

CU Buffs schedule games vs. Michigan Wolverines, Grambling State

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University of Colorado football fans will have a chance to experience one of college football's most storied venues and one of its most entertaining traditions in the next four years with a pair of future football games announced Wednesday.

CU will host Grambling State at Folsom Field in 2015 along with its famous marching band, and the Buffs will travel to the Big House to play the Michigan Wolverines in Ann Arbor in 2016. CU will earn \$1.45 million for the game at Michigan and the two schools already have negotiated with ESPN to televise the game nationally.

The two games complete the Buffs' football schedules through the 2016 season.

"Those things are what makes college football great," CU athletic director Mike Bohn said. "It's about providing a wonderful opportunity for our fans to see something unique and something that maybe they would never have an opportunity to see."

Earlier this year Bohn said he was looking to take the football team on the road to the northeast and to a destination within driving distance of the Chicago area to give large numbers of Colorado alumni in those areas an opportunity to see their team in person in the future. Bohn previously finalized a two-for-one series with Massachusetts, in which the Buffs will play the Minutemen in Gillette Stadium, home of the New England Patriots in 2014, with UMass coming to Boulder in 2015 and 2019.

With CU now in the Pac-12 Conference and most of its games in every sport being contested in the western half of the nation, Bohn said it is vital to remain connected to those large bases of support to the east. For example, Bohn said there are more than 1,800 alums of the school of business alone in the Chicago area.

Bohn said with the Pac-12 and Big Ten Conferences planning to begin a scheduling partnership in football in 2017, it made sense to kickoff a year early with a return trip to Michigan, the site of the "Miracle in Michigan" in 1994, when CU won 27-26 on the final play of the game. CU quarterback Kordell Stewart heaved a Hail Mary pass to Michael Westbrook for the win.

"Because it's really a prelude to the desire for us to put together the Pac-12-Big Ten Challenge and in time we'll have an opportunity for it to return through that process," Bohn said. "They had an opening for a road game and we were looking for an away game. A guaranteed appearance on ESPN and a significant (financial) guarantee works for us on those fronts as well."

"It just fit in the overall philosophy of scheduling. We're thrilled to be able to play in one of the most storied facilities against a great team. We really want to do everything we can to begin playing in that part of the country and reach our alums in that part of the country."

Bohn, who in conjunction with CU sports information director Dave Plati, has put together the football schedules through 2016, said the Buffs have a tradition of playing tough opponents in nonconference play and CU will continue that tradition whenever possible, especially when it makes

sense for other reasons such as opportunities to play in places that are home to large numbers of alumni.

Bohn said he also is careful not to make the schedule too difficult on the Buffs, having learned lessons from past seasons. In 2012, 2013 and 2014, CU does not have a nonconference game scheduled against a team from a Bowl Championship Series Conference.

"I think we are working over the next several years to create an environment for our team to gain some confidence and some success, and we're looking forward to doing all we can do to make sure the University of Colorado football enterprise continues to grow and stay strong," Bohn said. "That brand grows and stays strong by playing major, marquee games whether it's a neutral site or some of the most storied facilities in the country on a consistent basis."

Colorado and Michigan have played four times with the Wolverines holding a 3-1 advantage. They last played in Michigan in 1997.

Grambling State will come to Boulder for a Sept. 26, 2015 game at Folsom Field. Bohn said he hopes to include the Grambling band in the Friday night Buff Stampede on Pearl Street in downtown Boulder and have both bands perform together at halftime. Grambling State has played only once before in its history in the Mountain time zone.

"Both of these games will feature the best of college football pageantry," he said.