



A disappointing 2010 season has defensive end Nick Kasa refocused on 2011.

Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



Brooks: Kasa Refocuses, Rediscovered What He's After

Release: 08/18/2011 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER - Nick Kasa's football legacy at Broomfield's Legacy High School was about as glitzy as possible - an All-American on the pages of a couple of national recruiting publications, a U.S. Army All-Star Game participant, all-this/all-that all over the Western U.S., and this state's top 2009 recruit.

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Three years ago in Colorado high school football, Kasa was "the man." Three years later, he's one of several strung along the University of Colorado's defensive front.

But he's planning on distinguishing himself once more - and the Buffaloes are counting on it.

Last spring, after a severe knee sprain sidelined him in the fourth practice, Kasa soul-searched. It was his second knee injury in two years, the first occurring in the first fall scrimmage of his freshman season. That knocked him out of the first three games; mononucleosis shelved him for the final five.

Like the old saying goes, "He's hell when he's well . . . but he's sure sick a lot."

Disappointed in himself as much as the Buffaloes' 5-7 record last season, Kasa approached CU's new director of

strength and conditioning and, recalled Malcolm Blacken, "Get me right; I don't want that (the injuries) happening again. I've got to step up and perform."

Said Kasa: "I knew he was the top dog in weight training, so he knew what I needed to do. I just told him, 'I don't want to be that same guy, what do I need to do?' He got me lifting and doing the right kinds of lifts; he's helped me so much."

Under Blacken's direction, Kasa went about getting himself right - with the first step, of course, being identifying what was wrong.

"Injuries set me back a little, but just myself set me back a little bit, too," Kasa conceded. "It wasn't just all the injuries. It was some decisions I made, too. This past off-season and this season, I'm taking things a lot more serious and trying to just get down to football."

That was the mindset the members of CU's new coaching staff had hoped to see from Kasa when they arrived last winter. Kasa's reputation - that glitzy legacy from Legacy - all but flashed in their faces when they stepped inside the Dal Ward Athletics Center.

"When we came in here, it was like, 'Whoa, he's going to be a great asset,'" recalled Kanavis McGhee, a former Buffs defensive end who now coaches Kasa at that position. "We came in looking right at him - 'Hey, we heard about you, we know about you and your potential, a guy your size with your speed.'"

"But the (knee) injury hit him in the spring. Normally, you want to come out of the spring having a good idea (about abilities) but we didn't in his case because of the injury. He was one of those question marks out of the spring and going into this camp."

And Kasa realized that's how it would be. At the end of the spring semester, coaches were assigned to have individual "exit" meetings with players. The assignments were made by class rather than position, but it turned out that McGhee was one of the staffers meeting with the juniors-to-be - Kasa's class.

"They were heart-to-heart conversations," McGhee recalled. "He said he didn't perform to his own expectations last season (and) he was looking to refocus and get himself into a position where he could be major contributor. The changing of the guard provided him the opportunity to do that."

"He's a huge guy in our whole scheme of things. We're expecting a lot of things from him. He's an older kid and everybody knows who he was (at Legacy). We let him know, 'Hey, man, it's your time. You're going into your third year and we're going to give you every opportunity to show us what you have.'"

So far, it's been a pretty good show.

"I've done OK," Kasa said. "The last couple of days I've been fighting that 24-hour flu or whatever it was. But overall I've had a pretty good camp."

At about 265 pounds, the 6-foot-6 Kasa is leaner and stronger than he's ever been. He's playing mostly outside for McGhee but moves inside for tackles coach Mike Tuiasosopo as an interior speed rusher in passing situations.

In fact, Kasa's speed pleasantly surprised Blacken, who recalled, "When we ran this summer, I had to change his running group. He'd been running with the O-line and D-line, but he was too fast. I put him with the running backs, linebackers and tight ends. And that's a guy who's nearly 270 pounds. He can really get going."

Blacken said Kasa has "re-proportioned some weight and lowered his body fat. He looks like a ball player; he passes the eye test. When I first got here, he was a tall, big guy; now he looks like he's ready for some physical activity. I see no ill effects from that (knee) injury. He's going 100 miles an hour straight ahead."

On paper, Kasa's 2010 season didn't appear that bad. He played in all 12 games (one start against Texas Tech) and contributed 12 solo tackles (18 overall), including a couple for losses and one QB sack.

"I had some good stats, but it wasn't what I wanted to do; I was really disappointed with myself last year," he said. "I know I can do a lot better than that, and that's what I'm shooting for right now - getting to the level I know I should be at. I've been working really hard on and off the field, in the weight room."

Blacken believes the payoff is approaching. "I told him I was counting on him to stay healthy and play 13 games," Blacken said. "He's taken that to heart; he's done a good job of preparing this summer."

