



Freshman Josh Tupou is listed as a co-starter at nosetackle.
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



Brooks: CU Depth Chart Has A Freshman Feel To It

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BOULDER - On National Letter of Intent Day in February, Colorado football coach Jon Embree predicted that possibly 75 percent of his recruiting class could play prominent roles in the 2012 season. That percentage was tantalizingly close.

CU's post-camp/game week depth chart, released by coaches on Friday, reinforces Embree as a pretty fair prophet as well as a man of his word to his returning players and incoming recruits.

The Buffs' depth chart features 65 percent (15 of 23) of the true freshmen recruits in camp. Some of the freshmen listed on offense and defense also have earned special teams duties. The breakdown of 2012 signees making the depth chart: six on offense, nine on defense, six on special teams (all returners).

Of that total, three newcomers have either nailed down a starting job or are listed as co-starters on offense or defense:

- Josh Tupou, a head-turner from Day One at nosetackle, goes into game week sharing that position with junior Nate Bonsu.

BUFFALO EXTRAS

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- Kenneth Crawley, one of three signees from H.D. Woodson High School in Washington, D.C., will open at left cornerback against Colorado State (Sept. 1, 2 p.m., Sports Authority Field at Mile High). He'll also be a primary return specialist.
- Christian Powell, one of a trio of signees from Upland (Calif.) High School, emerged from camp as a co-starter at fullback with junior Alex Wood.

Other areas of interest on the depth chart include:

- Backup quarterback . . . for now it's a job-share situation. Sophomores Connor Wood and Nick Hirschman are listed as co-Nos. 2, an indication that the duel to back up transfer Jordan Webb was tougher to call than naming a starter. (Webb was named No. 1 after a mere eight days of camp.)
- The Buffs will go into the opener with the same punter - Darragh O'Neill - and placekicker - Will Oliver - that finished the 2011 season. But both were pressed in camp, O'Neill by Zach Grossnickle, Oliver by Justin Castor.
- Kickoff returns, per the depth chart, will fall to four freshmen. Crawley, slotted as the No. 1 punt returner, and three of his classmates - Marques Mosley, Donta Abron and Gerald Thomas - are the kick returners listed. But as with other positions, that could change.
- The first tailback to spell starter Tony Jones in the CSU game could be . . . a game-day decision. Offensive coordinator/running backs coach Eric Bieniemy said this about his second back in: "I'm not sure who our No. 2 guy is . . . all of them bring something good to the table. I want to see who can handle the pressure. Tony's been there, done that."

Bieniemy's list of candidates (in depth chart order) includes D.D. Goodson, Malcolm Creer, Abron, Josh Ford and/or Terrence Crowder. But that order is fluid, said Goodson: "At the running back position we really don't worry about the depth chart. That's one thing that's not on our minds; 'EB' is coaching us all to be the starters. Every rep we can get we take advantage of it."

Added Bieniemy: "I always I tell them, 'I coach the starter to be the starter, but I coach the next guy to take his job.'"

Through the first two games last season, the Buffs' only tailback to get a carry was senior Rodney Stewart. Bieniemy isn't planning on that being the case with Jones. While conceding how many tailbacks he uses will be "situational," he added, "You'd love to have two or three that you can rotate consistently. As a defensive staff looks at it, it's hard preparing when you've got a number of different guys that are playing. Would I like to get to that? Yes. Are we there yet? Not quite."

Of the large number of tailbacks in play, Embree said all offer "different skill sets (that) give us a lot of flexibility. Those guys have had good camps; they've done good jobs of running and being physical on the runs. Sometimes you get those young guys and every time they want to run and score. A 4-yard run is a good run. Those younger guys understand that . . ."

Among the young defensive linemen, it took about *thislong* for Tupou to establish himself as a significant challenge for anyone going head-to-head with him.

In the D-line world, bigger is better, and at a solid 6-3, 325 pounds Tupou was practically game-ready when he arrived. "A freshman like that," said D-line coach Mike Tuiasosopo, "is special."

