

RINGO: Quick hits from the first 10 days of CU camp

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Posted:08/14/2011 10:43:14 PM MDT

The first 10 days of fall camp under first-year Colorado coach Jon Embree have provided intriguing coaching decisions, a handful of key injuries and plenty of freshmen making big impressions on a team that features 28 seniors.

The second full week of action kicks off this morning. Here are a few nuggets of news and random observations as we wait for the next big hit, great quote or take-your-breath-away moment from wide receiver Paul Richardson. ...

It looks like athletic director Mike Bohn and his crew are going to hit their mark of 25,000 season tickets.

Bohn set that number as the department's goal back in the spring and as of Saturday evening, the school had sold 24,512 season tickets. With nearly a month still remaining before the home opener against California, 25,000 is very reachable.

The athletic director, who just received a five-year contract extension, deserves credit for what is currently the third-biggest one-year increase in season-ticket sales in school history. It's also fair to note that several factors have aided the cause.

At the top of the list is the move to the Pac-12 Conference. Safe to say it's going to be easier to sell tickets to games at Folsom Field for at least a few years with all the new conference opponents to check out.

You can take the absolute worst lineup of teams in the Pac-12 and bring them all to Boulder in the same year and it would never come close to stinker schedules the Buffs had to try to sell to fans in the Big 12. Once every four years CU fans could look forward to home games against Texas Tech, Baylor, Iowa State and Kansas State in conference play.

Glad those days are gone, eh?

Bohn's quest for 25,000 season-tickets also is aided by the excitement surrounding the new coaching staff led by former Buff greats Jon Embree, Eric Bieniemy and Kanavis McGhee in addition to Brian Cabral and guys who grew up around the program in Greg Brown and Bobby Kennedy.

Finally, it has helped that CU lowered ticket prices in much of the stadium in the offseason as it introduced its mandatory donation program in premium seating areas for season-ticket purchases. It also helps that there are just five true home games in the season-ticket package this year compared with the usual six.

It will be interesting to see how difficult it is for CU to keep these season-ticket holders next year when the overall price of a season-ticket increases because of one additional game. ...

It's interesting that most folks look at starting quarterback Tyler Hansen and think he faces little pressure heading into his senior season. It could be just the opposite if you think about it.

Sure, Hansen no longer has former Buff Cody Hawkins to worry about week in and week out. He has acknowledged numerous times in the offseason that he was constantly looking over his shoulder during the past three seasons waiting for the head coach to pull him if he made a mistake and insert his son.

But with Hawkins gone and after being named the starter at the end of spring ball, there is a case to be made that Hansen will be under the gun this fall to prove he is capable of producing points and taking care of the ball better than he has in the past. ...

Haven't seen a single tear shed so far in camp for the good ole days of injured players being made to haul sand in wheelbarrows because they believed they were too dinged up to practice.

One of my lasting memories of the past five years of covering the team will be watching players push those wheelbarrows the length of the practice field, back and forth like prisoners. I remember seeing former Buff defensive lineman Drew

Hudgins pushing a wheelbarrow with his foot still in a boot after he suffered a torn Achilles tendon.

The whole point of the exercise was that it was supposed to make the team tougher because guys would learn to play with bumps and bruises instead of missing practices. I'm no psychologist, but I do believe it's odd that such tactics were necessary then, but now, when practices are 10 times more physical, very few players are opting to miss out on the action because they might be dinged up. ...

Can't help but feel bad for senior offensive lineman Shawn Daniels, who was in the mix for the starting job at center until he suffered a torn calf muscle earlier this week.

Daniels just hasn't been able to stay healthy during his five years in Boulder, but he deserves all the credit in the world for his effort to continue playing. He returned from a broken back several years ago only to suffer a toe injury that ended his season last fall. ...

Maybe the most amazing story so far in camp is that of punter Darragh O'Neill, the former basketball and soccer star at Fairview who had no experience in football.

O'Neill, who was born in Ireland and has managed to retain an Irish accent, decided to walk-on as a punter in the spring and he managed -- just barely -- to impress coaches enough to convince them to keep him on the roster through the summer. During an interview with Embree back in May, he told me that O'Neill wouldn't even join the team until after the season opener.

Then coaches began getting reports from players during the summer about the progress O'Neill was making and it convinced them to add him to the 105-man camp roster. Now he has a very good chance of earning the starting job, just six months after getting serious about punting. ...

The final four days of open practices are today through Thursday. Friday's scrimmage has been closed to the public because it's move-in day around campus and parking will be hard to come by.

CU fans won't be able to watch the Buffs practice again this season, unless the coaching staff decides to change its policy at some point. So seize the day and stop by the practice fields while you can. It's definitely an interesting time be a Colorado fan.

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cu briefs

CU coach Jon Embree likes what he sees from freshman CB Greg Henderson

The Denver Post

Posted: 08/15/2011 01:00:00 AM MDT

Updated: 08/15/2011 07:09:22 AM MDT

BOULDER — The envelope please. . . . Among an apparent cast of thousands, the first cornerback mentioned Saturday by Colorado coach Jon Embree after the scrimmage was a true freshman.

That's Greg Henderson, a 5-foot-11, 185-pounder from Norco High in Corona, Calif. Henderson got a lot of work with the No. 1 defense during the 148-play scrimmage.

"I like 20 a lot," Embree said, referring to Henderson's jersey number. "I like his demeanor, the fact that he's physical. I like him a lot."

Henderson said he was humbled to hear that the head coach singled him out.

"It feels real good," Henderson said. "I thought I did pretty good. I just have to be aggressive out there. That's what they like. You have to go 100 percent, even if you mess up."

Last fall, ESPN ranked Henderson the 10th-best cornerback prospect in California. Henderson recorded nine interceptions and 22 passes

broken up in high school.

"I was a little nervous at first (beginning the scrimmage)," Henderson said. "But after that first contact, you just kind of ease into it. I just need to hit my playbook hard and play aggressive out there. I just have to make plays."

Goodson opens eyes.

Freshman running back D.D. Goodson is just 5-7 and 165 pounds. But the rookie from Rosenberg, Texas, put his head down Saturday and displayed strong running between the tackles.

"Most people see me as a guy that runs perimeter," Goodson said, "so I had to show I can run inside too."

Embree took notice.

"He ran hard," the coach said.

With senior tailback Brian Lockridge (strained calf) sitting out the scrimmage, Goodson, who has long dreadlocks, showed he may be able to do more this season than help with kick returns.

Holding on tight.

Offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy watched

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Saturday's scrimmage from the tower, 40 or so feet above the practice field. Bieniemy appeared to have an

Fan Mail

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extremely tight grip on the railing.

"Did he make it down?" Embree quipped. "He's not a guy for heights."

Sorely lacking in football tradition.

Freshman walk-on John Schrock, the front-runner for the No. 3 quarterback job, said his high school, Shawnee Mission (Kan.) East, won eight games in a season for the first time in something like 50 years with Schrock taking the snaps.

"It's a 'country club school,' " he said. "It dominates in tennis, swimming, golf. I knew I wasn't going to get much of a look (from football recruiters)."

Footnote.

Today's practice is from 8:30-11 a.m. and is open to the public. The last practice session of August camp open to spectators is Thursday.

Tom Kensler, The Denver Post

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