If Kasa was "the man" in Colorado high school football in 2009, Blacken predicts, "The man is still in there . . . let's go find him and take him on the road with us to Hawaii."

BUFF BITS: The Buffs move to Folsom Field for the first time on Friday for their second camp scrimmage (noon-3 p.m.). It is closed to the public . . . Starters are expected to be named at several positions, including cornerback and punter, after Coach Jon Embree and his staff review the scrimmage and release the first depth chart of camp . . . Saturday is "Photo Day," with no practice scheduled. And with the team taking Sundays off as it will once the regular season starts, the Buffs have their first weekend off since camp began on Aug. 4. Fall semester classes begin Monday, with practices shifting to 4-6 p.m. (closed).

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SHOW MENU



Coach Jon Embree unhappy with reserves for CU Buffs

Captains named; SI picks CU to go 0-9 in Pac-12

By **Ryan Thorburn** Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:08/18/2011 07:10:46 PM MDT

Two weeks of training camp will take a toll.

Especially when an aggressive new staff is trying to change the culture, implement new systems, and restore tradition before facing one of the nation's most grueling schedules.

"We're definitely a tired team," Colorado head coach Jon Embree said after Thursday's practice, the 17th session in 15 days.

That's not an excuse, however, for players to slow down and look for the light at the end of the tunnel. Embree, who has been resting well established starters like Tyler Hansen recently, is not happy with the way some reserves are letting opportunities pass by them.

"Overall, I was just disappointed in a handful of guys that need to step up that are backups. And they didn't do it," Embree said. "Some of them think their opportunity is going to be (in games). ... They've got to understand, especially with a lot of the coaches having an NFL background, I'm evaluating every day, every rep. I don't believe in, 'Well, now it's game time, so I'm going to play better.'

"That's what they have to understand. Every time that you're out there, as we say, you're putting it on tape and you're going to be evaluated. Some of these guys don't understand that, and I'm not going to let them prove me wrong on game day. They're not going to be out there. That's just how it is. I look to the guys who do it right in practice."

The coaches will evaluate the team during the second scrimmage of camp today at Folsom Field. Most of the starting positions are set, but there are still precious seats available on the flight to Honolulu for the Sept. 3 opener against Hawaii.

Just about every team in the country, including the Warriors from the WAC, can field a solid starting lineup. Depth usually separates the contending teams and the bowl teams from the average and losing teams.

Embree said he will not hesitate to keep a more talented player on the bench in favor of a more reliable practice player.

"I'm not going to let some guy go out there and beat me and have us lose a game and sit there and say, 'He did it in practice, what made you think he wasn't going to do it in the game?'" Embree said. "That's OK. We need to know who we can count on and who we can't."

Oh captain,

my captains

Embree announced that Hansen, the senior starting quarterback, has been selected as a team captain for the 2011 season, along with senior right guard Ryan Miller, senior safety Anthony Perkins and junior linebacker Jon Major.

The coach will also select a fifth captain for every game, which will usually be a player who performed well the previous week on special teams.

"They were voted on by the players, and I think they made excellent choices for who the leaders of the team will be this year," Embree said. "There's no finer honor than having that kind of respect from your peers."

A 'harsh' assessment

The Buffs are rebuilding, and no one outside the Dal Ward Center locker room is picking them to make a run at the Rose Bowl this season. But Sports Illustrated's on-line Pac-12 preview is extremely bleak -- predicting CU to finish 2-11 overall and 0-9 in the new conference.

"That is harsh. I don't think they know what we have," Hansen said. "I think guys that have been in the program, ask any of our players, we like where we're at. Yeah, it's pretty harsh and they don't expect a lot from us, but those are all just words on paper. ... We're not going to think much of it."

Washington State, picked by SI to finish last in the North Division and 1-8 in the Pac-12, visits Folsom Field on Oct. 1 for CU's official Pac-12 opener (the Sept. 10 matchup with Cal is a previously scheduled non-conference game).

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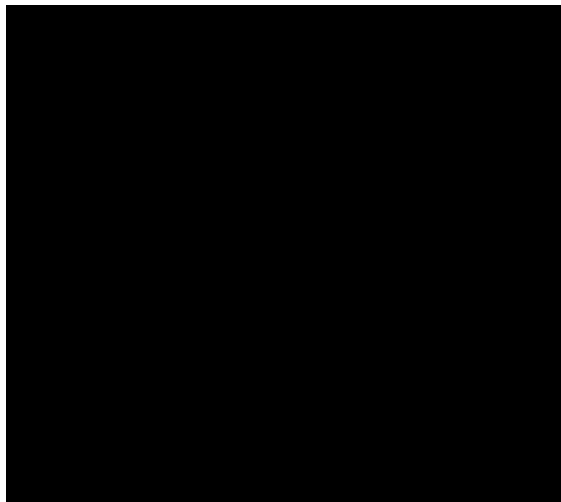
John Schrock solidifies hold on No. 3 QB job for CU Buffs

Freshman was lightly recruited out of high school

By **Ryan Thorburn** Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:08/18/2011 07:12:14 PM MDT

Jon Embree on Aug. 18, 2011



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family ties under the Flatirons.