Junior center Gus Handler works daily in Tupou's neighborhood at the line of scrimmage. "He's a big boy," Handler said. "Coming from high school, I knew he kind of used his weight to his advantage to just plow over people. Once he gets things ironed out and understands the defense here, he'll be pretty good. Anyone who weighs close to 330 pounds is a real load."

Tupou is sharp, soft-spoken and appears to be taking it all in before letting anything out. "I don't like to say much," he said. "I just like to watch the upperclassmen and see what they do and follow them. I worked hard in the summer to get where I was (he lost about five pounds before camp opened) and to where everybody else is."

It took a lot of work; I just came in with one goal - to get better and do whatever I could to help the team."

If Tupou impressed O-line returnees like Handler, the reaction was similar among CU's veteran players in the D-line. Junior Chidera Uzo-Diribe, a scheduled starter at defensive end, called Tupou "a funny guy, a good low-key kind of guy. But you don't see low-key from him when we get out here (on the field).

"It's crazy . . . you see a 325-pound guy out there chasing down receivers and running backs. He's just got a good motor on him and he's going to be a good player for us. He was just like all the rest of these freshmen: He just got it. He understood about getting in his playbook, taking things seriously in the weight room. He got it from day one."

But like most freshmen, the speed of the college game - even the pace of practice - surprised Tupou. Another surprise also awaited: "I was surprised I was able to pick it up a little faster," he said. "But there's still a lot left to learn."

Even with Tupou's size, he was close to being an under-the-radar recruit early on, with Nevada and San Jose State paying the most attention until Tuiaosopo and the Buffs entered the picture and offered a scholarship. Suddenly, UCLA and Washington State began sniffing.

But almost from their first handshake, Tupou developed a solid relationship with his future D-line coach. "I knew when I first met 'Tui' he could coach me," Tupou said. "The (CU) coaching staff reminded me a lot of my high school coaching staff (at Bueno Park, Long Beach, Calif.)."

BUFF BITS: Embree said he is expecting more out of linebacker Woodson Greer III than the sophomore showed in Friday's practice. Greer, said Embree, has practiced hot and cold - with Friday being on the frigid side. "But he's going to be a guy who makes a lot of plays for us," Embree added. "I'm just, as you can tell, not happy with his performance (Friday). But he has had a good camp." . . . Several veteran players - the list included linebacker Jon Major; defensive end Chidera Uzo-Diribe; defensive backs Ray Polk, Parker Orms and Greg Henderson - were in spectator roles Friday. Not to worry, said Embree: "We just want to heal them up; they've got nagging injuries . . . we're at the stage right now where it gives the young guys an opportunity to get more reps, quality reps, with the No. 1 unit. It was a good time to do that with those guys." . . . The Buffs could enter game week with no captains named. In fact, they might end the season without identifying permanent captains. Embree said captains could be named on a weekly basis, with the team voting at season's end on who did the best weekly jobs, who were the best leaders, and making those players the permanent captains for 2012. "That's what I'm leaning toward," Embree said. But if he elects not to go in that direction, a team vote on permanent 2012 captains likely would take place next Thursday . . . Only one player is on the injured list for an extended time at present, with receiver Paul Richardson (knee) still out indefinitely; no one has been lost for the season which has been the case going back at least three of the last August camps . . . The Buffs have a "mock game" scheduled for Saturday morning that will entail instructions on leaving the tunnel for pre-game warm-ups, how those warm-ups will be conducted, etc. A brief walk-through also is scheduled, followed by team photos. Sunday is a day off, with fall semester classes starting Monday.

Contact: BG.Brooks@Colorado.EDU

SHOW MENU



Upgrades may yield success Okla. St. football reached new heights after facilities improvements

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Editor's note: Today's story is the second in a three-part series examining the potential facilities upgrades the University of Colorado is exploring for Folsom Field.

Part 1: The plan. A look at the ideas CU officials are considering for stadium renovations.

Part 2: The process. An examination of what it will take to realize the plans.

