



CU defensive coordinator Greg Brown is readying his unit for UCLA's 'pistol' offense.
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Brooks: Buffs Prep To Cope With Neuheisel's 'Pistol'

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BOULDER - Nevada coach Chris Ault is viewed as the father of the "pistol" offense, which requires a dual-threat quarterback to make it armed and dangerous. Ault had to know he was asking his QBs to play Russian roulette, but then college football Saturdays always have been littered with physical risks.

Wanting to beef up UCLA's running game, Coach Rick Neuheisel went to the pistol a year ago and has encountered mixed results. It apparently caused a rift between Neuheisel and legendary offensive coordinator Norm Chow, who left LA for SLC and the same role at Utah. But the change also produced a moderate boost in the Bruins' ground game: their 186.7 rushing yards a game are up from 175.6 in 2010.

But here's the dicey side of Neuheisel's pistol, which has the QB lined up four yards behind center ostensibly to better read the defense and run/pass more effectively: Starter Kevin Prince missed one game after suffering a

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separated right shoulder and concussion in the opener against Houston, then was out a couple more games after separating his left shoulder on a passing play two weekends later against Texas.

A second QB, junior Richard Brehaut, suffered a fractured fibula in the Washington State game on Oct. 8 and only last week was cleared to resume practice. He didn't play last weekend at Utah, however, leaving Prince to run the offense in the Bruins' puzzling 31-6 loss.

After Prince's second injury in mid-October, Neuheisel, the former CU coach who is in his fourth season at UCLA, told reporters there are "two competing philosophies" in utilizing the pistol: "What do you need to do to be successful, and what do you do to stay safe? First and foremost, you have to be successful."

Neuheisel called Prince "an accomplished runner. It helps everything else go. Now, how much we run him remains the question."

Mike Johnson, who replaced Chow as UCLA's offensive coordinator, also said the Bruins simply are utilizing what they can on his side of the ball: "I don't think we have the team up front to muscle people. Deception (with the pistol) is the way to go . . . (it) puts the quarterback at some risk. It's unfortunate, but that's what we're up against."

A 6-2, 223-pound junior, Prince has averaged just under nine rushing attempts (68 for 306 yards) in eight games. Brehaut (6-2, 226) had run 44 times for 169 yards (six games) before his injury. That's 112 runs by UCLA's QBs this season, and by contrast Colorado starter Tyler Hansen - unquestionably athletic enough to be a pistol QB - has 69 rushing attempts (112 yards) this season.

Neuheisel knows his quarterbacks can be protected with what plays are called, but he added, "The fact that they may get tackled can't be a hindrance to what we do and our play calling."

UCLA's top rushers are tailbacks Jonathan Franklin (69.5 yards a game) and Derrick Coleman (58.5), but game-planning for the Bruins always must take Prince into account. He ran 12 times for only 10 yards last weekend at Utah and completed 12 of 24 passes for 146 yards. He was intercepted twice, giving him six for the season, and sacked three times.

CU defensive coordinator Greg Brown, whose unit faces Prince & Co. Saturday in the Rose Bowl (5:30 p.m. MST, Versus), called preparing for the pistol "to a certain extent, like playing the schemes you face against West Virginia or Oregon. You have to be option sound in the one-back zone read, the split-zone read. And from the two-back (sets), you have the zone option and the split-zone option. Those require everybody to be in the right spot at the right time and take your man.

"If that doesn't happen, you'll look like a fool. And if you do all that, then on the outside if you gang up so much on the run, you leave yourself vulnerable to the pass."

Prince, said Brown, is "smart, big and makes good decisions. He's done a great job with that offense."

FINE HOME FINALE FOR SANDERSFELD: Defensive back Travis Sandersfeld went out with a flourish in the Buffs' Senior Day 48-29 rout of Arizona. With totals adjusted after defensive coaches reviewed game tape, Sandersfeld recorded 14 tackles (11 solo, three for losses), an interception and a sack.