His mom, Mary, is a Fairview High graduate. His grandfather is Boulder-based sports agent Jack Mills, who introduced him

John Schrock, now a 6-foot-4, 215-pound college freshman, was just a wide-eyed kid at Folsom Field on Nov. 23, 2001.

He vividly remembers Chris Brown bludgeoning the "Blackshirts" for six rushing touchdowns that day, but doesn't have the infamous final score memorized like so many Buffs fans.

"The one I remember the most was the CU-Nebraska game when we won like 62 to 14, or something like that," Schrock said.

The final was 62-36.

"OK," Schrock said. "We left early."

Schrock grew up in the Kansas City area but became a fan of the Buffs, instead of Kansas, Kansas State or Missouri, due to

to Dan Graham after CU's historic upset of Nebraska a decade ago that led to the program's only Big 12 title.

When Jon Embree, one of Mills' clients, was named CU's head coach, the lightly recruited Shawnee Mission (Kan.) East quarterback made a smart preseason audible.

"My grandfather didn't do anything. Absolutely nothing," Schrock said when asked how his invitation to walk on at CU came about. "I called them and introduced myself and let them know who I was and everything, sent in my highlight tape."

Embree, looking for live arms to add to the mix behind starting quarterback Tyler Hansen, invited Schrock for a visit.

"I just kind of came right out and said, 'Listen, this is where I want to be and I'd love to walk on if there's an opportunity here,'" Schrock said.

Through two weeks of fall camp, no player on the CU roster has made more of the opportunity to impress the new staff than Schrock.

"He definitely solidified himself as the No. 3 guy," Embree said after Thursday's practice, where Hansen was given a rest and Schrock was running the first-team offense. "I feel good about our quarterback position."

Embree named Hansen -- the on-again, off-again starter the three previous seasons under the vacillating Dan Hawkins -- the undisputed No. 1 quarterback after spring drills. Backup Nick Hirschman has missed most of fall camp with a foot injury.

Schrock has clearly used the extra practice time to his advantage, quickly separating himself from the two new scholarship quarterbacks -- freshman Stevie Joe Dorman and junior college transfer Brent Burnette -- on the depth chart.

"I didn't really know what the situation was going to be like. I hoped for the best, I prepared for the best, but you never really know how things are going to work out," Schrock said. "Things couldn't have worked out better with the amount of reps I've gotten. You can watch things as much as you want, but until you actually do it, it's hard to really, truly get better. Things have just worked out really well."

During today's closed scrimmage at Folsom Field, Schrock's goal is to solidify his precious spot in the pecking order -- Embree will take three quarterback to Hawaii for the season opener -- by showing improved mechanics, ball handling and making all of the right reads.

The new staff has clearly taken notice of Schrock's grasp of the playbook and presence in the pocket.

"Poise," CU offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy said when asked what impresses him about Schrock. "Obviously, it's not perfect for him yet, but the bottom line is I love his calm demeanor. Nothing ever seems to faze him, and that's what you want in any quarterback."

Schrock didn't receive any Division I scholarship offers after throwing for 1,634 yards and 14 touchdowns last fall on a high school team that didn't throw the ball a lot. When two quarterback prospects de-committed from CU, he felt like playing for the Buffs was still meant to be.

So far, it's also a dream come true for Embree.

"I think if (Schrock) would have had a different high school offense or different players around him in high school, he would have been recruited highly," Hansen said. "But it didn't work out for him, and we're happy to have him."

The Buffs need Hansen to have a huge season in order to make any noise in the Pac-12. Hirschman's experience and pre-injury performance have earned him the backup job.

But if No. 1 were to get injured and No. 2 were still not healthy, the head coach isn't going to change any game plans.

"We can run the whole offense with him. That's been the great thing with him getting all of the reps he has gotten," Embree said. "I feel very comfortable with John Schrock if we needed to play him."

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Colorado Buffaloes to utilize Nick Kasa's versatile skills on defensive line

By Natalie Meisler
The Denver Post

Posted: 08/19/2011 01:00:00 AM MDT

BOULDER — No one believed Nick Kasa would be a starting defensive end at Colorado by now more than Nick Kasa.

