

Football: Still no plans to move CU-CSU games to campus

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

The University of Colorado is considering major facilities upgrades in and around Folsom Field in the coming years and Colorado State has proposed building a new \$250 million on-campus stadium that could be completed in the next three or four years.

If both projects move forward -- the answer to that question should be known by early 2013 -- does it mean the long-term future of the series in football is back on campus?

The Buffs and Rams will meet in Denver for the 12th time in the history of the series on Saturday at Sports Authority Field to kickoff the 2012 season (2 p.m., FX). Coach Jim McElwain is making his debut in Denver for Rams after a very successful run as offensive coordinator at Alabama.

Second-year CU coach Jon Embree is hoping to lead one of the youngest teams in the nation to the program's first bowl game since 2007. For Embree and the Buffs to pull it off, they must get off to a fast start and win games in the first half of the season, widely seen as the easier portion of their schedule.

Administrators at both schools have said in interviews during the summer they are committed to keeping the game in Denver at least until contracts with the Denver Metro Sports Commission and Stadium Management Company expire following the 2019 game. However, if steep declines in attendance in recent years in Denver continue, they might be inclined to rethink that position.

"I don't think it's a question of whether it should be in Denver," CSU athletic director Jack Graham said. "We're committed to being in Denver. At this point, it's incumbent upon us to improve the game. It starts with us putting better football teams on the field than Colorado State and Colorado have put on the field in recent years.

"There is a complete correlation between the quality of attendance at the games and the quality of the competition on the field. I think each of us -- Colorado and Colorado State -- has a responsibility to field a better football team so it's a better game."

Some of the CU and CSU games in Denver were classics and others produced classic individual performances. Perhaps the most memorable event in the entire series in Denver remains the post-game celebration by CSU fans in 1999, leading to Denver police responding with tear gas in the northeast corner of Mile High Stadium.

Attendance fell below 60,000 last year for the first time in the 11 games played in the 76,125-seat stadium. Two years ago, the programs attracted just short of 61,000 fans.

Colorado chancellor Phil DiStefano and athletic director Mike Bohn each expressed the same opinion as Graham about the competitiveness of the teams needing to improve for attendance to increase.

DiStefano, who has been at CU for four decades in different roles, said he is not aware of state officials ever putting pressure on leaders from the two schools to play the game in Denver. DiStefano said it's in the schools' best interests to play in Denver because both athletic departments make more money off the game when it is played there. It also creates an invaluable opportunity to connect with alumni in Denver who are not inclined to commute to Boulder and Fort Collins for games, he added.

"I've never heard of any pressure coming to my office from any legislator or the governor," DiStefano said. "I think the idea early on was that you take your two major universities and have them play in Denver. I think what we have to do now is figure how to increase the attendance from where it has been the past couple years. I think some of it comes back to having winning teams. Unfortunately, both of us have not had winning teams the last few years. I believe as we get better on the field, we'll see more people in the stadium."

But while administrators support playing the game in Denver, fans don't appear to agree and seem to be voting with

their wallets by not buying tickets in recent years. There hasn't been a crowd of more than 70,000 at the Rocky Mountain Showdown since 2003 when a sellout crowd saw the game.

Colorado season-ticket holders have always complained about their seating options in Denver. Each season-ticket holder is first seated in the top level of the stadium and given the option to upgrade to seats in other areas which are more expensive than the seats they pay for in Folsom Field the rest of the year.

Despite those complaints, CU continues to sell the majority of its allotment of tickets each season. CSU has fallen well short the past two years.

The schools provided ticket sales numbers for the game over the past 10 years to the Camera. CSU hasn't reached 30,000 in ticket sales in any of the past four games played in Denver, and sales for the Rams fell sharply in 2010 when they reported selling approximately 22,400 tickets and 2011 when they dropped to just 17,000. Colorado sold 33,722 in 2010 and 36,897 last year.

Colorado's ticket sales always figure to be higher for the game because the Buffs receive 55 percent of the tickets and the Rams receive 45. Both schools receive a significant boost in revenue when the game is held in Denver based on high ticket prices and more available seats. Colorado has generally averaged about \$500,000 more in revenue than a typical home game at 53,613-seat Folsom Field.

"We honor our contracts and we have great respect for them as an institution," Bohn said when asked if there has been any consideration to moving the game back to campus. "Our collective institutional leaders worked hard to gain the respect and support of leaders throughout the state and we are working hard to build equity in the game in Denver and we recognize we have a way to go."