Part 3: The payoff. Breaking down the rewards CU can reap by following through with pricey upgrades.

It's a fine line the University of Colorado navigates as it considers major facilities upgrades in and around Folsom Field.

School leaders don't want to over promise and under deliver. They are reluctant to say much publicly, but at the same time they need to keep people engaged and generate excitement in order to raise the money to fund their aspirations.

They are not alone. Dozens of schools are in the same boat and plenty of others have been there before.

Some of Colorado's big ideas are illustrated in renderings that accompany the final part of our three-day series today. The concepts were given to the board of regents in June by Chancellor Phil DiStefano as examples of what the school might want to do in and around its 88-year-old football stadium if it can raise enough money in the next few years.

Oklahoma State athletic director Mike Holder first went to school in Stillwater, Okla., as a freshman in 1966 and a member of the men's golf team. He has been there ever since, including decades of lean times when very little investment occurred in the school's athletics facilities.

Holder, who coached golf at OSU for 32 years, jokes that opponents used to call the Cowboys' home Rustoleum Stadium because it was so dilapidated and ugly.

"You brought a recruit on campus and he looked at the facilities for football and that reflected OSU's commitment to football and why would somebody who is serious about playing football at a high level want to play football at Oklahoma State?" Holder said. "The majority of them went elsewhere."

Folsom Field obviously hasn't fallen to the same state of disrepair and disrespect, but CU officials say there are parts of the stadium that need structural repairs and renovation soon. Their hope is not to fix them with a Band-Aid, but address the issues with solutions that will last decades and also improve the fan experience.

Holder said that is the approach his department adopted a decade ago.

He has been a big part of an unprecedented level of giving and spending over the past 12 years at his alma mater. In the 30 years from when he graduated in 1970 until 2000, OSU spent \$10 million on athletics facilities. In the first decade of this century, the OSU athletic department spent \$10 million per fiscal quarter on athletics facilities and now has one of the best college stadiums in the nation.

"People always said, 'You can't raise significant dollars at Oklahoma State.' They based that on the fact it had never been done before," Holder said, reflecting a sentiment often espoused at CU. "Everyone thought that we didn't have an alumni base that was wealthy enough to make those kind of donations. All of it was wrong. They just never had tried. You never know what's possible until you try."

Of course, Oklahoma State has benefited greatly from the generosity of oil tycoon T. Boone Pickens, who has single-handedly donated more than \$230 million to the athletic department in the past 10 years.

Colorado doesn't have such a donor for its athletic department, or at least it hasn't found that person yet.

But Holder said CU doesn't need a T. Boone Pickens. It only needs a little momentum from a donor or group of donors to get things started. He said hundreds of others have made significant donations to his department over the past decade and many were inspired to do so after hearing about Pickens' first big gift of \$20 million.

Holder said the giving has spilled over from athletics to the academic side of the school, which also didn't have a strong history of fundraising. Now the school has raised \$900 million two years ahead of its deadline to get to \$1 billion.

On the field, the Cowboys have gone from a perennial also-ran in the Big Eight and Big 12 Conferences to defending Big 12 champions. Under coach Mike Gundy, OSU advanced to its first BCS bowl game last season and narrowly missed a BCS game in 2010. The Cowboys have been to a bowl every season since 2006.

Holder said CU and any school that makes significant investments in its infrastructure can reasonably expect similar results over time.

"They will have a better football team and game day will be a lot more fun in Boulder, like it used to be when they were contending for national championships," Holder said. "There is no reason they can't do it again.

"And if we can raise that amount of money in Stillwater, Oklahoma, at Oklahoma State University, there is no reason you can't do it at Colorado. If you want to see an example of what it will do, just look at what happened here. They're much further along as a football program than we were. They won a national championship."

University of Washington athletic director Scott Woodward is in the midst of a \$250 million renovation to Husky Stadium that took the first four years of his tenure to get started. Different versions of the project were first conceived and considered going back at least two athletic directors before him.

