

CU-Utah Rivalry will take time to develop

Utah AD Hill believes Buffs-Utahs could become grudge match

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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SEATTLE -- Utah athletic director Chris Hill used to be Marlon Brando. Now he's Joey McIntyre.

With 25 years of experience as athletic director for the Utes, Hill was the Godfather of ADs in the Mountain West Conference. Participating in Pac-12 Conference spring meetings this weekend for the first time, he and Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn are new kids on the block.

"It's such an exciting time for us with so many new things happening that it's been energizing," Hill said. "In the past, I was involved with those schools for a long time. So it was a little bit more routine. Now it's just on a different scale."

Hill and Bohn have routinely met with their counterparts in the Pac-12 since the league invited CU and Utah to join the conference last summer. So they are familiar faces at this point. However, they are now finally able to turn their attention fully to the Pac-12 without concern for the league's they are leaving behind.

And in looking ahead to the future, the idea of a rivalry forming between the Buffs and Utes continues to come up.

Colorado and Utah were paired on rivalry weekend at the end of the football season because every other school in the conference already had a traditional rival to play that weekend.

The question is, will a genuine rivalry form between the schools or is it being forced? Will Utah continue to schedule its old rival Brigham Young beyond the next two years, giving it an early season rivalry game as CU has with Colorado State? Will that take some of the steam out of the Buffs and Utes at the end of the year and a need for a conference rivalry?

Hill said he and Bohn aren't kicking each other in the shins underneath the table this week in an effort to get a rivalry started.

"I think a rivalry takes time to build," Hill said. "The back to the future people will tell you that 40 years ago it used to be a rivalry. The nice thing is we have a chance, and it's not going to happen overnight, but Colorado and Utah have a nice ring. They are Rocky Mountain schools in similar environments.

"It will grow, but it doesn't become that overnight. That's what rivalries are."

Bohn agrees. He said Colorado coaches, fans and players will decide over time what teams in the conference they are most passionate about playing. However, after years in the Big 12 Conference keeping an eye on the guy in the room wearing Nebraska red, it might seem natural to target Hill, whose teams sport the same color.

Hill didn't need much prodding to playfully and jokingly take the first shot Friday.

"I've just learned to not like black and gold very much," Hill said. "I've gotten rid of all my gold or whatever they call that color. We don't like Buffaloes. We think the humane society should be upset about what they do with their mascot."

Basketball tournaments

up for grabs

The Pac-12 recently sent out letters of interest to cities within its footprint inquiring about interest in hosting the men's and women's basketball tournaments in future seasons. The league will follow up by sending a request for proposals to those that respond.

Recent tournaments in Los Angeles at the Staples Center have been played in an arena only 70 or 80 percent full for some games. In a league that now features 10 of the 30 top television markets in the nation, there are plenty of other options, including Denver and Salt Lake City.

Bohn said he was uncertain if the Denver Metro Sports Commission would bid on the tournaments after lackluster attendance when the Pepsi Center hosted the Mountain West Conference tournaments in the recent past. Denver routinely sells out its men's NCAA Tournament games when March Madness comes to town, but Bohn said the market seems to respond differently to local programs and conferences.

The view is just the opposite in Utah.

"I know the sports commission in Utah is very, very interested in it," Hill said. "We host NCAA basketball a lot in our city and I think our community would see it that way with all these teams coming in. We've been pretty successful with that."

New football rule

scrutinized

In addition to athletic directors meeting this weekend, Pac-12 senior women's administrators and faculty athletic representative also are here.

CU faculty athletic representative Dr. David Clough said discussion among his group Friday centered on a new NCAA rule that will go into effect this fall requiring football players to pass at least nine hours of classes. Those who fail to pass nine hours in the fall semester or quarter would face a four-game suspension the following season.

Players who fail to pass nine hours can qualify for a waiver to have the penalty removed (one time) or decreased by two games if they complete enough credit hours in the spring and summer.

Clough said about half the Pac-12 institutions support the rule, including CU, and about half hope to have it repealed. He said overriding legislation has proven to be difficult in most instances in the past.

