



David Bakhtiari believes he'll be second- or third-round NFL pick.

Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



Brooks: Bakhtiari Settles In For Weekend Of Waiting

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BOULDER – As the NFL Draft approaches, David Bakhtiari awaits one of the most significant weekends of his life with no illusions. The offensive lineman knows he left the University of Colorado a year early to enter an uncertain, often cold and always calculating business.

His best point of reference is one of the guys with whom he's spent the last couple of months running, lifting and nearly working himself senseless.

That would be Bakhtiari's older brother, Eric, who since finishing his playing career at the University of San Diego in 2007 has been released by an NFL team 14 times – including twice last season by the San Francisco 49ers.

Big brother can tell little brother a thing or two about the insecure nature of pro football – and he has done so. Nonetheless, David is eager for his vigil to begin on Thursday, when the draft begins. Teams with which David Bakhtiari or his representative have spoken believe he will be a second- or third-round selection, making Friday his "D-Day." Rounds four through seven will be on Saturday.

Bakhtiari and former CU tight end Nick Kasa appear to be CU's best bets to receive draft calls this weekend. Among others, defensive lineman Will Pericak, safety Ray Polk and linebackers Doug Rippey and Jon Major might

receive opportunities to play in the NFL through free agency.

Whatever route opens for Bakhtiari, "I'm really excited about it," he said Monday in a telephone interview from the Thousand Oaks, Calif., area. "It's kind of funny; I've been anticipating it for so long but it hasn't hit me because I've been taking care of business.

"I've really been kind of nonchalant waiting for it to happen. But once I get the phone call it'll all come together."

Bakhtiari elected to leave CU after his junior season rather than return and play for a third head coach in five years. Signed in 2009 by Dan Hawkins' staff, he redshirted as a freshman then started 11 of 12 games at right tackle in what would be Hawkins' final season (2010). He moved to left tackle for the 2011-12 seasons under Jon Embree and was a second-team All-Pac-12 Conference selection in each season.

Rather than return as a fifth-year senior under new coach Mike MacIntyre, Bakhtiari decided to declare his eligibility for the draft – and he has no regrets about doing so. "I was comfortable with it (his decision) the day I made it," he said. "I don't want to live with any regret; this is a once-in-a-lifetime thing and so far I've enjoyed every second of it."

He participated earlier this year in the NFL Combine, had maybe half a dozen workouts for teams in Colorado, made visits to Baltimore and Philadelphia, and spoke with "numerous teams" on the telephone. Being an underclassman, he believed he needed more of an introduction to NFL teams and their directors of player personnel than maybe some other prospects.

Embree and former CU O-line coach Steve Marshall – both ex-NFL coaches – helped him with his decision, offering evaluations that fell in line with what he was given elsewhere. "I was getting the same kind of feedback pretty much everywhere I went and I was comfortable with that," Bakhtiari said.

Most pre-draft evaluations from outlets such as NFLDraftScout.com, ESPN.com and NFL.com rate the 6-4 1/4, 299-pound (he's been as high as 306 when he visited Philly) Bakhtiari as a left tackle prospect who likely will find his way inside as his pro career progresses. Wherever he lands and whatever position he eventually plays suits him; the biggest step always is the first one.

NFL.com's Mike Mayock ranked Bakhtiari No. 82 on his list of the top 100 draft picks, grading him at 70.5 among draftable offensive linemen. That's in contrast to Alabama's Chance Warmack, whom Mayock graded as his top O-lineman at 95.9. The 2013 draft is said to be among the deepest for offensive linemen in the past two decades.

Most of Bakhtiari's pre-draft workouts in California were with linebackers – his brother's position – which increased the tempo of almost everything done by the group. Included were LB brothers Clay (Green Bay) and Casey (Philadelphia) Matthews. Bakhtiari called the pace "very, very fast . . . the training went great and I felt like if I could keep up those linebackers, I'm doing pretty well."

He plans to spend the weekend with his family and a few friends in Palm Springs, Calif., waiting on a call he hopes will help determine his future. "I think I have a good sense where I'm going to be (drafted)," he said. "But the only thing you know for certain is you don't know."

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SHOW MENU





Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



Bufs Spread Cheer and Pride at Children's Hospital

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AURORA, Colo.--University of Colorado football player Alex Wood won't forget the impact he and his teammates had on a six-year-old, who we will call, "D."

Wood, a junior defensive lineman, was one of about 20 CU student-athletes that visited Children's Hospital Colorado in Aurora Sunday afternoon.

Pulling wagons chock-full of Buff horns and stuffed animals, the athletes set out with the goal of meeting young patients and spreading some CU pride.

The group visited patients room-to-room, answering questions, offering autographed posters and handing out gear from the wagons: headbands with horns for the older kids, and tiny stuffed Buffs for those too small to fit the headbands.

While the football team was the highest in attendance, athletes from various CU sports — including several volleyball players, track and cross-country runner Shalaya Kipp, and basketball player Josh Scott — joined in on the event.

Chip the Buffalo came along, too, high-fiving and taking photos with children at every stop.

And while all the young patients the Buffs visited seemed to enjoy the company, "D" was perhaps the most eager. Not more than five seconds after a hospital attendant creaked open his door, "D" was off his bed and tottering toward the hallway for his first glimpse of Chip and friends.

"When he got out of the bed and came over, he was really excited to see us," Wood said. "He wanted to talk to us and take pictures, and he told us to come back. That was pretty cool."

For several minutes, "D," dressed in a baby pink hospital gown and ear-to-ear grin, learned how to fist-pound with Chip and modeled his new Buff horns for all to see.

