



Kenneth Crawley (2) is making his mark as a first-year defensive back.
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



Brooks: As Camp Crawls On, Crawley Keeps The Bar High

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BOULDER - Kenneth Crawley has traded the oppressive heat and heavy air of Washington, D.C. in August for kinder, gentler doses of the same stuff in the Rocky Mountain West. It's a brave new world for the freshman Colorado cornerback, but he's braving it, thriving in it and playing up to mountain high expectations.

"I'm learning a lot; everything I've been asked to do has been very helpful," he said after Tuesday's practice. "I'm tweaking my game from the high school level and learning at a lot faster pace."

Mountain weather - toss in the altitude here - is much different from what he was accustomed to in D.C., where he excelled for H.D. Woodson High School. Boulder's thinner air has required an adjustment, as well as a practice pace he called "way, way faster" than the tempo of his high school workouts.

Crawley is fast enough - his last 40-yard dash timing was a 4.45 in high school - to keep up with practically

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anyone he lines up against. But speed alone doesn't guarantee lock-down coverage for a corner. Fitting into defensive coordinator/secondary coach Greg Brown's schemes has sent Crawley and the Buffs' other young defensive backs into the film room and into their playbooks on a more regular basis than they might have imagined.

"I think I'm improving in my coverage, getting better with every practice . . . Coach Cha'pelle (Brown, defensive graduate assistant) is always in my ear," said Crawley, who was a receiver and return specialist in addition to being corner at Woodson. He had eight pass receptions for touchdowns in high school, as well as scoring on one punt return, one kickoff return and taking a blocked punt back for a TD.

But CU saw him as a corner - a very good one - and he's solidified that scouting report thus far in camp. He and his fellow secondary signees are learning at an accelerated pace, trying to correctly assemble their X's and O's while being assimilated into CU football.

"For now, it's all technique and little things for them," coach Jon Embree said of his "Fab Five" DB signees. "We've got to get them out of some of their high school habits. When you're the best or the fastest one out there, you aren't worried about a guy running by you. We've got some guys that will go by you. We have some things (offensively) that will put you in a bad position.

"For coach (Greg) Brown, that's great because he can focus on technique and that says a lot. I tell the players that their job is to know what to do. Our job as coaches is to teach them how to do it. When we can get to the point where we're teaching you that, we're teaching you the game within the game. Then you're playing at a higher level. The fact that these guys have come in at a point where they understand what to do, coach Brown is more focused on how to do things, and that says a lot about coach Brown."

Working against a two-minute offense at this level was new to Crawley, as was working against offensive players as physical as those he sees on a daily basis. But he seems to be coping nicely.

"It's a lot more physical, but I think I'm holding up to it pretty well . . . I can deal with the big boys," he said with a grin.

Crawley's speed has been apparent to his new teammates. Rushing from the edge, he blocked a field goal attempt in Tuesday's practice and said he can envision himself getting more opportunities in that role.

"I can myself going against some bigger, slower linemen and being able to squeeze my way around them and go past them," he said.

Crawley's athleticism wasn't lost on his teammates when he arrived earlier this summer and began participating in seven-on-seven passing work. Senior safety Ray Polk called Crawley "an exceptional athlete and exceptional player . . . he's really coming along well, really learning a lot. All of those young DBs are.

"Crawley's got great feet and knows where he's supposed to be and when. He's a well-disciplined corner and that's what we're looking for."

Crawley initially committed to Tennessee but had CU as his "backup." He said he took the Western route after developing "a close relationship" with Embree and his staff and listening to their approach in getting Buffs football back on course. He was one of three H.D. Woodson players to sign with CU last February, the others being fellow DB John Walker and defensive end De'Jon Wilson.

The Buffs' No. 1 goal this season is winning at least six games and returning to a bowl game for the first time in five years. From what he's seen through nine days of camp, Crawley called the goal realistic.

"I think we can do it," he said. "We've got a strong defense . . . I think we can get after some teams. We've got a bunch of good receivers - a really good receiving corps. The freshmen I've seen have stepped up."

On Media Day last weekend, Embree said the five secondary signees in his 2012 recruiting class might be unparalleled at CU. In addition to Crawley, the Buffs got Yuri Wright, Jeffery Hall, Marques Mosley and Walker, who will redshirt this season after undergoing surgery on a torn finger ligament.