While Graham insists the biggest problem with falling attendance is the fact that neither team has been ranked in the top-25 or gone to a bowl game recently, he also said the schools could take other steps to help such as later kickoff times.

"The kick times have not supported the spirit of the game and I think it dates back to the episode when the tear gas incident took place," Graham said. "I think it's time for us to put that behind us and recognize that Colorado State fans and University of Colorado fans and students can get beyond that and know how to behave well and be good sportsmen at the games and start thinking about kickoff times that are 4, 5, 6 o'clock in the evening. That will help the quality of the game as well."

There is a clause in the contract with the Denver Metro Sports Commission that would allow the schools out of the contract after the 2014 game is the DMSC does not average \$250,000 in net revenues for the sponsorships for the game from 2011-2014. The DMSC can opt out at the same time if the schools are not averaging at least 80 percent capacity.

Graham said when it comes time to talk about playing the game on campus again, he will insist the Buffs make more frequent visits to Fort Collins than they have in the past. CU is scheduled to play at Hughes Stadium in 2020 for a \$1 million guarantee.

"We're not the least bit interested in the kind of conversations that have existed historically where there would be two games in Boulder and one game in Fort Collins," Graham said. "We're not interested in that in any way, shape or form."

"So if there can be parity and equality in the conversation in the future when we've resolved any contractual partnerships we've got by playing in Denver, that's a possibility that we could explore."

Football: #CUBuffs use Twitter as way to connect with fans

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Colorado coach Jon Embree tweeted a riddle to his 3,464 followers earlier this month. Some caught on quickly that it was the coach's way of announcing who his starting quarterback would be for the 2012 season.

If you're not on Twitter, you're missing out on a whole other level of the modern college sports experience. It's the game between the games and the seasons as told by the players and coaches directly to their fans and followers.

Twitter and, to a lesser extent, other forms of social media, have allowed players and coaches to cut out the traditional middlemen such as sports writers and sports information staffers who work for the schools to communicate directly with the guy in section 210, row 8, seat 12.

Colorado fans might want to get used to the idea of Embree revealing tidbits of information or major announcements through his Twitter account. He said he plans to do more of it, even though the Pony Express used to deliver more frequently than Embree tweets right now.

"It's the way things are going and I'm not going to be like mom and dad telling us we couldn't watch color TV when we were little," Embree said. "Now look where it's at. ... I think that's our responsibility to teach them how to use it responsibly and appropriately. Part of that is I'm trying to learn how to use it, too. I try to put stuff pertinent to our team. I just thought that would be a good way to get it out there and let them know that we had decided on someone."

Embree says he tells his players to use social media responsibly and not to post anything they wouldn't want their parents to see. Some college coaches have banned players from Twitter and wouldn't dream of using it themselves. Embree said that just isn't the way he operates.

"I know our fans are out there and they want information," Embree said. "So it's just another way to get it to them."

Embree said he talked with Washington coach Steve Sarkisian in July about using Twitter to communicate with fans and get his message out. Sarkisian is adept at using Twitter. He posts stories he likes, profiles on freshmen, photos of the day and plenty of other random information on the Husky program.

Washington fans are most excited whenever Sarkisian tweets a single word -- Woof. It became his code for letting fans know he had received a commitment from a recruit.

While Twitter has made it easier for players and coaches to talk to fans, it also has made it easier for players and coaches to talk to each other. One classic example from earlier this summer was when Alabama quarterback A.J. McCarron and former LSU cornerback Tyrann Mathieu became embroiled in a Twitter war, talking trash to each other 140 characters at a time.

The two powerhouse programs split a pair of games last season with Alabama beating LSU in the national title game.

"Try throwing a corner route or a cross country on me this year!!! I'll be waiting!!" Mathieu wrote to no one in particular.

McCarron answered with "U can talk ab stopping something.. But actions speak louder than words. Remember that. #neworleans #14"

Colorado linebackers Derrick Webb and Doug Rippey say they are occasionally contacted by fans on Twitter or Facebook, but they don't get into talking smack with opponents before or after games on social media sites.

"If a fan said, 'Good job or good game.' or anything like that, it's just more support," Webb said. "We consider that

Buff Nation. We want to be respectful to our fans when we use Twitter and use it in a way that helps or welcomes their support.

"As far as criticism, I don't know how I'd feel about that. It would be kind of weird, you know?"

Most Colorado players with Twitter accounts allow just about anyone to follow them. Webb has opted to block certain people, including this beat writer, from seeing what he posts on his account.

"I've got a Twitter manager who manages my tweets," Webb said with a wide grin when asked why he blocked this reporter. "I don't know if I blocked you or not. You just got to be safe with the social media. I'd rather be safe than sorry."

