



Ryan Miller eagerly awaits the 2012 NFL Draft.
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



Brooks: When Call Comes, Miller Will Dress To Impress

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BOULDER - The last thing Ryan Miller wants is to be all dressed up with nowhere to go. His custom tailored suit - a jet black number with white pinstripes - is on standby in his closet, waiting for him to slip his 6-foot-7, 325-pound self into it, hop on a flight to somewhere and get on with his future.

Hopefully, that will happen this weekend, when he travels to the NFL city where he hopes to take up residence for the next several football seasons or longer. The league's annual draft is Thursday (Round One), Friday (Rounds Two and Three) and Saturday (Rounds Four through Seven).

To get properly "suited up" all Miller needs is the right telephone call from the right NFL team. "The suit fits like a glove . . . it looked weird on the rack, but it looks good on my body," he said. "It was fitted for me just before the (NFL) Combine and I just got it back two weeks ago. It's amazing. My mom and I looked at it and just said, 'Wow.'"

Miller, the lone Colorado senior in a class of 28 to be invited to the NFL Combine in February, is "guessing" he'll field his call on Friday. That would make him a second- or third-round selection and run contrary to some pre-draft projections that have him slotted to be taken in a later round.

But Miller is betting that four months of intense training in California and what he terms a "fantastic job" at the

NFL Combine in February have increased his draft stock. His 32 repetitions of 225 pounds in the bench press were the NFL Combine's third-best effort and he had a low 40-yard dash time of 5.09 seconds. Overall, he believes he performed better than expected in Indianapolis in several other areas of testing.

"A lot of people thought I wouldn't do that well," he said. "But I thought I did a fantastic job . . . after my position drills a lot of the scouts came over and congratulated me. The past three or four months have paid off - and I think it's about to pay off even more."

When CU's 2011 football season ended, Miller wasted little time in assessing and preparing for his future. He temporarily relocated to Irvine, Calif., in December and began training six days a week, 8 a.m. to 3 or 4 p.m., under the direction of former NFL offensive lineman (New England, Oakland) Pat Harlow, a 1991 first-round draftee from Southern California who works in conjunction with Velocity Sports Performance and Athletes First. Mark Humenik, Miller's representative, is associated with Athletes First.

The rigorous conditioning regimen overseen by Harlow included dietary instruction and working out with current NFL players such as Jake Locker (quarterback, Tennessee) and Von Miller (linebacker, Denver). Ryan Miller said the training "got me in the best shape of my life . . . that's why I think I did so well at the Combine, which was really an experience."

But before then, he was ultra-busy. He attended the Walter Camp Foundation All-America banquet (Miller was second team) and played in the East-West Shrine Game in January, returned to California for more training, performed for scouts at the NFL Combine in February, came back to Boulder for CU's Pro Day in March and now is settled in with his family in Littleton to monitor the draft.

He also visited the Philadelphia Eagles and Miami Dolphins, but a trip to Washington, D.C., and a meeting with the Redskins hit a snag. The Redskins, however, still maintain an interest and Miller says either he or Humenik have heard from all of the NFL's 32 teams.

As for which one makes *the* call . . . neither he nor his agent can make *that* call.

Said Miller: "Some teams talk you up, whether it's at the Combine, through telephone calls, whatever. But Mark has told me that some of that is smoke and sometimes a team that you never dreamed would call turns out to be the one.

"I've had some calls from some teams and a guy has said, 'This is Joe Schmoe from wherever and I just want to get your draft day phone number.' The conversations are basically the same and I know how it goes. I've got a handful of teams I'd love to play for, but all I want is an opportunity."

Some draft websites and publications project Miller first as a guard in the NFL, then as a tackle. Or vice versa. He played both positions at CU. He's tall to be inside, which means he must constantly be aware of his leverage in blocking. But he's got a strong initial "punch," has good feet and is competent as a run/pass blocker.

Here's how the Eagles' website - Bleeding Green Nation - critiqued Miller: "There will be discussions whether or not to move Miller outside to tackle or keep him at guard, his primary college position. This debate revolved around Miller's size, much like last year's first-round pick at OT, Nate Solder (CU tackle who went to New England). Given Miller's solid athletic ability and size, a move to the outside seems imminent. Miller would need to learn the position after spending the past two years inside, but he could transition well with his talent and versatility. Look for Miller to be selected early on as a result of his size, athletic ability and versatility on the line; he could go late first round, but most likely will settle in nicely in the second round."

Humenik has told his client he could "go as high as one, as late as seven . . . I guess you cut out the ones, save the sevens," Miller said. "I really don't have a clue. When I go is not as important as where I go. I know I can make a team. Guys kind of lose focus when they concentrate on the round (they're taken in). You've just got to remember you've got a job to do."