The Pac-12 honored the senior from Limon on Monday, naming him the conference's defensive player of the week. It was the second time this season a CU player has been honored; sophomore receiver Paul Richardson was named offensive player of the week after the Buffs' overtime loss to Cal.

Brown said Sandersfeld "had a special game and I couldn't be happier for him. As hard as he's worked, the injuries he's overcome during his tenure here . . . he is truly one of those people who's as good off the field as he is on. A great person."

Sandersfeld played all 76 defensive snaps against the Wildcats and never lined up at cornerback - his position when the season opened. "He played inside as a safety in regular personnel and then was our nickel . . . he

didn't play any corner," Brown said. "He stayed inside and made the calls, made the tackles, made the plays. He was huge for us."

Having played safety previously in his CU career has helped Sandersfeld play where he's needed this season and aid in communications on defense. "That's coach Brown - he's always believed in me, and that helps," Sandersfeld said. "Basically, it's just knowing the defense; when I'm at corner I know what the safeties are doing . . . it all came back pretty much."

Sandersfeld learned of his Pac-12 award at mid-afternoon Monday from a teammate who texted him with the message "congrats." Said Sandersfeld: "At the time I thought, 'For what?' I didn't find out until later . . . it's a great honor and Saturday was a great win for us."

He said the UCLA trip is huge for the Buffs in their quest to end a 23-game out-of-state road losing streak that dates to 2007. "But it's also huge for UCLA; they've got a lot to play for and are going to be coming hard at us. We've got to go in with our heads on and figure out what we need to beat these guys," he said.

CU coach Jon Embree said Sandersfeld "played a great game. Obviously, capping it off with the interception (in the final minute) was good for him. I'm happy for him. He's been missed, not being around. You could tell he's getting his legs back underneath him."

BRUINS CONTROL FATE IN SOUTH: Neuheisel's team was in a somber mood leaving Salt Lake City, but things brightened later that night when Washington State upset slumping Arizona State, 37-27.

UCLA and ASU now are 4-3 in the Pac-12 Conference, with one of the Sun Devils' losses being to the Bruins. Thus, UCLA has the tie-breaking edge if it finishes tied with ASU. UCLA has two remaining games - Saturday vs. CU, Nov. 26 at archrival Southern California. ASU has home games remaining Saturday against Arizona and Nov. 25 against California.

USC is 5-2 in league play (8-2 overall) and could finish with the best record in the South. But the Trojans are ineligible to participate in the conference championship game due to NCAA probation.

At 5-5 overall, the Bruins are within one win of becoming bowl eligible for the second time in Neuheisel's tenure. His 2009 team finished 7-6 after defeating Temple 30-21 in the Eagle Bank Bowl. Neuheisel, a UCLA alumnus, is 20-25 overall, 12-20 in the Pac-12.

ONE CLASSY WILDCAT: During his one season in Tucson, Brown and his family became acquainted with Arizona quarterback Nick Foles. In fact, Grace, the youngest of Brown's two daughters (Hannah is 11, Grace is 9), was infatuated with Foles.

"She's got pictures of him on her wall at home . . . autographs, the whole deal," Brown said with a laugh.

Foles took time before Saturday's to speak with Greg and an initially reluctant Grace, then also made time afterwards to pose for a couple of pictures with the Browns.

"This was after they'd just lost and he'd thrown three interceptions," Greg said. "He's a good guy, a class act . . . you want to see somebody like Nick succeed."

And Brown believes he will. Foles passed for 352 yards against the Buffs and became the Wildcats' career passing yardage leader (9,573). "I think he's a first-round draft choice," Brown said. "He's big, smart and has a strong arm and great touch . . . plus all the intangibles."