Rippy said he thinks it's cool when fans contact him on Twitter. He said he appreciates the support. He said he doesn't pay any attention to fans of other programs or fans who might be critical of his play or the Buffs.

Rippy said Twitter and other forms of social media help to heap the pressure on players today. He said players of the past didn't have the added distraction. Of course, no one is forcing anyone to use the service.

"I don't know how other teams use it, whether they're reading up on us and trying to figure out who we are," he said. "I really don't care. I save it for the field. That's where I do most of my talking."

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Football: Recruiting foundation to reach CU Buffs' goals

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

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In trying to build a winning college football program, there may not be anything more important than recruiting.

For Colorado, recruiting is at the core of its quest to achieve national prominence once again.

"First of all, we want to build it from the ground up," offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy said. "What does that mean? We've got to add depth. We've got to go out and find bigger, stronger, smarter and more athletic football players. On top of that, we want to make sure we're bringing in the right kids that understand two things: the importance of earning a degree and kicking a lot of tail on the weekends. That's your start.

"From there, now we just want to continue building our program with great kids who have great integrity that understand the importance of being an accountable and responsible student-athlete. That's what this is about."

Bieniemy said CU has to focus on finding the right fits for the University of Colorado. The Buffs can't deviate from that focus in an effort to sign a player who might be talented, but won't be a good representative of the university.

"We have to make sure we're recruiting the right people, and that's the beauty about this whole process," he said.

Head coach Jon Embree and the Buffs currently are working on their third recruiting class and they believe they've held to their plan in recruiting to this point. Embree said he doesn't see the staff changing its strategy any time soon.

"You see teams sometimes that catch lightning in a bottle, have a real good year and then they change their recruiting philosophy and try to go for a different kind of kid," Embree said. "They get them in there, but then they don't fit with their program, they don't fit with their system and it causes a lot of dissention and they take two or three steps backward."

So far that hasn't happened for the Buffs. Still, it takes several years of good recruiting for a head coach to truly have his mark on the program.

"I think until three of the classes or four of the classes are yours then I think you can do that," former CU head coach Gary Barnett said.

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Football: CU Buffs' Jon Embree sticking to his game plan

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

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Patience is a virtue not often held by sports fans. It's sometimes not held by football coaches, either.

Yet, in directing the Colorado football program, head coach Jon Embree and his staff has had to practice patience, along with a few other traits, in trying to get the Buffaloes on solid ground once again.

"You've just got to be true to your vision, your plan and your program and just keep doing it," Embree said.

The vision is clear. The Buffs were once a nationally ranked program, even winning a championship in 1990, and they want to get there again. The path to national prominence -- or even national relevance -- is not easy, though.

Colorado enters the 2012 season looking to snap a streak of six consecutive losing seasons. The Buffs haven't been to a bowl game in five years. They haven't finished a season in the top-25 since a No. 20 ranking to close the 2002 season. They haven't hit the 10-win mark since 2001. And, 1995 was the last time they finished a season among the nation's top five.

Embree, of course, came into Boulder believing he can get the Buffs back to a national stage. Every coach hired at every school believes that.

"Sometimes you have an inflated sense of self worth that you're able to go in and you're just going to be able to accomplish something no matter what because you're different or you've been there or this or that," former CU head coach Gary Barnett said, speaking generally and not about Embree specifically. "It doesn't happen that way. It doesn't happen fast."

A plan in place

As proud as Colorado is about its football tradition, the truth is that the program has grown accustomed to losing over the past decade. It hasn't been an elite program in more than 15 years.

When Embree was hired in December 2010, he talked about having a "new standard" and achieving "excellence." He spoke about regaining the "luster of this great program" and honoring the tradition. At that time, Embree acknowledged it would take some time, but added, "I'm not a patient person."

Being a head coach for the first time has forced Embree to gain some patience. He wasn't happy with a 3-10 season last year, and he won't be happy with a losing season this year.

Still, Embree realizes that staying the course is of utmost importance.

"You have to, because for one, I believe in what we're trying to do and how we have to do it to be successful," he said. "And, the players know. For you to be successful, the players have to know what you're trying to do and how you're trying to do it. If all of a sudden you just start doing stuff out of left field and try to pull things out of midair to try to get a quick fix, then you're just going to end up in the same spot."

Embree said he's seen coaches go for the quick fix, and it doesn't accomplish the ultimate goal.