The student-athletes then said goodbye to finish making their rounds to other rooms, but they promised to visit "D" again on their way out.

And they kept their word.

As the last stop of the day, the group knocked on "D"'s door for a final time. The little boy hadn't forgotten, either — while he waited for his heroes' return, he'd created a thank-you card, writing all the words himself in his best-effort kindergarten script.

"It was a real eye-opening experience," said senior defensive lineman Chidera Uzo-Diribe. "Just being around the kids, seeing how happy they were to meet Chip. It just looked like we brightened up their day, and in fact they were brightening up ours."

Junior defensive lineman Juda Parker was the first at the door of nearly every patient's room Sunday.

"I had an awesome time," Parker said. "Just the whole experience of it all. Meeting people, someone who doesn't have as much as I do or is not as fortunate as me. It's great to give back, and really it's a heartfelt moment."

For Parker, the experience was a personal one as well. When Parker's cousin was seven or eight, she was diagnosed with leukemia and underwent chemotherapy treatments on her way to recovery.

"She didn't have hair or anything, so I know that experience," Parker said. "I know how it is to give back and make a little kid's day a little brighter."

The visit is just one of several volunteer events Colorado football head coach Mike MacIntyre has arranged for his players this spring in an effort to become more involved in the community. For smaller events, he sends his athletes in nine pre-arranged "family groups" of 10-12 players led by a position coach. He has set a goal for each family group to volunteer at least once this season.

Defensive line coach Jim Jeffcoat leads one of the family groups that attended Sunday's hospital visit.

"I think the kids got into it, and they enjoyed it. It was a good experience for them," Jeffcoat said. "I wanted there to be an emphasis on [community service] this season ... I wanted them to understand that you have to give something back."

Last week, several Buffs volunteered in their family groups to cheer on runners at the Frank Shorter 5k Run/Walk.

Next Friday, the team will volunteer in its largest community-service event of the season, an on-campus bone marrow drive called "Be the Match." The event is set for 12-6 p.m. at the Balch Fieldhouse; athletes will encourage CU students to donate marrow in the hope of finding matches for patients in need of transplants. For more information on the Be the Match Program, visit <http://marrow.org/Home.aspx>.

Football: CU Buffs' Chidera Uzo-Diribe sees team maturing, improving

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Chidera Uzo-Diribe says he and his Colorado teammates will be better defensively next fall because there won't be nearly as many young Buffs on the field getting their first taste of college football.

Uzo-Diribe and numerous other members of the team said there is also a greater sense of brotherhood among the players currently in the locker room than there has been in the past and that should help the Buffs stick together when adversity comes.

Each year at this time Colorado football fans have grown accustomed to players talking a good game only to see those promises and prognostications vanish in the fall when hungry teams are on the sideline on Saturday afternoons.

But Uzo-Diribe believes his senior season at CU can be and should be the start of the Buffs' long-awaited resurgence. He is enthusiastic after spending five weeks in the film room and on the practice fields with a new coaching staff. He sees reason to believe a team largely made up of players who were here last year can be much improved.

"If we come out there and play with 10 times more effort than we played with last season, good things will happen," Uzo-Diribe said.

He is one of the most experienced defenders returning for coach Mike MacIntyre's first season at the helm of a program that has seen far too many sour Saturdays in recent years. Uzo-Diribe led the Buffs with seven sacks last fall and he was the only CU player to finish in double digits in tackles for losses with 10.

Sacking the quarterback and being more disruptive to opposing offenses behind the line of scrimmage is just one of numerous challenges the Buffs must meet in order to get better and move up in the Pac-12 Conference standings.

But an argument can be made that improved play from the defensive front, the players most likely to get sacks and make tackles for losses, will feed improvement elsewhere such as turnovers and passes being broken up in the secondary, third-down stops, fewer big plays. The list is lengthy.

There are quarterback sacks that truly make a difference. They come in big moments on third downs at crucial points in football games.

And there are quarterback sacks that look good in a box score but don't have much of an impact on wins and losses.

Colorado has produced too few of the former and too many of the latter in recent years. The Buffs finished with 21 sacks and 35 quarterback hurries in 2012. Uzo-Diribe hopes to be a leader in

helping drastically improve those numbers.

He said he plans to do everything he can between now and the time the season begins to make it his best.

"I have to take my offseason training to a whole other level," Uzo-Diribe said. "If I want to have the season that I want to have this year I have to pick up the intensity in my training and even when fall camp comes around."

CU will play at least eight teams that run some form of up-tempo spread offense next season. That approach to offense has made sacks tougher to come by than at times in the past.

"You have to be more disciplined because it has become such a fast-paced speedy game," CU defensive line coach Jim Jeffcoat said. "You will get your opportunities with the spread offenses and everything. You might not get the sacks but if you can knock a pass down or cause a negative play, that's just a positive, too. You would love to get all the sacks but you also have to look at how you're affecting your team."

Uzo-Diribe said he thrived this spring being coached by Jeffcoat and believes he has a foundation from which he can make significant improvement in the fall. He said he can ask Jeffcoat any question and because of Jeffcoat's 15 years of experience in the NFL, he always has an answer ready.

"It's good to have someone like that to pick their brain," Uzo-Diribe said. "It's good to come to the sideline and tell him about what you see out there because he knows how to react to it and how to play."

Uzo-Diribe says he is ready to step into a larger role with his teammates now that he is a senior.

"I have to lead," Uzo-Diribe said. "These past couple years I've kind of sat back and let the seniors and the older guys do their thing, but now it's my time. I have to go out there and lead, not only defense but the offensive guys. I have to make sure everyone is doing what they need to do and be accountable for each other."

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