



It's been a week of firsts for CU interim head coach Brian Cabral.
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



11/12/2010 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

Brooks: Cabral Wants Warm Reception For Players

BOULDER - A tumultuous week in Colorado football has been a week of firsts for Brian Cabral.

Although this is his second time around as CU's interim head coach, this is his first week of game preparation as the guy in charge - not exactly the same as it was in 2004 when he was charged with running spring practice in Gary Barnett's absence. Cabral also is getting acquainted with the offense, its coaches and players for the first time.

This week also has found Cabral speaking before a couple of area Buff Clubs - in Greeley on Thursday, in Denver on Friday. And here's another first: On Friday night for the Buffalo Stampede on Pearl Street, he'll give up his customary role of watching the CU Band from the sideline and join the parade.

"I've never walked with the team (in the Stampede) because I enjoy watching the band so much," Cabral said. "I usually watch at the starting point, walk up the mall after they pass, come back and watch some more. I love the band's energy.

"And I love seeing my guys look into the crowd and see me . . . it always kind of shocked them."

BUFFALO EXTRAS



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Cabral's "guys" have been the Buffs linebackers - the position he's coached at CU for the past 21 seasons. But on Monday night, when he was named interim head coach, his "guys" suddenly became the entire team.

Saturday's game against Iowa State (11:30 a.m., Fox College Sports) concerns him - not so much in how the Buffs might respond to last week's debilitating loss at Kansas but in how the fans respond to Saturday's weather and a season gone awry.

Speaking to the Coaches Group, an off-shoot of the Northern Colorado Buff Club on Thursday, Cabral said he wants two things to occur Saturday for a team that desperately needs something good to come its way.

"One is a win, that more than anything for them," he said. "And two, is for our seniors to have fan support. These guys are true Buffs. They've cried more, bled more, sweated more than any other players on the team. They deserve a sendoff this week and next week (against Kansas State).

"I don't want anything out of this. I just want them to experience victory and the support of our fans . . . and I want the younger guys to see the support they can expect when we go to the Pac-12 (next season)."

Dan Mills, who heads up the Northern Colorado Buffs, said the Coaches Group is capped at 40 members, but an additional 10 to 12 guests were present, making it the season's most well-attended meeting.

"The enthusiasm was palpable," Mills said. "If anyone knows Brian's history, they know he's emotional. If he doesn't move you, you're a Nebraska fan."

At the gathering in Greeley, Cabral implored fans to show up at Folsom Field despite temperatures expected to be in the upper-30s and a CU season (3-6 overall, 0-5 Big 12) that also has been on the cold side, resulting in Sunday's dismissal of fifth-year coach Dan Hawkins.

"Is that a big request? Yeah, I understand that it is," Cabral said. "But we're not looking back, we're looking forward . . . I'm asking the people that care about CU football to come out, support the team and show they care - much like the way this coaching staff cares about these players."

Cabral said he would make the same plea Friday in Denver and again Friday night at the Buffalo Stampede, which begins at 7 p.m. at the courthouse on Pearl Street.

"I'm asking fans to show up and encourage their friends and family to be a part of this," he said. "The only thing this is about is the players."

At noon Tuesday, Athletic Director Mike Bohn said about 800 tickets for Saturday's game had been sold since Monday night. By Friday morning, that number had increased to about 1,800, with the week's total nearing 2,000. CU's ticket office number is 303-492-8337. Ticket information also is available on CUBuffs.com.

RUNNING LIKE THE WIND: Is Cyclones running back Alexander Robinson looking forward to Saturday? Let him count the ways: 366, 4, 1.

That's 366 rushing yards, four rushing touchdowns and one receiving TD - Robinson's highlight package from his three most recent games against CU.

Since he was a freshman, the 5-foot-9, 191-pound senior has trampled the Buffs. The breakdown: 2007 - 127 yards rushing, 2 TDs (31-28 ISU win); 2008 - 101 rushing yards, 2 TDs (28-24 CU win); 2009 - 138 rushing yards, 20-yard TD pass reception (17-10 ISU win).

