

Buffzone mailbag, March 23

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Buffzone.com Mailbag

Have a question for our reporters about any of the CU athletic teams, ask it here in our weekly mailbag.

This week we talk playoff formats, locker room schisms, the offensive line and linebacker Jon Major gets a lot of love.

Question: An eight-team playoff. First two rounds played the first and second weekends of December. Then the championship in early January like it is now. Bowl invitations can be extended to teams once they lose in the tournament or to teams based on traditional conference tie-ins. Seems like the best of all possibilities. Why hasn't something similar been suggested? If it has, what are the negatives? Thanks. -- Beatty

Kyle's answer: Just about every college football playoff format imaginable has been suggested by someone at some point. Washington State coach Mike Leach believes there should be a shortened regular season to make room for a 64-team bracket like there is in basketball. For those teams and schools that don't make the bracket, that would mean your season ends after 10 games in early to mid-November. Yuck. I hate that idea.

I'm a big supporter of the idea that you can have an eight or even 16-team playoff while not adversely affecting the important bowls and maybe even including them. Yes, there are some bowls that are important and about 10 or 12 that simply are not. I also think you can do it without putting the athletes at risk academically. I mean, eight of those teams in a 16-team bracket wouldn't even be playing any more games than they are now.

It's only a matter of time now before we have a four or eight-team playoff and at some point there will be a controversy leaving some team out that should have been in and the field will be expanded a bit more. Eventually it will settle at either eight or 16 teams.

Question: Are Jon Major and Jack Harris still on the team? Jon Embree has given no mention of captain and three year starter Major and one of our best offensive lineman Harris all winter and spring. Are they hurt? Are they in Embree's doghouse? Since these are both homegrown Buffs, I would love to hear Embree take on their development from time to time. Also, what position are they playing this spring and what do they bring to that position. Loved the story on Kasa last week. Keep up the good work. -- Scott P.

Kyle's answer: Thanks Scott. Major and Harris are both practicing and doing well this spring. I think Jack Harris has big time potential, but I think it's premature to say he is one of the best offensive linemen on the team. He hasn't played much to this point. I promise to catch up with both of them when the Buffs resume spring ball after spring break. As for who Embree talks about and who he doesn't, the majority of the time he is simply responding to questions about individuals and isn't purposely leaving people out. I haven't heard anyone ask him about Jon Major this spring and I've been at every practice. Same with Harris. I know he thinks highly of both players based on what he has said about them in the past.

Question: My favorite defensive player on the Buffs is LB Jon Major. I hated to see Coach Embree and his staff limit his production by playing him at outside linebacker most of last year. At OLB, he is holding the edge and really only playing on half the field. Teams scheme away from him. He is at his best, and helps the defense the most, when he can use that tremendous speed to run sideline to sideline and make plays like he did his RS Sophomore year and the Arizona and Utah games last year. Does Coach Embree still plan to play Major at OLB or will we see him move inside next year? If he stays outside, what does he bring to the OLB position that prevents permanently moving him inside? Thanks. -- James

Kyle's answer: James, trust me when I tell you that Brian Cabral is deciding which linebackers play where, not coach Embree. Obviously Embree has the final say, but I seriously doubt he would overrule anything Cabral said in terms of where guys are best suited to play. They have Major where they want him. It's a demanding position and requires a very heady player with the skills to play the run, rush the passer at times and play in coverage. Major led the Buffs in tackles with 85 last year. He was second on the defense in playing time being on the field for 752 snaps.

Question: Do you see any schism between those players signed by Hawk and those who were signed by Embree,

especially since some juniors and seniors on the roster have seen limited playing time, and a large number of freshmen played last year, and Embree thinks about 75% will play this year? -- Dave

Kyle's answer: Dave, the last time I saw any schisms in this program, Hawkins was the coach and all the players were his. There were some guys who liked Hawkins and some who didn't. There were some guys who wanted Cody Hawkins to be the quarterback and some who wanted Tyler Hansen. Those days are long gone from what I've seen and heard around the program.

Question: Whether at left guard or left tackle is it safe to assume that Alex Lewis will be starting next year? Do you have any idea who has the upper hand on the RG position? -- Steve

Kyle's answer: Steve, Yes, I believe it is safe to assume Lewis will be a starter as long as he continues to thrive and develop as he has been to this point. I'm betting he ends up at guard with Bakhtiari at tackle. I would guess that Ryan Dannewitz will be your right guard in the fall with Jack Harris at right tackle. Dannewitz hasn't been practicing this spring because of a back problem. He should be ready in the fall.

Question: Is Damien Cain still on campus? -- Bill H.

Ryan's answer: Damiene Cain is not currently a student at the University of Colorado. He's dealing with some difficult personal issues. Not sure what his future will hold at this point but it's probably not going to involved playing basketball for the Buffs.

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