Quotable

Pac-12 athletic directors were together in Arizona when the league announced its historic media rights deal with ESPN and Fox last month. So there wasn't any high-fiving in the meeting Friday. However, Hill had this to say about how athletic directors responded to the 12-year, \$3 billion deal commissioner Larry Scott negotiated.

"We were carrying Larry around on our shoulders," Hill said.

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The Salt Lake Tribune

Building a rivalry: Utes, Buffs starting from scratch

By Michael C. Lewis

The Salt Lake Tribune

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Boulder, Colo. • Except for the national championship emblem painted on the stadium facade, the Colorado Buffaloes don't have all that much in common with the Brigham Young University Cougars. They represent a public university in an exceptionally progressive town, have a new football coach trying to reverse years of losing and possess one of the coolest live mascots in college sports, not just another guy in a fuzzy costume.

Yet here they are, bumping the Cougars from the traditional rivalry spot on the University of Utah's schedule.

It's one of the oddities of the Utes making their historic move into the Pac-12 Conference next month.

To accommodate their new league schedule, the Utes have had to relocate their annual football game with the hated Cougars since the Pac-12 needs them to play the Buffaloes on the final weekend of the regular season. That's when the rest of the teams in the league will be contesting their own traditional rivalries, such as the "Big Game" between Cal and Stanford.

But the Utes and Buffaloes haven't played each other in football since 1962 — the Buffs traditionally have played Nebraska in their final regular-season game — assuring that if anything is going to breed contempt between the two on the last Saturday in November during the next few years, it's probably not going to be familiarity.

"Rivalries take time," Colorado receiver Kyle Cephalo said. "You never know. It takes a lot, a lot of years to establish a solid rivalry, and this year, to be honest with you, everyone's our rival. That's our mentality. Us and, obviously, Utah — we're the new kids on the block and everyone in the Pac-12 is going to try to show us this is Pac-12 football, and we're going to try to show that, hey, we're up to the task. We're ready for anything you put on the table for us."



Scott Sommerdorf | file photo The Salt Lake Tribune Utah coach Kyle Whittingham will face the Colorado Buffaloes as end-of-season rivals, instead of BYU.

Most analysts expect the Buffaloes to rank among the weakest football teams in the expanded Pac-12 after five straight losing seasons under former coach Dan Hawkins.

But the Buffs fired Hawkins after last season, hiring alumnus and former assistant coach Jon Embree from the NFL's Washington Redskins in the hope that he not only can rebuild the program on the field but also re-establish a connection to the fans and alumni who have lost contact since the glory days that included the 1990 national championship.

It's that last part that makes the move from the Big 12 Conference to the Pac-12 particularly important for the Buffaloes.

While the Utes view their move into the Pac-12 as a opportunity to take a major step up to the big time, the Buffs had already been members of an elite league with automatic access to the Bowl Championship Series.

For them, the move is equally about demographics.

Athletic director Mike Bohn said most of the school's alumni live west of Boulder, Colo., so they were seldom able to see the Buffaloes play when the team was in the Big 12 Conference.

Now the Buffs will enjoy regular exposure to 23,000 alumni in California alone, which is important to a school that Bohn said depends more on out-of-state students and the tuition they pay than any other. The promise and excitement were evident when the Buffs played at Cal last season and 9,000 fans showed up wearing black and gold.

"No disrespect to our Big 12 partners, but we never had 9,000 to a game in the Big 12 Conference, even in championship games, in 15 years," Bohn said. "Not even half that."

The Buffs had 15,655 fans attend their annual spring football game, when quarterback Tyler Hansen showed off the team's new pro-style offense at Folsom Field. That was the second-largest spring crowd in school history.

"It represents the optimism associated with coach Embree," Bohn said.

In his effort to embrace the program's history, Embree also hired several former Colorado players and coaches as staff members — former Utah defensive line coach Mike Tuiasosopo is there, too — and he has experience in the Pac-12, having also coached at UCLA, where his son is a wide receiver.

