

Ringo: Skies seem brighter over CU Buffs

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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It wasn't that long ago here on the Boulder campus at the University of Colorado when it seemed Murphy's Law ruled when it came to most athletic department doings.

Whether it was hiring the right coach, recruiting the right player, scheduling the right opponent, making the right call on game day, raising the right sum or anyone of myriad other decisions made in operating the department. If it could go wrong, it did go wrong, or at least it didn't go nearly as well as planned.

Sure, there have been some blue skies with the gray, some successes intermingled in there. Jenny Simpson (formerly Barringer) comes to mind. But this place lacked a key ingredient and you could feel it no matter how well some might have wanted to conceal it -- confidence.

But that all seems to be changing these days and you can feel that, too.

It started last spring when it became clear that the future of the school and the department was in the Pac-10 Conference and the West Coast. That came just after CU officials hired two enthusiastic basketball coaches with ties to the school or the area that really wanted to be here. They replaced two departed coaches who always seemed to have a complaint or excuse to register.

The sense of optimism about the future even seemed to rule the day during a difficult 2010 football season in which there were numerous tough and ugly moments and it was obvious another coach was going to need to be replaced.

The momentum really shifted into high gear when that move was finally made, a year overdue, and CU made the wise decision to fill the position with a football coach who shared many of the characteristics of the two previously hired basketball coaches. The key point being he has passion for the place.

Basketball resumed the charge during the winter and early in spring with both teams advancing in the postseason and the men's team setting a program record with 24 victories.

Oh by the way, the ski team returned to the top of the NCAA heap winning another national championship.

Looking forward, the next big development likely will be the Pac-12 Conference negotiating a media rights deal that could be valued at more than \$200 million annually.

Here is all you need to know about the significance of that number at CU. Over the past few years in the Big 12 Conference, the Buffs have been regularly earning between \$9 and \$10 million in conference distributions at the end of the year in television, bowl game and NCAA Tournament revenue earned by the entire conference and divided among the members.

Splitting a \$200 million pie 12 ways (and remember Utah doesn't even get a full share until 2014) means each school will earn about \$17 million. That's a heck of a lot of reasons to be smiling if you're a CU administrator or coach.

One of the biggest problems with CU athletics throughout its history has been funding. A larger pay day from the conference every year doesn't make that problem disappear, but it certainly goes a long way in easing the burden the Buffs face currently just keep up with rising scholarship costs every year.

If CU administrators are wise with the money and simultaneously capitalize on expected growth in fundraising because of the new conference affiliation and the chance to be in front of more donors more often out west, the financial health of the department looks much better five years from now.

In the meantime, CU is nearing completion of its new volleyball/basketball practice facility and it's looking like volleyball coach Liz Kritza is assembling a nationally ranked recruiting class to practice there. The basketball teams also figure to be

very competitive once again.

There is always enthusiasm in front of a CU football season, but there is already more than usual with anticipation of a 13-game schedule that will seem like an entire season of non-conference play as the program makes the jump into its new league.

Throw in the added dimension of a new coaching staff in its honeymoon season and it's hard to remember those dark clouds that seemed to linger around here far too much over the past five or six years.

Now, CU fans must hope no one wearing black, silver and gold does anything stupid in these next few months.

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CU Buffs will host USC on Friday, Nov. 4

Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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Colorado's home football game against Southern California this fall has been moved to Friday night Nov. 4 at Folsom Field and will be televised on ESPN2 with a 7 p.m. kickoff, the Pac-12 Conference announced today.

The game was originally scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 5, but CU athletic director Mike Bohn lobbied to have the game moved to either Thursday or Friday that week to assure it would be televised nationally.

Faculty and staff members expressed concerns about a Thursday game because it overwhelms the campus. Weekday games also affect class attendance the day of the game and the day after. The compromise was moving it to Friday and the conference and network also honored CU's request to move the game back from a 6 p.m. start to 7 to allow congestion on campus more time to clear.

CU has played at least one Friday game every year since 1997, including the annual day-after-Thanksgiving battle with Nebraska. But that series has ended with the Buffs' move to the Pac-12 and the Cornhuskers' moving to the Big Ten.

Aside from those games with Nebraska, CU has played at home on a weeknight only three other times. The last such game was in 2008 when the Buffs beat West Virginia. The Buffs hosted Stanford on a Thursday night in 1990 and Texas on a Monday night in 1989.

"This will be a great opportunity to showcase our entire program and the university," athletic director Mike Bohn said in a statement. "It was a great atmosphere three years ago for the West Virginia game, and I am appreciative of the cooperation from the Boulder campus to make this happen."