Of course, Miller wouldn't be opposed to being drafted in Thursday's first round, but he and his family have scheduled a watch party of sorts on Friday for Rounds Two and Three. If it turns out to be a celebration in the wake of what happened the previous day, so be it. Who's going to complain about being a first-rounder?

Miller has invited Columbine High School coach Andy Lowry and his entire staff to the get-together. It's one way Miller says he can demonstrate how much he owes the coach that showed him "tough love" during a tough transformation from a high school sophomore to a junior. It was a period Miller admits he entered as "a baby," but emerged as more of a man.

"And lo and behold," Miller said, "here we are. I really hope (Lowry) can come. I owe him."

Before the weekend ends or in the days thereafter, a number of Miller's former CU teammates - among them quarterback Tyler Hansen, running back Rodney Stewart, fullback Evan Harrington, receiver Toney Clemons, tight end Ryan Deehan, guard Ethan Adkins, defensive back Travis Sandersfeld, defensive ends Josh Hartigan and David Goldberg - also are hoping for a call that at least leads to an NFL opportunity.

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SHOW MENU



Miller draft time

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Two weeks ago former Colorado offensive lineman Ryan Miller thought he had a pretty good idea of what teams might select him in this year's NFL draft, but now he isn't so sure.

What has changed?

Interest has picked up dramatically in the final few weeks leading up to the draft, which begins with the first round Thursday evening, the second and third rounds on Friday and the final four rounds Saturday.

Miller said Wednesday he has talked with 28 of the 32 NFL franchises, with the majority of that activity coming recently. Several weeks ago, he believed about 25 percent of the teams in the league had serious interest, but it has "bubbled over" lately.

"It seems like it's nonstop right now," he said of how often his phone is ringing. "It's just wham, wham, wham. All the time. It's been ringing nonstop for the last week basically."

Miller is a rarity in Colorado annals.

He logged playing time in five different seasons during his career. The NCAA restored a year of eligibility after he suffered a broken leg early in his sophomore season. The athlete who became a Parade All-American at Columbine High School in Littleton has been a stalwart of the CU program during some tough times in Boulder. Now he's ready to take the next step in his football odyssey.

"I've worked so hard for so long and now it's really starting to pay the dividends," Miller said. "... It's nice to be wanted."

Miller plans to watch the draft and wait for his name to be called surrounded by a small group of family and friends in Englewood at his grandparents' home.

His agent has told Miller he could be drafted anywhere from the second to the seventh rounds, but they believe because of the recent increase in interest that Miller will be picked earlier rather than later.

"He's pretty sure it's going to be two or three," Miller said of the round forecast his agent has given him.

Miller said he believes he was able to change some opinions about his ability in February at the NFL Scouting Combine. He was the only Buff invited there this year.

"People knew I was a big body, but they weren't sure I could move," he said. "I think I really proved a lot of that at the combine. ... I'm thankful for wherever this opportunity is. It's not one that

many people get and I'm trying to make the most of it."

Saturday figures to be the busy day when it comes to former Buffs moving on to the NFL this year.

Last year the program had Nate Solder and Jimmy Smith selected in the first round, Jalil Brown picked in the fourth round and Scotty McKnight taken in the seventh.

Coach Jon Embree said earlier this spring he wouldn't be surprised to see several former Buffs taken after Miller in the later rounds of the draft and he expects that as many as seven or eight seniors from last season's 3-10 team will end up in NFL training camps as either draft picks or undrafted free agents.

Most of the CU prospects in this year's draft plan to watch the draft with only the people closest to them, just like Miller.

Former quarterback Tyler Hansen is going to Disneyland for his girlfriend's birthday on Friday and will be paying close attention on Saturday, sitting on his parents' couch in Murrieta, Calif.

Hansen said he is expecting to be selected on the third day of the draft, but he also is prepared for the possibility that he might be a free agent when the draft ends.

Hansen said about six or seven teams have shown serious interest in him. Most or all of those teams use the West Coast offense, which would make the transition easy on Hansen.

Hansen spent his senior season in the West Coast offense put together by Embree, offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy and quarterbacks coach Rip Scherer.

All three of those men have coached in the NFL and have many relationships with coaches, general managers and scouts around the league. That should benefit Hansen, whose father, Rick, was signed by the Chicago Bears as an undrafted free agent 1984 and was among the Bears' final cuts that preseason.

Former running back Rodney Stewart will be back home in Columbus, Ohio, with his family this weekend. Stewart has been in Boulder taking classes this spring as he prepares to graduate in May with a degree in sociology.

Stewart is undersized, at 5-foot-6, 180 pounds, for an NFL running back, but Bieniemy has encouraged scouts to pay attention to what they have seen on tape from Stewart over four years and not worry as much about his size.