Based on his performances from the past three weekends, he'll be in fine form again when he reaches Folsom Field. He's topped 100 yards rushing in each of the Cyclones last three games and has 13 100-yard games for his career, pushing him into the school's elite 3,000-yard career rushing club. His 3,189 yards rank him fourth behind Troy Davis (4,382), Darren Davis (3,763) and Dexter Green (3,437).

In ISU's 31-30 overtime loss last weekend against Nebraska, Robinson sliced through the Big 12 Conference's No. 2 overall defense for 101 rushing yards. Against Kansas the previous week, he ran for 117 yards and a TD against Kansas, and at Texas three weeks ago he rushed for 124 yards and a pair of TDs. ISU won both games (28-16 vs. Kansas, 28-21 vs. Texas).

From watching Robinson for the past three seasons as a defensive position coach (linebackers), Cabral knows what the Buffs defense is up against.

"He's a really good back," Cabral said. "He makes you pay if you don't get him down."

The key to slowing Robinson?

"We just have execute the defense," Cabral said. "They out-executed us last year, no question. That dude is hard to tackle. We've got to be better tackling. That's it. If we execute the defense and fit where we're supposed to fit, and we tackle, we're good. But he's strong, tough . . . maybe it's time to put a stop to that."

AA IS A-OK: Robinson isn't the Cyclones' only offensive weapon. Fifth-year senior quarterback Austen Arnaud is ISU's career leader in completion percentage (.596 percent) and second in passing yards (6,641) and passing TDs (42).

Arnaud (6-3, 224) also has run for 1,293 yards and 15 TDs in his career.

ISU coach Paul Rhoads said he and his staff have been "really happy with his play, especially of late . . . Austen struggled a little earlier in the season, especially in big games. Right now, he's overcome adversity. He threw two interceptions (against Nebraska) and then played some of the best football of his career after that in the fourth quarter and in overtime. We're very pleased with his command and performance in our program."

Despite the two picks against the Cornhuskers, he finished 21-of-32 for 213 yards and three touchdowns. He also ran 13 times for 63 yards and a score.

Cabral acknowledged Arnaud's ability but said what the Cyclones are doing offensively doesn't differ from Rhoads' first season: "It's the same offense we saw last year . . . they're just running it better."

Rhoads said Arnaud and his offense have matured on schedule: "We're heading into our eleventh game and we got some kids playing at their best level right now, and our team as well."

LET'S GO BOWLING: Think things haven't changed a bit in the Big 12? Iowa State (5-5, 3-3) is a win away from bowl eligibility for the second consecutive season, CU (3-6, 0-5) is a longshot to reach the postseason for only the second time in five years.

In Rhoads' first season in Ames, the Cyclones earned a trip to the Insight Bowl with a 6-6 record, then defeated Minnesota 14-13 to finish 7-6. He was the first ISU coach to win seven games in his first season at the school since 1907 and the first Cyclones coach since 1931 to debut as a winner.

ISU is counting on a win Saturday to avoid taking its postseason plans to the final regular-season game - Nov. 20 vs. No. 20 Missouri. The plot was almost identical last season, when the Cyclones defeated the Buffs 17-10 to gain bowl eligibility. CU dropped to 3-7 and out of postseason contention with two games to play.

Saturday's stakes are equally high, but Cabral said whatever drives ISU "doesn't help us get focused; we help us get focused. This situation (coming off an embarrassing loss, a coach's firing) is helping us get focused. Iowa State is a very talented team, no question. We've got our hands full . . .

"But right now, I like the response of this team. We'll see."

COMING ALONG SLOWLY: CU tight end DaVaughn Thornton, a redshirt freshman from Denver East, made his first career reception last weekend at Kansas. It went for a 12-yard TD.