"Those other four guys, they all get it," Embree said. "If you play for coach Brown, you're going to be prepared to play on Sunday. If you're going to play on Sunday, you can't play one coverage. There are different ways you are going to play man, different ways you are going to play cover two, different zone pressures - these guys all get it. I hate using coaching clichés, but they get it."

The expected boost in coverage provided by Crawley and the other DB newcomers, said Embree, "will continue to help us improve. They allow us to blitz. They free up a lot of stuff, just from a defensive standpoint, when you know you can cover longer than two seconds. You know you won't have to sit back there with your fingers crossed and hope."

Greg Brown characterized his incoming DBs as a group with "size, speed, athleticism - and some confidence . . . Yuri and Kenneth were the more highly recruited of the group and rightfully so. They're big kids with ability. But I feel good about all of them. So far in camp, Marques has been stellar. He's going to be an extremely good player."

None of Brown's newcomers initially were scheduled to redshirt, but Walker's finger injury changed that during week one of camp. Brown said a decision on any of the others sitting out their freshman years "is still a few weeks away. But the majority looks like they won't. We don't have that luxury; for us, it's all hands on deck."

Crawley is learning to play both corners, which he said was no hardship. "It's just getting comfortable with both," he said. "In high school I played left, but I'm getting the feel for the right side now, too. I feel good about what's going on here."

Make no mistake, Embree, Brown & Co. feel good about having him here.

CONCUSSIONS END HARLOS' CAREER: On-going concussion issues have ended the CU career of safety Will Harlos. Embree spoke with Harlos and his family Tuesday morning and said the 6-3, 210-pound sophomore was considering staying at CU and running track, among other options.

Embree said even if Harlos decided against pursuing a track career at CU, he could "medically retire" and remain on scholarship and continue his education. Medical retirees can remain on scholarship without counting against a school's 85 total.

"We're waiting to see what he wants to do . . . I know the initial shock of everything he's going through," said Embree, adding that Harlos "had a pretty good collision (Monday) and was wobbly. We had to come get him, so that was it. I felt it was in the best of him not to participate in football."

Harlos suffered "at least one pretty bad" concussion last season, Embree said. Harlos also told the *Boulder Daily Camera* that he believed he had another two concussions last fall that he did not immediately report to the CU medical staff.

"When you're talking about your head . . . I take it seriously," Embree said. "He's a great kid; he's been on all four (special) teams for us. He was getting comfortable there in the back end but the way he plays, he's a violent, physical guy. It was unfortunate, but there's more at stake than trying to play for us."

Harlos, of Somerset, Texas, participated in three games last season and earned five special teams points.

"He's taking it hard and rightfully so," Embree said, noting that Harlos was among the players he knew was passionate about football. "It was important to him, it is important to him. He was upset (Tuesday) morning. Like I said, it's unfortunate, but as I explained to him, we all go out at some point, and for him, it's not like we're

saying, 'Oh hey, it's an elbow or a knee and you're not going to walk good.'

BUFF BITS: The Buffs shifted to a morning practice/afternoon walk-through on Tuesday, with the morning session including "teaching, then some situational scrimmaging" that included two-minute and four-minute work, Embree said. "Guys are separating themselves; you start seeing some guys making plays and gaining confidence. We got a lot of good work done." He said the biggest challenge through nine consecutive days of camp - five in full pads, four in "shells" - was coping with a "very physical" tone thus far. "It was good to see them come out and not flinch or blink and just get after it." With a major scrimmage set for Saturday, Embree said the next couple of days would be tempered with the scrimmage in mind Sophomore receiver Tyler McCulloch suffered a hip pointer during Monday's work and sat out Tuesday. He said he likely would be out no longer than one more day, if that The third of five two-a-days is scheduled for Wednesday, with a split squad practice in the morning and full team work in the afternoon.

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SHOW MENU



Football: Harlos' CU playing career over due to concussions

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Earlier this year Colorado coach Jon Embree said he would not allow redshirt freshman Will Harlos to continue playing football in Buff black and gold if the defender from Somerset, Texas, suffered another concussion.

Embree followed through on that promise Tuesday when he informed Harlos and his family that he and CU medical staffers consider it unsafe and unwise for Harlos to continue to play the sport after Harlos suffered another concussion on Monday.