BUFF BITS: Embree said he heard from many former Buffs players and supporters after the school's first Pac-12 win. "That was good and so great for our players," Embree said. "I was so happy for those kids." . . . Tailback Malcolm Creer, injured in the loss at Arizona State on Oct. 29, is set for knee surgery next month. And he's not moping about losing his freshman season after playing in only two games. "I'll come back from this faster and stronger . . . I've got the right mindset about this," he said. Creer had his redshirt pulled the week before his injury . . . CU offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy says UCLA's defense, which is ninth in the Pac-12 in both

points allowed (31.4 a game) and yards allowed (414.2 a game), is heavy on size/speed, but light on gadgetry. "One thing they can do, they can run," Bieniemy said. "They're not a team that's going to try and trick you. They do what they do - they line up, they may bring pressure here or there, but they keep it simple so those guys can play fast." . . . Embree's former CU coach, Bill McCartney, often said, "There aren't enough wins" - and those words have often registered with Embree during his first season. "That's exactly right," he said, "and you don't know until you go through that." . . . In addition to Sandersfeld, Embree said linebackers Jon Major and Patrick Mahnke stood out against Arizona: "It was definitely (Major's) most physical game . . . there were a few guys who played really well." Saturday will come close to being an Embree family reunion in the Rose Bowl. His oldest son, Taylor, is a senior receiver at UCLA, and Embree's two other children, his wife and mother will be in LA for the game. Asked Monday who his wife, Natalyn, would root for, Jon said, "I told her to root for her baby. It won't be the first time she's rooted against me - pool, basketball, it's all the same." . . . At 6-3, Taylor Embree is one of three large targets for UCLA's quarterbacks. The others are 6-5 Nelson Rosario and 6-8 Joseph Fauria, the nephew of former CU tight end Christian Fauria, who played for Neuheisel in Boulder. Taylor Embree has 13 receptions for 152 yards and a touchdown this season, trailing Rosario (42-758-1) and Fauria (22-307-4) . . . One of Jon Embree's high school dreams was playing in the Rose Bowl - and that briefly concerned him about signing with CU. But with the Buffs now in the Pac-12 and the Rose Bowl being a postseason reward, he's happy. He said the game is a mighty motivator for the Californians on CU's roster and the prospects from California that CU is recruiting: "Growing up (in California) you can't help but want to play in that game . . . it's a special, special game." . . . Saturday's win against Arizona earned a "brick" for its Pac-12 significance, but as of Monday afternoon the appropriate artwork hadn't been done in the hallway outside the Buffs' locker room. Embree's focus now is on the "brick" that will signify the end of CU's 23-game out-of-state losing streak, which dates to 2007. "We need to get that road brick," he said. "That'll be the one I cherish the most being a part of."

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SHOW MENU



CU Buffs coach Jon Embree targets Rose Bowl

Coach hopes his team soon plays in marquee bowl game

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 11/14/2011 10:39:11 PM MST

One of Jon Embree's long-range goals for the Colorado football team is representing the Pac-12 in the Rose Bowl.

With that in mind, Embree said Monday following the Buffs' first practice of the week that it will serve his younger players well to go on the road to UCLA this week and get a feel for the legendary stadium, its history and aura.

Not many visions get the hair to stand up on Embree's arms the way it does when he thinks about Ralphie running in the Rose Bowl with a blanket of roses on her back.

Embree is hopeful the Buffs play in the Rose Bowl -- the game not just the stadium -- before the freshmen and redshirt freshmen on this season's team graduate.

"It will be a good experience for these kids," Embree said. "A lot of them obviously have never been there, let alone played in it. It will be a lot of fun. It's a special place."

Embree coached in the Rose Bowl for three seasons as an assistant at UCLA (2003-05) before taking a job in the NFL as a tight ends coach. In some ways, those three years were a dream come true for him.

Colorado's first-year coach spent most of his childhood in the Denver area but he had relatives in Los Angeles and spent plenty of time there as well. He grew to appreciate the significance of the Rose Bowl as a child.