Thornton had played in seven of the eight previous games, but had not been deeply involved in the offense. Offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau attributed that to "getting him to understand his assignments, that's basically it . . . he's got great hands, a great body (6-4, 225). We have to be very, very specific on what he does and in telling him what to do.

"We have some specific things for him. (But) you have to be careful with that because when he goes in, (opposing coaches) say, 'Oh, he's going in because that's the play he knows.' We have to make sure we camouflage it."

Kiesau believes with harder work and more experience, Thornton can become more of a contributor.

BUFF BITS: CU leads the all-time series with ISU 48-15-1, but the Cyclones have won two of the past three meetings. The Buffs are 10-4 vs. the Cyclones in Big 12 play and have won six of seven games at Folsom Field . . . Iowa State has played this season's toughest schedule, facing teams (including CU and MU) that have posted a combined 55-29 record . . . Cyclones linebackers Jake Knott and A.J. Klein, both sophomores, rank second and third in the Big 12 in tackles per game. Knott averages 10.3, Klein 9.9. Said Rhoads: "We started the season very, very young and (had) inexperience to go along with that. I talked about the improvement these guys would need to make (weekly) if they were going to develop - and they've done that. Our two true sophomore linebackers are playing well." . . . ISU placement specialist Grant Mahoney hit a career-long 57-yard field goal last week against Nebraska. It was one yard shy of the longest field in school history . . . The coaching change isn't likely to affect CU's placekicking status. "I've got to trust coach (Kent) Riddle for special teams, for kickers," Cabral said. "We've had conversations. I just want to know what his thinking is." Senior Aric Goodman hit a 38-yard attempt at Kansas, making him 6-for-10 this season.

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SHOW MENU



FOOTBALL FLASHBACK: A look back at Colorado's 1990 national title season

By Neill Woelk Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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Editor's note: *This is the 11th in a season-long series on Colorado's march to the 1990 national championship. The Camera will recap each week's game every Friday during the 2010 season.*

After an emotional two-week stretch that saw the 1990 Colorado Buffaloes record back-to-back wins over Oklahoma and Nebraska, the concern heading into the 11th week of the season was that CU might suffer a letdown.

But the fourth-ranked Buffs were in no mood for a slip-up. The possibility of playing again for the national championship -- plus the thought of locking down a second-straight Big Eight title -- kept the Buffs' eyes on the prize.

Oklahoma State never had a chance. Thanks to 237 yards and a school-record four touchdowns through the air from Darian Hagan, and 148 yards rushing from Eric Bieniemy, Colorado rolled to a 41-22 win over OSU at Folsom Field to clinch at least a share of the Big Eight title and guarantee a return trip to the Orange Bowl.

"Going to the Orange Bowl is a tremendous accomplishment for us," CU coach Bill McCartney said after the game. "We couldn't be more excited about representing the Big Eight."

Colorado scored first against OSU, getting a 9-yard touchdown pass from Hagan to George Hemingway. The Cowboys then tied the game late in the period on a long touchdown pass from Kenny Ford to Curtis Mayfield, but from that point on, it was all Colorado.

The Buffs scored a touchdown and field goal in the second quarter, then added three more touchdowns in the third period to take a 38-7 lead into the final quarter. Hagan threw scoring passes of 28 and 34 yards to Mike Pritchard and an 8-yarder to Sean Brown to go along with a 21-yard Bieniemy touchdown run as Colorado methodically put the game away.

Defensively, CU picked off a pair of passes (Paul Rose and David Gibbs), and while OSU did finish with a respectable 362 yards offense, much of that total came in the fourth quarter, when the Cowboys put two meaningless touchdowns on the board.

"We know we have to stay focused," said Buff defensive lineman Garry Howe after the game. "It's great to have the Orange Bowl and a chance at the national championship ahead of us to keep us going in the right direction."

The Buffs entered the day ranked No. 4 in the nation, with 8-1 Notre Dame at No. 1, 8-1 Washington at No. 2 and 8-0 Houston at No. 3.