"Generally what ends up happening is you don't end up being successful," Embree said. "One year, good or bad, doesn't make a program. It's about consistently being whatever the level is, top-20, top-10, top-5. Whatever it is, it's about that consistency. There's only one way to do it, I believe, and that's sticking to whatever your game plan is, from recruiting, from everything."

The plan laid out by the CU staff includes the building of a roster filled with high quality players that possess good character. It also includes establishing offensive and defensive systems that the players can grow into and which will

give the Buffs an identity.

Be ready to adjust

While holding true to the plan, Embree and Barnett both said a coach has to be willing to adapt after taking over a new program. Barnett said the plan a coach has at the time of his hire is often not the same as it is after a few months, or a full season, on the job.

"The most complex piece of it is you come in thinking that you know what the problems are because people have told you or maybe you were there before," said Barnett, who was the head coach at Northwestern before coming to CU. "Then after six months you have to change your course because you have a much more realistic idea of what your problems are and the direction you need to go."

Embree has learned that already.

"I say that you have a plan, but now you also have to be able to adapt to things," Embree said. "Sometimes you may have to slow certain aspects down and then speed certain aspects up as it dictates with your team and your personnel and other issues."

During the 2011 season, the Buffs displayed an ability to adjust and utilize the personnel on board. When a coach doesn't do that and doesn't adapt to the job, it can be ugly.

"I've seen instances where what you bring in and try to do quickly just doesn't work and it's not a good fit," Barnett said. "Michigan is a perfect example. Rich Rodriguez, his style, the kind of kids he wanted to play with, etc., wasn't a fit in three years and probably was never going to be a fit there. I don't think Rich changed and, as a result, he's somewhere else now."

Rodriguez went 15-22 in three seasons at Michigan before being fired in 2010. He's now entering his first season at Arizona.

Embree's challenge

Embree is hoping to stick around a bit longer. He's also hoping fans can show a little more patience than they did at Michigan.

"It's tough for fans," Barnett said. "It's not so hard in August and July, but it's really hard in October and November to be patient."

"The average fan on the outside doesn't quite understand the complexities and everything that goes into it. Sometimes they think it's just about players and sometimes they think it's just about the coaches. In reality, it's so much more and it's never one thing. It's always a multiple of things and Colorado is that way, as well."

As CU looks to rebuild, it is trying to fix a lot of areas of the program. Depth, talent and experience on the roster have been issues over the years and continue to be. Experience in the coaching staff is a factor, too. Embree never had been a head coach. Offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy never had been a coordinator. And, defensive coordinator Greg Brown never had been in a situation where he had a coordinator job to himself.

"They have a learning curve just like the kids have a learning curve," Barnett said. "I think sometimes it takes a year for that to happen and I think that's probably right on point. Probably Jon knows a lot more about responsibilities and headaches that come with being a head coach and how to adapt and work with them."

"From what I can tell, it looks like they're all so much further along than they were last year."

In addition, Embree and his staff have taken on a daunting task of changing the culture, establishing winning traditions and honoring the great history of the program.

Along with that, they have made it clear, through suspensions of players for various off-the-field issues, that they won't tolerate players who don't honor the university and the football program. The message: Wins are not as important as the integrity of the school and football program.

"We probably wouldn't have had the suspensions last year if I was concerned about having to win or needing to win or compromising some things," Embree said. "There some other things around here, if I wasn't going to stick to the plan and the vision for what I have for this program I would have compromised, but then you wouldn't see the close-knitness of this team, you wouldn't see the kind of energy you're seeing now, I believe."

It's been done before

Embree certainly isn't the first coach at CU who has taken on such a daunting task. In 1982, Bill McCartney inherited a CU team that had posted three straight losing seasons. McCartney then went 7-25-1 in his first three years.

"It's hard to do in a year," Barnett said. "Unless you're coming in and taking over for a program that's hitting on all cylinders, which Jon certainly didn't do, then I think it's going to take you four years before you've got the kids that were already here ingrained in your system and the kids that you brought in trained the way you want them trained."

Even McCartney needed four years to build a winner. His fourth team at CU went 7-5 and snapped a seven-year bowl drought. He never had a losing team again and when he retired after the 1994 season, he handed a national power to Rick Neuheisel.

Embree saw McCartney's work up close. He was one of McCartney's first recruits in 1983 and played for him from 1983-86. From 1993-2002, he was a CU assistant, working under McCartney, Neuheisel and Barnett.

By practicing patience and sticking to the plan, Embree and his staff could follow the same path McCartney took, and the Buffs would be much more likely to achieve long-term success.