He said the opportunity to play four years' worth of home games in the Rose Bowl almost made him choose UCLA over CU and Ohio State when he was being recruited in the early 1980s out of Cherry Creek High School.

"That was one of the hardest decisions about me choosing Colorado, coming out of high school, was I always dreamed of playing in the Rose Bowl, playing in that game," Embree said. "Now to have the opportunity as a coach, and with the kids we have committed from California, and the kids on the team from California, you can't help but grow up wanting to be a part of that game."

Embree and everyone else associated with the 2001 Colorado team had an opportunity to play in the Rose Bowl snatched away by the Bowl Championship Series system, which was still in its infancy at the time.

The Buffs won the Big 12 title that season and crushed Nebraska at home in the regular season finale 62-36. But somehow the Cornhuskers advanced to the national title game against Miami in the Rose Bowl ahead of the Buffs.

"The double whammy of not getting picked to play in that game against Miami in 2001, the fact that it was a national title game and it was the Rose Bowl, that was a hard one to get over," Embree said.

Sandersfeld honored

Senior defensive back Travis Sandersfeld was named Pac-12 defensive player of the week for his part in beating Arizona and earning the Buffs first Pac-12 victory in program history.

Sandersfeld made 14 total tackles, including 11 solo stops. He registered three tackles for a loss and also made an interception. It was Sandersfeld's second game back after missing seven games with a broken lower leg.

"He played a great game," Embree said. "... He's been missed not being around and you could tell getting his legs back underneath him in the second game was good for him."

Embree said he thought linebackers Jon Major and Patrick Mahnke played the best games of their seasons, too. Embree said Major played as physical as he has all season.

Healing up

The Buffs will probably be as healthy for their trip to UCLA as they have been since the season started in the first week of September at Hawaii.

Embree said he expects every one of his players to be available to play, aside from those who suffered season ending injuries at some point this fall.

He said that list of healthy players includes cornerback Parker Orms, who left last week's game with a hamstring injury and safety Kyle Washington, who was recovering from a concussion.

Tricky situation

UCLA coach Rick Neuheisel has been on the hot seat all season and his job remains in jeopardy, even though the Bruins could still win the South Division and play in the inaugural Pac-12 championship game next month.

Embree was asked Monday if it is strange to be in a situation where if he beats Neuheisel, his friend could be fired.

Neuheisel and Embree coached together for two seasons in Boulder under Bill McCartney and the three years Neuheisel was the Buffs' head coach.

"Who says he's going to get fired?" Embree said. "You know what, I don't even look at it that way and I don't think that's appropriate."

Quotable

Embree, when asked who his wife would root for this week, him or Embree's son Taylor, a wide receiver for UCLA: "I told her to root for her baby. It wouldn't be the first time she rooted against me, going against him. Pool, basketball, it's all the same."

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NOVEMBER 14, 2011, 7:53 PM

Embree has special feelings for Rose Bowl

By **JOHN HENDERSON** |  No Comments

BOULDER — Colorado coach Jon Embree is more excited about coaching Saturday in the Rose Bowl than coaching against his son, Taylor, a senior receiver for UCLA. Jon got a chance to coach in the Rose Bowl as a UCLA assistant from 2003-07 and loved it. But he never coached in the Rose Bowl game.

“That was one of the hardest decisions about me choosing Colorado coming out of high school,” said the Cherry Creek High grad. “I always dreamed of playing in the Rose Bowl, playing in that game. Now to have the opportunity as a coach to have that and with the kids we have committed from California, the kids on the team from California, you can’t help grow up wanting to be a part of that game. That’s a special game. Now that it’s a viable option, it’s exciting.”

He almost got a chance as an assistant in 2001 when Colorado went 10-2 and beat Texas for the Big 12 title. However, the BCS rankings had Nebraska No. 2 that year even though Colorado whipped the Cornhuskers the week earlier, 62-36.