The next day, Notre Dame accepted a bid to play in the Orange Bowl, giving the game a rematch of the 1989 contest.

But just as importantly that Saturday, Houston and Washington both lost. The Cougars, who had been riding the arm of quarterback David Klingler, lost to Texas, 45-24. The Huskies, whose only previous loss had been at Colorado earlier in the season, lost to UCLA, 25-22.

That dropped both teams in the polls, leaving Notre Dame at No. 1 and moving the Buffs up to No. 2.

Thus, if the Buffs could hold serve against Kansas State the following week, they would almost certainly be playing for a national title -- again -- in Miami on New Year's Day.

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Barnett: Outside expectations don't match financial support for CU Buffs

Former football coach speaks to disconnect at Colorado

By **Kyle Ringo** Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 11/11/2010 03:31:18 PM MST

Five years after Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn fired former football coach Gary Barnett, the two men appear to be on the same page in at least one regard.

Bohn and Barnett each said this week that expectations for the program from the outside don't match the reality of resources and support it receives.

Colorado is once again looking for a new head coach in football after Bohn fired Dan Hawkins, the man he picked to succeed Barnett in Boulder back in December, 2005. Hawkins went 19-39 in nearly five full seasons in Boulder but never produced a winning season.

"There's a disconnect between what it takes to compete at that level and what's being done," Barnett said during an interview on ESPN radio in Denver (1600 AM). "I think what happens is nationally, on the outside, people perceive CU and Boulder to be like it is in Oklahoma, like it is in Nebraska, like it is in places where we have defeated programs and played for national championships and played for league championships.

"And in reality, we've scratched along and found a way to be competitive on those levels without having that same sort of culture and environment that other people have. And as long as that culture and environment doesn't change and remains the same, then it's going to be a constant scratch and claw.

"Yeah, there's a disconnect between those that want and what the university is willing to do. And as long as it stays that way, there's going to be this constant set of expectations that are unrealistic for any coach that goes in there. And that's what's really hard -- on the outside the expectations are one thing, on the inside the expectations are something else."

Barnett was 49-39 in seven seasons at Colorado. His teams played in four Big 12 championship games (two of them only because other teams lost on the final Saturday of the regular season) and won one title. His teams played in five bowl games.

Barnett accomplished those results despite the fact that he had fewer resources at his disposal than Hawkins. Two years worth of ugly allegations against his program and three consecutive losses at the end of the 2005 season led to his dismissal.

The recruiting budget was increased dramatically under Hawkins, who also was allowed to hire more staffers in the football program.

The school also invested in locker room and varsity room upgrades, coaches' offices renovations, a multi-purpose practice bubble and other equipment and software upgrades under Hawkins.

Yet, the athletic department still struggles to fill its stadium (one of the smallest in the Big 12) each Saturday and had only one sellout during Hawkins' tenure.

Part of that can be chalked up to a lack of winning, but when considering that the school also ranks at or near the bottom of the Big 12 in fundraising every year, it seems Barnett and Bohn have a point.

While answering questions about his decision to fire Hawkins on Tuesday and the future of the program, Bohn challenged CU supporters -- many of whom have become critical of him -- to raise their level of the support for the program.

"For example, we don't have multiyear contracts; we've got to find a way to escalate our salary pool for assistant coaches

so that we're not 12th in the league on (offensive and defensive) coordinators, so we're not 12th on total pool of salaries for coaches," Bohn said. "We cannot continue to expect to attract top coaches and top staff members without a bigger investment."

The university has increased its level of financial support for the athletic department in recent years but it simultaneously continues to raise the cost of tuition, which causes the scholarship bill to rise in athletics.

CU officials believe the move to the Pac-12 next year will help facilitate an increase in donations to the department and the school because its teams will consistently play in front of large numbers of alumni on the West Coast.

But the novelty of that development will pass quickly and then CU will need its teams -- particularly the football program -- to win more often than it loses to drive interest, sell tickets and earn donations to a level that comes closer to expectations.