A four-star prospect on signing day in 2009 who was lauded by one scouting service as the fifth-best defensive end in the nation, the former Legacy High two-time all-stater still is waiting to make his impact.

Kasa hasn't dominated yet at defensive end, but this season he may make his biggest contribution to the program if he can play all along the defensive line.

"He's a big athlete," defensive tackles coach Mike Tuiasosopo said of Kasa's 6-foot-6, 270-pound frame. "Hopefully, we can get a mismatch."

The plan is to move Kasa inside on passing downs.

"It's a little tough," Kasa said of the new assignment. "I'm figuring it out. I just have to go through the playbook a lot to get all the plays instead of one position. I'll do whatever I can to

get on the field."

He was on the field last season, but with only one start. His freshman year was four midseason games (ruling out a redshirt) between injuries and illness.

"He's starting out as an end, yet in certain situations he can be an inside rusher for us," Tuiasosopo said.

The Buffs are building depth in the preseason along the defensive front. Kasa could rotate at end with Josh Hartigan and Chidera Uzo-Diribe. He could also give a break inside to Will Pericak and Conrad Obi.

CU coach Jon Embree isn't that fixated on starters.

"Whether you are the starter or the backup, you are going to get equal snaps," Embree said. "Nick is going to help us a lot. He had a good camp. I feel comfortable with what he brings. He can play inside, he can play outside."

The one place Kasa does not want to play is the offensive line. He has not regretted his celebrated decommitment from Florida, which thought about moving him to tight end.



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In the future, Embree has his own theory for bringing sanity to the madness that often overtakes college recruiting.

"As far as the star stuff, I don't pay attention to that," Embree said. "They have zero stars when they come here."

Footnotes.

The CU players have voted, and there are no surprises among the four captains this season. Senior quarterback Tyler Hansen and offensive tackle Ryan Miller will represent the offense, and senior defensive back Anthony Perkins and junior linebacker Jon Major will share defensive captain honors. Additionally, Embree will select a fifth captain each week, typically based on the prior week's special- teams performances. . . . Embree said senior wide receiver Kyle Cefalo has been placed on scholarship. . . . The Buffs' scrimmage today at Folsom Field is closed to the public.

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AUGUST 18, 2011, 3:14 PM

Buffs select four captains

By **NATALIE MEISLER** |  No Comments

Colorado football players have voted and there are no surprises among the four captains this season.

Senior quarterback Tyler Hansen and offensive Ryan Miller will represent the offense and senior defensive back Anthony Perkins and junior linebacker Jon Major will share defensive captain honors.

Additionally, CU coach Jon Embree will select a fifth captain each week, typically based on the prior week's special team performances.

Hansen is CU's first fourth-year senior QB named caption since Mark Hatcher in 1987.

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<http://blogs.denverpost.com/colleges/2011/08/18/buffs-select-four-captains/19808/>

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The Field House — Blogs — The Denver Post

AUGUST 18, 2011, 2:51 PM

Cefalo awarded scholarship at CU

By **NATALIE MEISLER** |  No Comments

Joe Amon, The Denver Post

CU wideout Kyle Cefalo is now on scholarship.

BOULDER — Much traveled senior wide receiver Kyle Cefalo became the first Buff walk-on this fall to receive a scholarship from Colorado coach Jon Embree.

Originally a baseball pitcher at Oregon State, he moved on to junior college and came to CU as a sophomore in 2009. Last season he caught six passes for 35 yards.

“Kyle’s been great on and off the field,” Embree said after Thursday’s practice. “I’d rather give a known commodity than give a guy coming in not sure what you’ve got. He’s earned it.”

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The Field House — Blogs — The Denver Post

AUGUST 18, 2011, 2:21 PM

Embree confirms Schrock wins battle for CU's No. 3 QB

By **NATALIE MEISLER** |  No Comments



Karl Gehring, The Denver Post

John Schrock, CU's No. 3 quarterback.

BOULDER — John Schrock, an invited walk-on quarterback from Mission Hills, Kans., wrapped a new invitation Thursday as Colorado's third team quarterback. It was looking obvious last weekend and Schrock only took advantage or more work.

With senior starter Tyler Hansen resting up ahead of Friday's scrimmage, the 6-4, 215 pound newcomer took advantage of the extra work behind back-up Nick Hirschman.

"I think he definitely solidified himself as the No. 3 guy," CU coach Jon Embree said after Thursday morning's practice. "I feel good about our QB position."

Schrock wasn't fed an abbreviated version of the playbook. Embree said "He can run the whole offense. That's the great thing about the reps he's gotten (with Nick Hirshman out injured part of the time)."

Schrock has been exposed to numerous situations in practice. Embree said freshman recruit Stevie Joe Dorman would likely redshirt.

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