The game, one of only five home games in Boulder this year, will likely be dubbed a "blackout" game by students, who have designated other night games against prominent opponents as blackout games in the recent past. CU also is the home team in the annual in-state rivalry with CSU in Denver.

The Pac-12 and ESPN will announce the remainder of the early September and national television schedules next week.

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Bufs' game vs. USC moved to Friday, Nov. 4

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Sure, Colorado will already have played five conference games in its new league, including a game against the national runner-up from last season, but Friday, Nov. 4, will be the Buffs' true "Welcome to the Pac-12" moment.

Perennial national title contender Southern California comes to Boulder for a prime-time football game on ESPN2.

The 7 p.m. game was originally scheduled for the next day.

"These rare weeknight games provide a spotlight on CU-Boulder for a national audience, and create a sense of community across the campus," CU chancellor Phil DiStefano said in a release.

No team has given the Buffs bigger fits than USC. CU is 0-5 against the Trojans and has been outscored 138-24. In the last meeting, USC rolled the Buffs 40-3 in 2002.



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Monday, May 2, 2011

Learning more about ... Nate Solder

By Mike Reiss

In the first of a series on Patriots 2011 draft choices, ESPNBoston.com speaks with former Colorado offensive line coach [Denver Johnson](#) about New England first-round pick [Nate Solder](#):

• **What was the most common question you heard from NFL coaches and scouts on Nate?:** "It was kind of funny because everybody was trying to find salt with him, almost like 'this is too good to be true.' Nate is just a very humble, unassuming person. He is very generous with his time. He isn't the guy who is going to show up with a gun in his bag and be on the police blotter. So everyone was trying to dig up dirt because no one could find anything. I think they sensed we might be hiding something about him, but we weren't. He's the real deal, everything you'd want a kid to be. He's the kind of guy you hope your daughter brings home to meet you one day. He's as good as gold and a tremendously blessed athlete on top of it."

• **How would you characterize Nate as a football player?:** "I could go several different ways with that. Probably the most accurate thing to talk about is how he still has it all in front of him. Nate came out of a school in the mountains of Western Colorado, and arrived at Colorado as a tight end. He was converted to offensive tackle and I coached him the last two years. In the last half of this past season, he just really started to become an offensive lineman. I think the guy has such tremendous upside. He's injury-free, with no major surgeries, so he's pristine in that way. He's immensely talented, with tremendous God-given ability, highly intelligent with a great work ethic. In my opinion, he's just scratched the surface in what he can be. I think the people of Boston and New England fans everywhere would be really excited about what they have in Nate."



Nat Solder's college offensive line coach says the 6-foot-8 first-rounder has a "suddenness to him" that you just can't teach.

• **How would you describe what makes Nate unique as a player?:** "Other than the obvious, his tremendous physical assets -- he's long at 6-foot-8 -- the term I use is 'sudden.' He has so much suddenness to him. He can come out of his stance, get that first step on the ground, and snap up in pass protection. All of these things have a little development in front of him, but you can't teach that suddenness. He's kind of a quiet, unassuming guy. He's not one that is going to head-butt the Coke machine in the locker room. But he's highly competitive and he is a sponge, someone who wants to be a good football player. I believe he will be."

• **Is there a game that stands out from Nate's career at Colorado?:** "He was so consistent for me, so I'm not sure any one stands out more than any other. He lined up against Oklahoma, Nebraska, Texas, those type of teams, and was amazingly consistent for us. He was a great player on a struggling team. We didn't have great seasons at Colorado, but it wasn't his fault. He held up his end of the deal."

• **Is there a player from the NFL that might be a good comparison?:** "I was shocked at Colorado when he was moved to the offensive line. I thought he was someone who could have played defensive line, and been an all-Big 12 defensive end. I was thinking along the lines of Ed 'Too Tall' Jones from the old [Dallas Cowboys](#) days. But we had a tremendous need on the offensive line and I was delighted to get him."

• **How does Nate's height create a challenge for him against some smaller edge rushers?:** "The thing that Nate can do, as opposed to a lot of other guys his height, is bend. He has tremendous ankle, knee and hip flexibility. He can lower his body without bending at the waist. Sometimes smaller guys can be problematic, and that's something any lineman can learn to better deal with, but coaches will work on that aspect of it. He has the inherent ability to bend and move his feet."

• **What was your experience with Nate's family?:** "Mom and Dad are just great people. Nate is kind of an All-American kid and it's an All-American family. His dad hunts elk in the mountains and they run a bed and breakfast in the mountains. They are salt of the earth people. Good folks."