"I feel very confident about my athletic ability," Stewart said. "I think there are a lot of players in the NFL that I have played against. I think I'd be a good third-down back and I can bring a lot of diversity to an offensive scheme."

Stewart said when he has met with NFL scouts who have come through Boulder, none of them have asked him about his size or expressed concerns to him that he might not be able to withstand the

physical punishment in the NFL.

Tight end Ryan Deehan will be in Washington, D.C., with his father and wide receiver Toney Clemons is home in Pittsburgh where he doesn't plan to watch the draft.

Clemons said he will spend the next three days reading "Catching Fire" the second book in the Hunger Games series.

"I've always struggled watching the draft when I've had friends or family involved in it," Clemons said. "I can't imagine how it would be now that it's me. I rather just take the call if it comes. If it doesn't, it doesn't. That's just how I feel."

Clemons, who is cousins with Kansas City wide receiver Steve Breaston and Oakland Raiders quarterback Terrelle Pryor, was the Buffs second leading receiver as a senior with 43 catches for 680 yards and eight touchdowns.

The major sites specializing in draft analysis predict Clemons won't be drafted.

The National Football Post doesn't even list him among the 89 wide receiver prospects it ranks in the draft.

NFLDraftScout.com ranks him the 40th best wide receiver in the draft, but Clemons' representatives have told him they believe he will be picked.

"Any organization is a dream job for me," Clemons said when asked if he would like to end up with his hometown team, the Pittsburgh Steelers. "I'd feel the same about any other team as I would if I landed with the Steelers.

"I've heard encouraging things from organizations, which means the most to me. Obviously they have a direct source to go on as far as where I stand with their organization. So I'm still considered a pick, I'm seen as a pick and that's a great thing. I don't know when that pick is going to come or where, but being considered a pick is the most positive thing."

Other former Buffs who could end up in NFL camps this summer are guard Ethan Adkins, defensive end/linebacker Josh Hartigan, defensive tackle Conrad Obi and safety Anthony Perkins.

Taylor Embree, the eldest son of CU's coach and a former UCLA wide receiver is ranked as the 67th best wide receiver in the draft by the National Football Post. NFLDraftScout.com ranks him the 95th best player at his position.

THORBURN: CU Buffs should be back on NFL stage soon

By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

There won't be any Colorado football players shaking hands with Roger Goodell Thursday on the big stage at New York's Radio City Music Hall.

The good news for the Buffs and their fans? College football history tends to repeat itself over the decades.

Despite suffering through six consecutive losing seasons, CU is still ranked in the top 20 nationally when it comes to producing NFL Draft picks.

It all started back in 1938 when Byron White was selected by Pittsburgh in the first round (fourth overall).

"Whizzer" led the league in rushing as a rookie and was the league's highest paid player that fall, but he cut his playing career short to pursue more higher education and eventually a higher calling as a justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Boyd Dowler, a third-round pick (25th overall) by Green Bay in 1959, was one of Vince Lombardi's key players during the Packers' early dynasty.

The 1961 Buffs won the Big Eight and played in the Orange Bowl. Seven players from the team, beginning with first-round pick Jerry Hillebrand, were selected in the 1962 NFL Draft. The group still gets together at The Sink to talk about the gridiron glory days.

Eddie Crowder's 1967 CU squad also produced seven draft picks. Dick Anderson was the first of his teammates taken off the board by Miami (third round, 73rd overall) and was a part of the '72 Dolphins undefeated season.

Two years later, the Denver Broncos selected Anderson's brother, Bobby, with the 11th overall pick.

Some of the best CU steals from the 1970s included Cliff Branch (fourth round, Oakland), Cullen Bryant (second round, Los Angeles Rams), Jon Keyworth (sixth round, Washington) and Dave Logan (third round, Cleveland).

Emery Moorehead (sixth round, New York Giants) and Brian Cabral (fourth round, Atlanta) were captains on CU's 1976 Big Eight championship team and were also members of the Chicago Bears' 1985 Super Bowl champion team.

Bill McCartney pulled the program out of a dark period in the early 1980s one prize recruit at a time. One of the legendary head coach's first in-state gems, tight end Jon Embree, was a sixth-round pick of the Los Angeles Rams in 1987.

I wonder what ever happened to that guy?

Eventually, McCartney and his staff accumulated the kind of talent necessary to win a national championship.

Nine players from the 1990 team -- including Mike Pritchard (first round, Atlanta), Alfred Williams (first round, Cincinnati), Eric Bieniemy (second round, San Diego) and Kanavis McGhee (second round, New York Giants) -- had their names called during the ensuing draft.

CU's 1993 draft class included Deon Figures (first round, Cleveland), Leonard Renfro (first round, Philadelphia), Chad Brown (second round, Pittsburgh), Ronnie Bradford (fourth round, Miami) and Greg Biekert (seventh round, Los Angeles Raiders).