Embree said Harlos has the option of remaining at CU on scholarship if he medically retires. Players who medically retire do not count toward the maximum of 85 scholarships allowed by the NCAA. Embree said Harlos is considering remaining at CU and running track. Embree wasn't sure how the scholarship would be handled in that case.

Harlos also can transfer if he has his heart set on continuing to play and he can find a program to transfer to.

"He's taking it hard and rightfully so," Embree said. "You know, we talk about guys who are passionate for the game and football is important to, it was important to him. It is important to him. He was upset this morning. Like I said, it's unfortunate, but as I explained to him, we all go out at some point, and for him, it's not like we're saying, 'Oh hey, it's an elbow or a knee and you're not going to walk good.'"

"...Usually when one door closes like this, another opportunity is waiting for him. What he has to understand is this isn't the end of the world."

Embree returned to CU in late 2010 after five years spent in the NFL, where concussions have changed the game. The league is being sued by nearly 3,500 plaintiffs who claim it hid information linking concussions and football related head trauma to long-term brain injuries. Several former NFL stars have taken their own lives in recent years after battling depression and sometimes debilitating physical symptoms thought to be caused by multiple blows to the head over years playing football.

It is with those outcomes in mind that Embree decided to draw a line where he would no longer allow a player with a history of concussions to play for him at CU.

"I don't take that lightly," Embree said in the spring. "We have some guys who if they get one more concussion, they're done. It's not up for debate. If they want to play, they've got to go somewhere else. I'm not having it on my shoulders."

Harlos said in the spring during an interview with the Camera that he is aware of the dangers of continuing to play football with a history of concussions. But at that time, he said his love for the sport was too great for him to consider giving it up, even though continuing to play might put him at greater risk for long-term health problems.

"I love football more than I fear for a concussion," Harlos said in the spring "It really overcomes it. I'm not really worried about it. I just want to come out here and play ball and show these people what I can do."

Harlos came to CU as part of the 2011 recruiting class, the first of Embree's tenure, after making a name for himself as in high school as a hard-hitting player who excelled at special teams.

Harlos suffered two concussions within days of each other last year in training camp, he said in an interview during spring ball this year. He told team athletic trainers about the first and he was required to sit out until he was cleared just a few days later. He suffered another concussion soon after and didn't tell anyone.

Harlos said he played in the first four games of the season without ever informing the CU medical staff that he was suffering from concussion symptoms. He finally talked to trainers after a loss at Ohio State when his symptoms were

causing extreme headaches and missed classed time. He missed the rest of the season. He did not record statistics on defense and finished with five special teams points.

In the spring, Harlos said he had learned his lesson and he planned to follow team policies and report any symptoms to trainers. The NCAA awarded him a medical redshirt season because he played in only four games. He still has four years of eligibility remaining. Perhaps it will be spent in the CU track program.

Football: CU Buffs' McCulloch uses height as advantage

By Ryan Thorburn *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

Posted:

Buffzone.com

When should the Colorado quarterback candidates throw into tight coverage?

When they see Tyler McCulloch matched up one-on-one with a smaller defensive back.

Jon Embree wants his 6-foot-5, 210-pound sophomore wide receiver to "play big" for the Buffs this season. McCulloch says he's ready to rise to the head coach's challenge.

"It's just using all of my 6-5 frame, going up and getting the 50-50 balls," McCulloch said. "(Embree) said for receivers those have to be 90-10 balls, especially for me where I can use my body to my advantage and go up and get the ball."

McCulloch was receiving rave reviews last summer from Embree, who issued the lanky freshman jersey No. 87 because he reminded him of Ed McCaffrey.

But at about the midpoint of the seemingly endless 2011 campaign, the McCulloch bandwagon ran out of gas.

"He hit the wall last year," Embree said. "It's hard to go 13 weeks in a row, but I can't imagine as a freshman having to do that and what was put on him. He's stronger, he's quicker, his footwork is better. I'm anxious to get him back because he was making some strides and doing some good things."

McCulloch was held out of Tuesday's practices with a hip pointer sustained while making a diving catch in the end zone.

The injury is considered to be minor. McCulloch said he is "extremely sore" but hopes to return to action today.

"We've just got to continue his progress. He's by no means a finished product," wide receivers coach Bobby Kennedy said. "He's a big target that runs better than most people think. He's just got to continue to catch the ball away from his body. He tends to cradle things when it's close."