"What people don't realize is that as athletic directors we're not autocratic rulers," Woodward said. "We work for big public universities with a lot of different constituencies within the universities. For the folks that think you can just snap your fingers and do something, we're not Jerry Jones or Pat Bowlen. We're not those guys. In the end, we have to justify the stadium as a public good. It's imperative that we do it this way because we are a public institution."

Some parts of the renovations and construction being considered at CU have roots that go back to the mid-1990s or earlier.

Former athletic director Dick Tharp and his staff first proposed building a permanent indoor practice facility on the northeast side of the stadium as part of their Athletics 2010 plan from the 1990s. Current CU staffers and football coaches have been showing a model from that era to recruits and donors to give them an idea of what the future might hold.

The CU athletic department recently began contacting many of its donors and season-ticket holders with a survey about possible facilities upgrades. A feasibility study will be finished next month and it will tell officials what they can reasonably expect to raise in private funding.

At that point, the department can begin to plan upgrades and a time line for either doing them all at once or in a prioritized order based on available funding.

No public money or funds from the school will be used. CU spokesman Bronson Hilliard said much of the construction on campus in recent years has had to be paid for in other ways because there isn't enough money from the state to dedicate to new construction projects or even renovations.

Woodward advises CU officials to plow ahead with as much transparency as possible. He said one of the best decisions made as Washington considered its options was forming a stadium committee that included some of the project's biggest donors, as well as school administrators, faculty and students.

"You have to be patient but you also have to be vigilant about how you attack these things," Woodward said. "It's not a matter saying you start at point A and you will get to point Z at a certain time. It's different for everyone. You have to be as linear as you can and check off the boxes on your way to renovating and fixing the stadium."

Holder said it's only a matter of time before CU moves forward. He said the decision that has to be made is whether the school makes that move soon or if it waits decades to do so, repeating the mistake he believes Oklahoma State made.

"The improvements gave us a fighting chance," Holder said. "Before, we were dead in the water."

Follow Kyle on Twitter:

@KyleRingo

Football: CU Buffs freshmen will see plenty of playing time

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Jon Embree had barely learned his way around the Colorado campus before he found himself at Spartan Stadium in East Lansing, Mich., lining up against one of the great players in college football in the fall of 1983.

So, forgive the CU head coach if he's not too worried about throwing his true freshmen out on the field this season.

"They're probably going to have a better comfort level than I did going against Carl Banks," Embree said with a laugh, recalling his first game as a collegian as he went up against the No. 3 overall pick in the 1984 NFL Draft.

"I remember what it was like as a freshman playing in the first game at Michigan State. The difference is that these kids have been here all summer. They've been working out, lifting, running, learning our system, being around our players. So, they're a big part of the team."

After losing 28 seniors from last year's squad, the Buffs have 24 true freshmen on board this fall. Several times, Embree has stated that as many as 75 percent of them could see the field this season. With the season opener one week away, the Buffs released their depth chart on Friday and true freshmen are highlighted throughout.

Three true freshmen are listed as starters or co-starters, including Kenneth Crawley, who will be the starting left cornerback and top punt returner. Defensive tackle Josh Tupou is a co-starter at defensive tackle and Marques Mosley is listed as the top kickoff returner. All four players listed at kickoff return are true freshmen.

The depth chart lists 16 true freshmen at various spots. Gerald Thomas (receiver), Jeromy Irwin (left guard), Christian Powell (fullback), John Stuart (left defensive end), Jeffery Hall (left cornerback), Yuri Wright (right cornerback) and Mosley (free safety) are listed second on the depth chart.

At tailback, the Buffs list several players at the No. 2 spot behind Tony Jones. Included in that group is freshmen Donta Abron and Terrence Crowder. Offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy has raved about Abron and Crowder, saying both have plenty to learn, but "once you put the ball in their hands, they can make things happen."

Right guard Alex Kelley, defensive tackles Tyler Henington and Justin Solis, defensive end Samson Kafovalu and tight end Vincent Hobbs are also listed in spots that suggest they'll play early and often. Abron, Thomas and Crawley are listed behind Mosley at kickoff return.