“The double whammy of not getting picked to play in that game against Miami in 2001, the fact that it was a national title game and it was the Rose Bowl?” Embree said. “That was a hard one to get over.”

Nebraska went on to get blown out by Miami (Fla.), 37-14. Colorado went to the Fiesta Bowl and lost to Oregon, 38-16.

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Tuesday, November 15, 2011

First look: Colorado at UCLA

By Peter Yoon

So many subplots are in action this week as UCLA prepares to face Colorado Saturday at the Rose Bowl, but really the only one that matters for the Bruins is the chance to gain bowl eligibility and keep control of their destiny in the Pac-12 South division.

So **Rick Neuheisel** going up against the school that gave him his first coaching job and receiver **Taylor Embree** playing against his father, Colorado coach **Jon Embree**, and **Josh Smith** and **Kai Maiava** facing the Buffaloes for the first time since transferring from Colorado are really side stories.



"We're in it," Neuheisel said. "And we are excited about trying to stay in it."

The Bruins (5-5, 4-3) need to defeat Colorado (2-9, 1-6) to make that happen.

At first glance, it appears that it should be no problem. The Buffaloes are a rebuilding team that hasn't won on the road since Oct. 27, 2007--a span of 22 consecutive games. They are ranked No. 101 or lower in the nation in six major statistical categories and have given up 29 points or more in 10 of their 11 games.

Still, Neuheisel said the Bruins can ill afford to look at those numbers and look past Colorado.

"We would be absolutely foolish to consider that anything other than motivation for them," Neuheisel said. "This is going to be a slugfest. This is going to be a team that plays with reckless abandon that has nothing to lose that's going to come here excited. And we've got to match fire with fire."

Colorado is coming off of its best performance of the season, a 48-29 victory over Arizona. yes, that's the same Arizona that embarrassed UCLA, 49-12, on Oct. 20.

Colorado running back **Rodney Stewart** had a season-high 181 yards rushing in that game and also scored three touchdowns. The 5-foot-6, 175-pound senior is the school's all-time leader in career yards with 4,409 and his 3,486 yards rushing are second on the school's all-time list.

Stewart is also a weapon as a receiver with 36 catches for 525 yards this season and needs 77 yards receiving to become the 27th player in NCAA history with 3,000 yards rushing and 1,000 yards receiving in his career. He also threw a touchdown pass last week.

But even with a solid back such as Stewart, Colorado ranks 104th in the nation in rushing with only

110.64 yards per game on the ground. The Buffaloes passing game, led by veteran quarterback **Tyler Hansen** and receiver Toney Clemons, has gotten on track the last three weeks as Clemons has 324 yards receiving with four touchdowns in those games.

Hansen, a three-year starter, has passed for 2,492 yards with 18 touchdowns and seven interceptions this season, though Colorado has had trouble putting points on the board. The Buffaloes average 21.27 points a game, which is No. 101 in the nation.

If there's one thing the Buffaloes struggle with more than putting points on the board, however, it's keeping points off the board. They rank No. 116 in the nation in scoring defense at 37.88 points per game and last week ended a string of five consecutive games giving up 42 points or more.

Colorado has been especially vulnerable against the pass, giving up 264.55 yards per game through the air, but they had three interceptions last week against Arizona.

The preseason pick to finish last in the Pac-12 South, Colorado appears to be headed in that direction, but Neuheisel said that doesn't mean the game will be easy.

"Colorado is going to come in here and play great," Neuheisel said. "There's going to be a bunch of kids from L.A. Like every team that comes here, they're going to be excited about playing in the Rose Bowl. The head coaches son is on our team. I used to coach there. There is going to be a lot of motivation for them to finish their season with a bang."

UCLA has some motivation as well.

"We have a lot to play for, as well," Neuheisel said. "We just have to go out and play our best game and that's the focus of the week and that's exactly what we're going to do as coaches is create a great game plan, or one as good as we can muster up and then go coach our tails off to make sure it's executed as well as possible."