"We must inspire a higher level of interest from fans, sponsors, donors, media, you name it," Bohn said. "We've got to do that."

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Bufs begin post-Hawkins era

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) -The students at Folsom Field probably won't have bags over their heads now. The crowd won't stand in protest and turn its back on the coach who did just that when his kicker was attempting a field goal recently. And maybe there won't be as many empty seats as the school feared.

The Dan Hawkins era is over at the University of Colorado.

He was fired this week following the worst collapse in the program's 121-year history when the Buffaloes blew a four-touchdown lead and surrendered 35 points in the final 11 minutes in a historic 52-45 loss at Kansas.

What began in December 2005 as "Hawk Love" when he came over from Boise State as one of the hottest coaches in the country had turned into "Hawk Hate" by the end of his five failed seasons in Boulder, which included a 19-39 record, 17 straight losses outside the state and a current five-game skid in Colorado's Big 12 farewell tour.

The Buffaloes (3-6) host Iowa State (5-5, 3-3), which can become bowl eligible with a win, on Saturday under interim coach Brian Cabral, who has been on the coaching staff since 1989 after playing linebacker for the Buffaloes and in the NFL.

Cabral would like a shot at the full-time job, and he's among several lower profile candidates who are in the school's price range. Athletic director Mike Bohn makes no secret that Colorado lacks the cash and cachet to go after the really big names in college football.

Cabral is a defensive mind - he coached the inside linebackers - so he's been cramming on offense since taking over head coaching duties Tuesday.

"This is the first time I've ever watched the offense practice," he admitted.

And what happens Saturday in crucial situations?

"I'll confer, I'll confer," Cabral said. "I don't know all the answers, I don't. And I'm going to have to rely and depend on those coaches."

Cabral knows exactly what Colorado needs to do on defense: stop Cyclones running back Alexander Robinson, who has had three good games against the Buffs.

"The dude is hard to tackle," Cabral said.

Cabral isn't used to worrying about the other side of the ball.

"I'm learning. We had a drill and I'm mad at the defense then, Oh, I have to go congratulate the offense!" Cabral said. "I go run back to the other side of the field and become an offensive fan."

Although Cabral wants an interview with Bohn, he's not going to publicly lobby for the permanent job. Nor does he see the next three weeks as an audition necessarily, although beating Iowa State, Kansas State and Nebraska would certainly augment his resume and standing in many fans' eyes.

"No, I'm looking for these seniors to finish on a good note," Cabral said. "I'm looking for us to do what we're capable of doing. I believe we're capable of doing a lot."

Cabral said he's not going to juggle the lineup or make any drastic changes.

That sits well with his players, who are eager to put the week's drama and years of negativity behind them and just focus on football minus the distractions.

At his farewell news conference, Hawkins said he hoped the Buffs faithful would show up this Saturday and next to support his old team.

"They have had to learn too much about adversity in their young lives, so that chapter has been covered pretty well. Hopefully at some point, they will get the spoils of victory," Hawkins said. "But I think these guys are poised to go out and play well and compete and get after it the next three games, maybe four.

"I hope the Buff nation will show the kids and show the nation and future recruits and the future coach how much passion there is here and how much they are behind the program."

Senior cornerback Jalil Brown said no matter the crowd's size, he expects the Buffaloes will rally around each other.

"Everybody is counting us down and out and we feel like we still have a fighting chance," Brown said. "I would not be surprised to see our best football being played this Saturday."

There was some speculation in recent weeks that Buffs quarterback Cody Hawkins, who was elevated to starter with Tyler Hansen sidelined, would quit if his father were fired.

No way, said the younger Hawkins, noting he signed on to play for the Buffs, not just for his father.

"Coach Cabral talks about having a black and gold heart, I believe that inside my chest that I have one of those," Cody Hawkins said. "Regardless of what the situation is, regardless of what's going on outside, I'm going to prepare, I'm going to compete and be there for my guys."

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