes it's because the kid just doesn't work at what he is supposed to do, or maybe he isn't consistent with what he is supposed to do. But you need to find a way to still get him out there and help him. That is part of coaching, taking a player where he can't take himself.

"You've got to find a way to get him out there. If it's three plays, it's three plays. Then when he gets that down, give him three more plays. Whatever you have to do, if you have to spoon feed him, spoon feed him. But you've got to find a way to get your good guys on the field, so they can help you win."

Embree also believes that allowing players the opportunity to get on the field and taste success, even if it comes in small doses, feeds that players drive to improve, which helps the team improve in the long run.

Embree said after evaluating the roster from top to bottom, he believes he has the personnel to immediately begin running the pro-style offense he and offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy envision.

However, there are holes he will be trying to address with this recruiting class and the 2012 class, such as fullback, wide receiver and tight end, as well as identifying his quarterback of the future.

Another staple of the past five seasons has been the use of personnel groupings on offense. Hawkins believed in sometimes taking more explosive players off the field in favor of other players to run certain plays because those players had been more successful in practice against the scout team or because he preferred the way one player ran a route or blocked his assignment.

Embree says he won't continue that philosophy because he doesn't believe it provides the team its best chance to win.

"We won't have three-wide groups where it's three different wide receivers in one group and the next three-wide group is someone else or something different," Embree said. "We won't be doing that. We'll be different in that aspect."

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Redskins strength coach follows Embree to CU

Bufs also announce Kennedy's hiring

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 01/05/2011 06:39:53 PM MST

Colorado football coach Jon Embree has hired Washington Redskins assistant strength and conditioning coach Malcolm Blacken to replace Jeff Pitman as strength and conditioning coach in Boulder.

Embree and Blacken developed a strong professional relationship over the past year working together for coach Mike Shanahan in the Redskins organization. Colorado hired Embree from Washington in early December and Embree first discussed the position with Blacken shortly after taking over in Boulder.

Blacken, who was chosen over several other candidates, has 15 years of experience in the National Football League, including nine years as the head strength coach for the Detroit Lions. He has served two stints with the Redskins.

While the strength coach deals mostly with the football program, he will oversee the strength and conditioning of athletes in all 16 CU sports programs.

Blacken is a graduate of Virginia Tech where he played running back in the mid 1980s (1984-88) and has served as a strength and conditioning coach at three different colleges prior to his years in the NFL. He worked at South Carolina, George Mason University and the University of Virginia. Blacken is married and has two children.

Blacken won't have much time to get settled in at the Dal Ward Center. He will begin the winter strength and conditioning program with returning members of the football team when players return from winter break and resume classes Jan. 10.

Embree still has one assistant coach position to fill. He is expected to hire a quarterbacks coach from another NFL team soon. He also is working on the parameters of a operations staff position for Darian Hagan, who has served as an assistant coach the past six seasons.

The school also formally announced the hiring of Boulder native Bobby Kennedy as wide receivers coach on Wednesday.

"I'm excited about adding Bobby and Malcolm to the staff," Embree said in a CU press release. "Bobby is a very good receivers coach and he's had a lot of success.

"A number of schools wanted to hire him in the past, so I feel very fortunate that he's here. He's another guy who will be a head coach soon. I got to know Malcolm last year with the Redskins and he's a former head strength coach in the NFL and collegiate levels and he will be a valuable asset to our program."

Kennedy, 44, has spent 21 years as a college assistant coach, including the past seven with the Texas Longhorns, where he was part of the 2005 national championship team and the 2009 team that played in the national title game.

In addition to his skill as a coach, Kennedy brings valuable recruiting ties in Texas to Embree's staff.

"Jon and I have known each other for over 20 years -- from when I was at Boulder High and he was at Cherry Creek," Kennedy said in a statement. "I always followed his career and always wanted to come here and be a Buff. That opportunity didn't present itself until now and I couldn't be more excited."

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Colorado adds two assistants, hires WR and strength coaches

By The Denver Post

Posted: 01/05/2011 05:04:05 PM MST

Updated: 01/05/2011 05:06:06 PM MST

Colorado football coach Jon Embree today officially named Bobby Kennedy wide receivers coach and Malcolm Blacken as CU's speed-strength and conditioning coach.

"I'm excited about adding Bobby and Malcolm to the staff," Embree said in a release from the school. "Bobby is a very good receivers coach and he's had a lot of success. A number of schools wanted to hire him in the past, so I feel very fortunate that he's here."

Kennedy, 44, spent the past seven years as receivers coach at Texas. The Boulder native was named the Longhorns' assistant recruiting coordinator after his first year on staff.

"Jon and I have known each other for over 20 years - from when I was at Boulder High and he

was at Cherry Creek," said Kennedy, who graduated from Boulder in 1985 then went to Northern Colorado. "I always followed his career and always wanted to come here and be a Buff. That opportunity didn't present itself until now and I couldn't be more excited."

Kennedy's other coaching stops include two years coaching receivers at Washington, as well as stops at Arizona (2001), Wake Forest (1995-2000) and Wyoming (1993-94).

Blacken comes to Colorado from the Washington Redskins, and has been in the NFL for the past 15 years. He will oversee speed-strength and conditioning for all of CU's intercollegiate sports.

Embree still has one assistant position for quarterbacks vacant at present.

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Longmont, Colorado
Thursday, January 06,
2011

Publish Date: 1/6/2011

CU adds coaches to staff

By Brian Howell
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The football coaching staff at the University of Colorado is nearly complete.

New head coach Jon Embree added two more assistants on Wednesday — Bobby Kennedy will coach receivers and Malcolm Blacken will be the speed-strength and conditioning coach.

“I’m excited about adding Bobby and Malcolm to the staff,” Embree said in a press release.

Since being hired last month, Embree has hired Eric Bieniemy (offensive coordinator/running backs); Greg Brown (defensive coordinator/secondary); J.D. Brookhart (passing game coordinator/tight ends/special teams coordinator); Brian Cabral (defensive run game coordinator/linebackers); Steve Marshall (offensive line); Kanavis McGhee (defensive line); Mike Tuiasosopo (defensive line); Darian Hagan (recruiting coordinator); and Kennedy and Blacken.

Embree needs only to find a quarterbacks coach to fill out his staff.

For Kennedy, coming to CU will be a return home. He grew up in Boulder and played at Boulder High School. He then played quarterback at Northern Colorado.

The 44-year-old Kennedy has coached in college for 21 years, including the past seven years as the wide receivers coach at Texas.

“Jon and I have known each other for over 20 years — from when I was at Boulder High and he was at Cherry Creek,” Kennedy said in a press release. “I always followed his career and always wanted to come here and be a Buff. That opportunity didn’t present itself until now and I couldn’t be more excited.”

Kennedy also has coaching experience in the Pac-12, at Washington and Arizona.

Blacken worked with Embree on the Washington Redskins staff this season. He will be in charge of speed-strength and conditioning for all of CU’s 16 sports.

Blacken has 15 years of NFL experience. He graduated from Virginia Tech in 1989 and played running back for the Hokies.