"The thing that I'm emphasizing to him is to use your body and reach for things. He's got a long wing span, so he's got to go and get the ball."

McCulloch played basketball growing up. His uncle, Tommy Sheppard, works in the front office for the Washington Wizards.

Now it's time for McCulloch to summon his inner Antonio Gates or Tony Gonzalez when the CU quarterbacks throw the ball up for him to make a play on.

"I think that helps having the mindset of going to get the rebound and staying big in the paint," McCulloch said.

McCulloch played in all 13 games as a freshman but only finished the season with 10 catches for 96 yards and one touchdown. Right now he is listed as the starter at the "X" wide receiver position, but freshmen are not included on the depth chart.

"Last season was a grind. When you look at it with camp, that's about four weeks right there. Halfway through a season is the length of a high school season," McCulloch said. "The difference now is unbelievable. Everything last year was moving so fast for me. I was able to learn the plays and stuff, but it was tough balancing the schedule with school and everything."

"Now I know everything and it's just going out there and performing every day, rather than being broken down mentally and physically."

'He's not Tupou'

Embree has been bragging on his defensive line a lot this camp.

The coaching staff seems to be excited about the mix of veteran players (Will Pericak, Chidera Uzo-Diribe, Nate Bonsu) and true freshmen (Tyler Henington, Josh Tupou, Justin Solis, Samson Kafovalu) up front.

"They don't always do things right, but they are passionate about how they play," Embree said. "I'm always telling those guys that we're not tackling, to stay away from the quarterback. I'm always telling them to not grab them, to just let them go. They know one way. We have a lot of depth there. I don't recall us ever having a (recruiting) class like that."

So where does Kirk Poston fit in? The 6-2, 250-pound redshirt sophomore is listed as the starter at one defensive tackle spot next to Pericak, but his name hasn't been mentioned voluntarily by the head coach.

"Kirk is a utility guy for us, he's playing inside and outside," Embree said. "I just keep mentioning those other guys because they're making plays. He's flashed and done some stuff, but he's not Tupou. He's not him."

Poston only saw action on six plays last season and did not register a tackle. Now he's trying to crack a rotation that is deeper and more talented.

"I'm strong enough to play inside and big enough to play outside. That helps me. I'm versatile," Poston said. "I can play the run pretty good, I can play the pass pretty good, I can do everything pretty good."

Practice notes

And on the 10th day, the Buffs will rest. Or at least take a break from knocking each other on the ground.

The coaching staff wants to save some of the physical contact for Colorado State after opening training camp with five practices in pads and four more practices in shells.

"We'll temper some of the stuff we do over the next couple days," Embree said. "We'll still practice and get after it, but not as much banging so we can protect those big guys up front a little bit."

The team conducted a situational scrimmage on Tuesday morning that included 4-minute drill, 2-minute drill and red zone offense.

Heading into Saturday's scrimmage, Embree said he already has a pretty good feel for which players are ready for the spotlight on Sept. 1 at Sports Authority Field.

"The guys are separating themselves," Embree said. "You're starting to see that the same guys are making plays and gaining confidence."

Quotable

"Whoever helps us win," Poston said when asked which candidate for the starting quarterback job the defensive players are pulling for.

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AUGUST 15, 2012, 6:45 AM

CU Buffs position breakdown: Wide receiver production from young players

By **TOM KENSLER** |  No Comments

BOULDER — Colorado's wide receiver position was going to be young even before standout junior Paul Richardson tore an ACL in his left knee on April 10 during spring drills and underwent reconstructive surgery.

Richardson, evidently a quick healer, plans to be back this season. But nobody knows when.

In the meantime, sophomores Keenan Canty and Tyler McCulloch rank among the most experienced wideouts. Canty (5-foot-9 and 160 pounds) caught 14 passes in 2011 as a freshman. McCulloch (6-5, 210) caught 10 passes last fall as a true freshman.

Two young players that can help immediately are redshirt-freshman Nelson Spruce (6-2, 195) and true freshman Gerald Thomas (5-11, 175).

Of Spruce, CU coach Jon Embree said: "I've really tried to focus Nelson, as has coach Kennedy (wide receivers coach Bobby Kennedy), on a lot of little things that can help him become a very productive player for us. He very rarely drops the ball, so that's the first thing you want from your receivers. He runs good routes, and he's faster than what you'd think. Right now we're working on different ways with him to create space (from a defender), because he's a guy we can lean on."