That's why Embree believes the Utes can develop a healthy rivalry with the Buffs, even while retaining one with the Cougars.

"That's the one thing about this conference — a lot of schools have two rivals," he said. "But I understand they want to try to make it happen. I believe, when you come in somewhere new, usually something happens that creates a rivalry, you know? It may be Utah. But for Utah, it may be Oregon State. Something may happen where bad blood develops, and that's how it goes."

"That's today's culture," he added. "Everyone wants it to happen now, now, now. But the rivalries will develop."

The Utes and Buffs actually did have a pretty good rivalry, years ago.

They played 57 times between 1903 and 1962, perhaps most notably when future U.S. Supreme Court Justice Byron "Whizzer" White — the most famous Colorado football player in history — shredded the Utes in back-to-back Buffalo victories in 1936 and 1937. The teams were members of the same conference from 1910 to 1947, before the Buffaloes joined the Big 8 Conference, which eventually became the Big 12.

The Buffs led the series, 30-24-3, but the Utes won the last two meetings after a nine-game winless streak through the 1950s — when their biggest rival was Utah State and BYU had yet to develop into a power under LaVell Edwards.

“Rivalries develop over time,” said Utah athletic director Chris Hill. “But maybe we can speed it up.”

Hill and Bohn said they have discussed strategies for doing that, including introducing a trophy for the winner and encouraging fans to travel back and forth for games.

Certainly, geography can play a helpful role, with only 525 miles separating the schools.

That’s a few more, obviously, than the 45 miles that separate the Utes from the Cougars. But the proximity has helped fuel strong rivalries between the NBA’s Utah Jazz and Denver Nuggets, as well as Real Salt Lake and the Colorado Rapids in Major League Soccer.

And even though the Buffs aren’t the Cougars, Colorado offensive lineman Ryan Miller said it might not take much for them to rile the Utes just the same.

“A rivalry can happen any play,” Miller said. “It can happen as quick as someone says something to the media, a play, a look. A bad call. It can happen. There are no limits about how a rivalry can form.”

The renewal of a rivalry?

The Utes and Buffaloes will play their inaugural Pac-12 Conference regular-season finale Nov. 25 — the Friday night after Thanksgiving. The game will be played at Rice-Eccles Stadium, though the time has yet to be determined. The teams will play every year, alternating locations.

The past decade

The Utah Utes and Colorado Buffaloes have endured different football fortunes since 2000:

Utah Year Colorado

4-7 (3-4 MWC) 2000 3-8 (3-5 Big 12)

8-4 (4-3 MWC) 2001 10-3 (7-1 Big 12)

5-6 (3-4 MWC) 2002 9-5 (7-1 Big 12)

10-2 (6-1 MWC) 2003 5-7 (3-5 Big 12)

12-0 (7-0 MWC) 2004 8-5 (4-4 Big 12)

7-5 (4-4 MWC) 2005 7-5 (5-3 Big 12)

8-5 (5-3 MWC) 2006 2-10 (2-6 Big 12)

9-4 (5-3 MWC) 2007 6-7 (4-4 Big 12)

13-0 (8-0 MWC) 2008 5-7 (2-6 Big 12)

10-3 (6-2 MWC) 2009 3-9 (2-6 Big 12)

10-3 (7-1 MWC) 2010 5-7 (2-6 Big 12)

96-39 (58-25 MWC) TOTAL 63-73 (41-47 Big 12)

Wynn was a whisker from being a Buff

Utah quarterback Jordan Wynn nearly played for Colorado instead of the Utes.

The junior originally committed to play for the Buffaloes, but he changed his mind because of the stockpile of quarterbacks that former coach Dan Hawkins had assembled — including Hawkins' son, Cody. One of them was Tyler Hansen, who was Wynn's host during his recruiting visit and has grown into the starter for the Buffaloes.

"It will be a good rivalry," Wynn said. "We're both making a transition, but they are coming from the Big 12 — a BCS conference. So they might have a little bit of an advantage. But it should be a lot of fun."