The most physically gifted team the program has ever fielded was the 1994 group that finished 11-1. The Buffs pulled out a miracle win at Michigan, lost to eventual national champion Nebraska, and sent McCartney out with a 41-24 thrashing of Notre Dame in the Fiesta Bowl.

Seven of the first 71 players taken in the 1995 NFL Draft -- Michael Westbrook (first round, Washington), Rashaan Salaam (first round, Chicago), Christian Fauria (second round, Seattle), Ted Johnson (second round, New England), Kordell Stewart (second round, Pittsburgh), Darius Holland (third round, Green Bay) and Chris Hudson (third round, Jacksonville) -- were CU products. A total of 10 Buffs were drafted that year.

During the 1990s, CU had 58 players drafted into the NFL, including nine first-round picks.

In 2001, the Buffs recaptured the magic and won the program's only Big 12 championship. The list of players on the memorable team that beat Nebraska 62-36 at Folsom Field and upset Texas in the conference title game in Dallas included:

Dan Graham (first round, New England), Andre Gurode (second round, Dallas), Michael Lewis (second round, Philadelphia) and Justin Bannan (fifth round, Buffalo) from the 2002 NFL Draft and Tyler Brayton (first round, Oakland), Donald Strickland (third round, Indianapolis) and Chris Brown (third round, Tennessee) from the 2003 NFL Draft.

From 2004 to 2009, CU only had 11 players drafted (eight in the fifth round or later). Place-kicker Mason Crosby is the most productive pro from the five-year period when the program began spiraling downward.

Gary Barnett, a great coach, didn't recruit well enough in the end to keep his job.

Hawk-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named didn't coach well enough to sustain his early momentum on the recruiting trail.

I'm not sure what is more of an indictment on the regrettable H-W-M-N-B-N era -- that no Buffs were taken in the 2010 NFL Draft, or that CU was 3-6 when the head coach was pink-slipped with 2011 first-round picks Nate Solder and Jimmy Smith on the team.

Entering tonight's NFL Draft, USC is the program that has produced the most all-time selections. The Trojans passed Notre Dame on the list a year ago.

Ohio State, Oklahoma and Michigan round out the top five with more of the usual subjects (Nebraska, Tennessee, Penn State, Texas, Miami, Florida, Alabama) jockeying for position in the top 15.

Other than the Men of Troy, UCLA and Washington are the only Pac-12 programs that have produced more picks over the years than CU.

History says the Buffs -- perhaps sooner than later given Embree's track record as a recruiter -- will be back on the big stage again.

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Former Valley star Clemons plays draft waiting game

by BILL BECKNER JR.

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Moments after a high school basketball game during his senior year, Toney Clemons bumped into a man who had been working the concession stand at Mars.

An athletic swingman for Valley, Clemons had accepted a scholarship two months earlier to play Division I football.

Clemons recalls the man greeting him with, "Congrats on signing with Michigan. I have been following your career. There are a lot of great players at Michigan."

Clemons remembers his reply.

"I looked the guy in the eye. I said, 'Thank you, I appreciate that. They just got another one.' "

Turns out, the man was Kevin Colbert, general manager of the Steelers, who had a son playing for Mars.

Five years later — last Wednesday — Clemons reunited with Colbert at the Steelers headquarters on the South Side during a pre-NFL Draft meeting.

"It was the most unreal feeling I ever had when he told me that story and it all came back to me," said Clemons, who left Michigan and had a prolific two-year career at Colorado. "When I first talked to him, I didn't know who he was. I mean, he was working at the concession stand."

A 6-foot-2, 210-pound wide receiver, Clemons was floored by how much the Steelers knew about him. That doesn't mean he's going to be drafted by them, but he is definitely on the team's radar.

Colbert said this week that receiver is one of the deeper positions in the draft — a potential plus and a minus for Clemons, whose stock has risen since a head-turning pro day last month.

The draft begins Thursday with the first round. Second- and third-round picks will be made Friday, and rounds 4-7 will be Saturday.

Clemons appears to be on the draft boards of at least three teams — Jacksonville, Green Bay and the Steelers — all of whom he visited in recent weeks.

"A lot of teams draft guys they never even fly in or talk to," Clemons said. "It's a chess game. Nobody wants to expose who they want to take."

NFL Draft experts have pegged Clemons a free-agent signee at worst, but he's been projected as high as a fifth-rounder by mock draft sites.

Every team except the Giants and Patriots has been in contact with Clemons, whose stock has risen substantially since an impressive pro day in Colorado. His rating has jumped 40 spots on some draft sites.

But Clemons isn't paying attention to rankings or mock drafts.

"Nobody knows anything but the people who call the shots," he said. "You can try to follow this stuff online or in the paper, but it means nothing."

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