On Thomas: "The second you put on (full pads), guys get slower and may go down. One guy that I know isn't like that is Gerald Thomas," Embree said. "He made one guy miss him twice, on the same play. It was funny. He has it. He had a nice touchdown in a situational scrimmage. When he turns up the field he explodes. He just goes."

ARTICLE PRINTED FROM THE FIELD HOUSE

<http://blogs.denverpost.com/colleges/2012/08/15/cu-position-breakdown-wide-receiver-production-young-players/24167/>

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The Seattle Times

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Huskies

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Colorado, coach Jon Embree hope to "keep moving forward"

Colorado is picked to finish last in the Pac-12 South, a prediction second-year coach Jon Embree didn't dispute. But Embree said winning two of the final three games last season is something to build on.

By Bob Condotta

Seattle Times staff reporter



Jon Embree didn't try to put up a fight. Didn't attempt to pull out the no-respect card.

Instead, when Pac-12 media voted the Colorado Buffaloes last in the South Division last month, Embree shrugged and said he had no quarrel.

"We haven't done anything," said Embree, entering his second year as Colorado's coach. "We won two games in the conference last year and we graduated a lot of guys. So I understand that."

Indeed, on paper the Buffs seem to have all the makings of a last-place team — and the conference's only team that seems a stretch to contend for a bowl game.

Colorado was 3-10 last season overall and 2-7 in Pac-12 play, where it was outscored 354-162, by far the most points allowed and the fewest points scored of anyone in the Pac-12 (Washington's much-maligned defense, by contrast, allowed 290 points in its nine conference games).

And as Embree noted, there is little proven talent returning as the Buffs welcome back just 10 position starters — four on offense

and six on defense.

Given the team's record, some might figure a lack of returners to be a good thing.

But among the starters lost were tailback Rodney Stewart (854 rushing yards in 2011) and quarterback Tyler Hansen. In fact, Colorado's 28 seniors last year were the most for the school since 1987.

Now Colorado has just eight seniors — its fewest since 1995 and, according to the school, fewer than anyone in the country other than Indiana, with seven.

Embree, though, also notes that Colorado played 15 freshmen last season and ended the year on something of a high, winning at Utah to knock the Utes out of a berth in the Pac-12 Conference title game.

"I understand (the predictions), but yeah, I am optimistic," he said. "I feel like us winning a couple of games at the end last year, two of the last three (the other was over Arizona), gives ourselves a chance to build on that momentum."

Embree also said he views what Steve Sarkisian has accomplished with Washington as a template for what the Buffs hope to get done.

Colorado, on the surface, wasn't quite the mess the 2008 Huskies were when Embree took over following the 2010 season, Dan Hawkins' last in Colorado.

But they weren't much better. Hawkins, who previously coached at Boise State, went 19-39 in Boulder before being fired and won just four of his last 21 conference games.

Embree hopes the wins at the end of last season indicate that the team's belief in itself is beginning to turn.

"I look at what has happened up at Washington, how Sark came in there and what it was like, and going into his second year they had to win the last three to get to a bowl game, and they do it," Embree said. "Once his players kind of believed that they could win, they started doing it."

"I know he was telling them, 'Hey guys, we can do this, we can do this.' But until they experience it, there is still that question in the back of their mind: 'Well, how do we do it? We haven't done it.' So we need to have some success and need to try to find a way to get to a bowl game just like UW did in Year 2 to keep building momentum."

One of the keys will be finding a quarterback. Heading into the second week of camp, Colorado still had three vying for the job — sophomore returnee Nick Hirschman, sophomore Connor Wood (a transfer from Texas) and junior Jordan Webb (a transfer from Kansas). Embree says he might use a platoon system.

Colorado could have a decent offensive line, with four returners who have previous starting experience, led by left tackle David Bakhtiari, picked by many preseason publications as a potential first-team all-conference selection.

Colorado appeared to suffer a big blow in the spring when star receiver Paul Richardson suffered an ACL injury. Richardson, though, is reportedly making a fast recovery and holding out hope he could be ready this season.

Among Colorado's defensive returnees is outside linebacker Jon Major, who also has all-conference potential.

Another rebuilding year, though, won't surprise anyone.

"Our program," Embree said, "is at a place where we just have to keep moving forward."

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