Wynn said he doesn't expect a lot of hype surrounding his past with the Buffs because the staff that recruited him has been replaced. Actually, both he and Hansen are operating under new regimes, with Hansen playing for new head coach Jon Embree and Wynn heading into his first season under new offensive coordinator Norm Chow.

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Colorado, Pac-10, college football — posted by matt murschel on June, 4 2011 7:00 AM

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We are continuing our Preseason College Football Countdown, ranking every team at the Football Bowl Subdivision level from 120 down to 1.

Matt Murschel compiled the rankings based on several factors including: returning letterwinners, returning starters, 2010 performance, coaching staff changes, strength of schedule and strength of the conference.

Today at No. 72: Colorado



Jon Embree takes over as head coach at Colorado in 2011. (Photo by CUBuffs.com)

Coach: Jon Embree (0-0, first season)

2010 record: 5-7 (2-6 in Big 12 Conference, tied for fifth in North Division)

Look back: With three victories in its first four games, the 2010 season looked to be a promising one for the Buffs. That optimism quickly faded after the team spiraled into a five game losing streak culminating with the firing of head coach Dan Hawkins. The Buffaloes finished winning two out of the next three games.

Offensive starters lost/returning: 2/9

Defensive starters lost/returning: 4/7

Key losses: WR Scotty McKnight, LT Nate Solder, LB Michael Sipili, LB B.J. Beatty, CB Jalil Brown, CB Jimmy Smith

Top returnees: QB Tyler Hansen, RB Rodney Stewart, DB Ray Polk, DB Terrel Smith

Strengths: A ruptured spleen ended Tyler Hansen's junior season after seven games. The California native returns as the opening day starter for the second straight season. ... Rodney Stewart returns to the backfield as well. Stewart rushed for 1,318 yards last season and could be gunning for the school's all-time rushing record held by new offensive coordinator Eric Bienemy. ... The defensive line has the most experience with Curtis Cunningham, Will Pericak, and Conrad Obi, who should anchor a defense that registered 34 sacks last season.

Weaknesses: The loss of cornerbacks Jalil Brown and Jimmy Smith creates a huge vacuum in the secondary with DB Ray Polk being called upon to fill some of that void as younger players get a shot at the position. ... Special teams were a concern last season and with PK Aric Goodman gone, the team will need someone to step up and that someone could be Justin Castor.

Outlook: Colorado makes the jump from the Big 12 to the Pac-12 this July, a move that will help out the institution in several levels. Embree, along with Bienemy, both spent time in the Pac-10 during their days at UCLA so they already know how to recruit the conference. Offense will be the strength of this team this season thanks in part to the return of Hansen. If the defense can fill holes left by graduation and injuries, Colorado might survive its first season in the new Pac-12.

2011 schedule

Sept. 3 at Hawaii
Sept. 10 CALIFORNIA
Sept. 17 vs. Colorado State
Sept. 24 at Ohio State
Oct. 1 WASHINGTON STATE
Oct. 8 at Stanford
Oct. 15 at Washington
Oct. 22 OREGON
Oct. 29 at Arizona State
Nov. 4 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
Nov. 12 ARIZONA
Nov. 19 at UCLA
Nov. 26 at Utah

Rest of the countdown:

No. 73 Temple
No. 74 Army
No. 75 FIU
No. 76 Middle Tennessee
No. 77 Toledo
No. 78 Fresno State
No. 79 Arkansas State
No. 80 Ohio
No. 81 Kent State
No. 82 Western Michigan
No. 83 Idaho
No. 84 Purdue
No. 84 Purdue
No. 85 Iowa State
No. 86 Virginia
No. 87 Louisville
No. 88 UTEP
No. 89 Colorado State
No. 90 Louisiana-Monroe
No. 91 Kansas
No. 92 Marshall
No. 93 Louisiana Tech
No. 94 Wyoming
No. 95 Utah State
No. 96 Minnesota
No. 97 Wake Forest



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 No. 107 Rutgers
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