So, after sending 15 true freshmen to the field last year, there's a good chance the Buffs could exceed that number this year. That can cause headaches to a lot of coaches, but CU's staff insists it is excited about what the youngsters can bring to the table.

"I'm excited because the last thing we're going to do is place them in a situation where it's detrimental to their success and our success," Bieniemy said. "We're not just going to throw them out there and say, 'Hey, go do this.' We want to make sure we're putting them in right situations and also make sure they can handle it at the same time."

There's no question the Buffs will be playing freshmen out of necessity, especially after losing 28 seniors. But, Bieniemy and defensive coordinator Greg Brown both said the freshmen have earned the right to play, too.

"There is definite holes and we know that going in, especially the secondary and defensive line," Brown said. "We brought some guys in that have earned their way, and let's see how they do."

CU has just eight seniors on the roster, its fewest total since 1995. A year ago, they had 21 first-time starters, including six true freshmen.

Combining last year's crop with this year's, the Buffs are clearly loaded with youth. The best way to get better, though, is to play.

"The more opportunities guys get to go on the field and make plays (the better) and at the same token they learn from their mistakes and get better," Brown said.

Brown pointed to Greg Henderson, who was a true freshman last year and played nearly every snap at cornerback. He had a solid year, but has come back this year to be much improved.

CU hopes the same will happen with this year's group, but at least for now, there is no hint of nervousness detected in the voices of CU's coaches.

"The way the ball bounces and anything can happen, man, I don't know if we'd feel good if we had the Pittsburgh Steelers defense," Brown said. "You never know what's going to happen during a game."

Ultimately, Brown said, there's nothing really to be nervous about. The Buffs are simply following the path they feel they need to take as a program.

"We feel we're on the right track," he said. "We're still a team in transition trying to find its identity and trying to come together as a group."

It just so happens that the group is younger than most groups in the country.

Follow Brian on Twitter: @BrianHowell33.

Football: CU Buffs still undecided on backup QB spot

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Colorado football coaches still can't decide which third-year sophomore -- Nick Hirschman or Connor Wood -- will be their backup quarterback a week from today when the Buffs open the season in Denver against Colorado State.

Coaches released the first depth chart of the season Friday afternoon and said they will decide on Jordan Webb's backup late next week after Hirschman and Wood have another week of practice under their belts.

Hirschman might have an edge simply because he has played before, logging time in five games last season as Tyler Hansen's backup. Hirschman even started one game at Arizona State but things didn't go well and Hansen came off the bench to replace him.

Wood had all the first-team snaps in spring ball in March and April because Hirschman was injured, but Wood didn't take control of the job and coaches brought in Webb, who transferred from Kansas after earning his degree.

Wood transferred to CU at this time last year when he came up short in his attempt to win the starting job at Texas as a redshirt freshman.

Good day for Goodson

After Friday's morning practice, coach Jon Embree was asked who the first man off the bench would be to give tailback Tony Jones some rest.

Embree said it was a decision coaches were still considering. By Friday afternoon they had chosen sophomore D.D. Goodson, who played tailback part of last season but also played cornerback for a time when the defense suffered severe attrition from injuries and suspensions.

Fellow sophomore Malcolm Creer is listed third on the depth chart at tailback less than a year after his 2011 season ended with a major knee injury.

Donta Abron is the top freshman running back. He is listed fourth at the position.

Alex Wood and freshman Christian Powell will split time at fullback.

Steep fall

A year ago, Jered Bell was on the verge of being named a starter at cornerback for the Buffs before he suffered a season-ending torn knee ligament in an August practice. Bell returned this year ready to compete at corner but the first depth chart of the season shows him third at free safety behind senior Ray Polk and freshman Marques Mosley.

Notable

Sophomore Darragh O'Neill will keep the starting punter job after beating out Zach Grossnickle for the second straight season. Coaches said both punters performed well in camp. ...Senior Eric Richter played defensive tackle last year but has since moved back to offensive line and is listed as the second-team right guard.