"You want to win now," Bieniemy said. "You always, in this profession, understand the importance of now. Selfishly, I want to win a national championship this year. But, let's start off with Step 1. Let's get our players understanding that, hey, let's compete at a high level, let's go to a bowl game. Anything after that is a bonus and we'll build it from there."

That doesn't mean they're willing to accept losing, however. Remember, Embree isn't a patient man.

"The goal is to go to a bowl game," Embree said. "That's the goal. We have to reach our goal for me to not be disappointed. Yeah, we could still make strides and not go to a bowl game, but the stride that we want to make is finding a way to get to a bowl game."

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Football: CU Buffs' Brian Cabral continues to groom strong LBs

By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

In addition to all of the winning, the classic blue and white uniforms, and the huge crowds in Happy Valley, Penn State University football was known as Linebacker U.

Now the program and the entire institution are infamous because of the heinous crimes former assistant coach Jerry Sandusky committed against children and the stunning cover up involving university and athletic department leaders, including Joe Paterno.

The NCAA has taken away scholarships, postseason opportunities and 111 of Paterno's wins.

Colorado might seize the Linebacker U moniker in the years to come.

It could be argued that the Buffs already had as good of a tradition at linebacker as the Nittany Lions.

Each program has produced two Butkus Award winners -- CU's Alfred Williams (1990) and Matt Russell (1996) earned the award for the nation's top linebacker before Penn State answered with LaVar Arrington (1999) and Paul Posluszny (2005).

Jack Ham, Greg Buttle, Shane Conlan and Dan Connor are among the All-American linebackers Penn State has produced over the decades.

The impressive list of future NFL linebackers longtime CU assistant coach Brian Cabral has mentored in Boulder includes Greg Biekert, Chad Brown, Jordan Dizon, Brian Iwuh, Ted Johnson, Brad Jones, Hannibal Navies, Jashon Sykes, Sean Tufts and Thaddeus Washington.

"I take a lot of pride in knowing that there is a great tradition here, but more importantly I want to see the tradition continue," said Cabral, who played linebacker for the Buffs and helped lead the program to the Big Eight championship in 1976. "It's not so much about the tradition or me. It's about how those guys are going to carry on that tradition."

Once again, CU's linebackers are the leaders of a defense that will be breaking in freshmen on the defensive line and in the secondary.

Jon Major and Doug Rippy, who both have had injury problems during their careers, are back stronger than ever and ready to leave their mark on the program as seniors.

"A good linebacking corps is going to help everyone else. That's our role right now is to get our young D-linemen right and hold our DB's accountable," Major said. "We're always going to feel like our unit is the strongest. That's how the mindset has to be. But we definitely have the age and experience to be that."

Major knew all about CU's history at linebacker growing up in Parker. It didn't take long for Rippy, who is from Columbus, Ohio, to get up to speed.

"It was something I had to learn once I got here," Rippy said. "I saw it from Dizon and Brad Jones, how they played. Over the years I've talked to guys like Jashon Sykes and Matt Russell about what it means to play linebacker here."

With Major at the Sam (outside) linebacker position and Rippy back at the Mike (inside) spot, this sets up to be a breakout season for junior Derrick Webb at the Will (inside) linebacker.

"Webb gets a chance to see what a senior looks like, what he's going to look like in his last year," Cabral said. "It couldn't be better situation for Webb."

The Buffs will not rebuild at linebacker in 2013. Cabral will reload with Brady Daigh, Woodson Greer, Kyle Washington, K.T. Tu'umalo, Paul Vigo, and so on.

"We get a lot of leadership from Major and Rippy. Other than those two, it's a pretty young backer unit," said Daigh, who was routinely praised by head coach Jon Embree during fall camp. "You also definitely look back at guys like Matt Russell and Greg Biekert and try to play like them."

Adding a third Butkus Award to the trophy case would certainly enhance the argument for CU as Linebacker U.

"We have really good linebackers this year. Webb is a really good linebacker and he's starting to settle into that position," Rippy said. "With Jon and I, it's a dream to bring the Butkus back here, but right now our goal is to go to a bowl game."

If the Buffs hope to succeed in their quest for at least six wins and a bowl appearance, the linebackers' fingerprints will have to be all over the blue print.

"It's fun to see everyone a year older, a year more mature, a year better," Cabral said. "This should be a very solid group to watch this season."

Follow Ryan on Twitter:

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CSU's Jim McElwain likes what he sees out of Buffs QB Jordan Webb

By Christopher Dempsey *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*

Posted:

DenverPost.com

FORT COLLINS — Praise for new Colorado quarterback Jordan Webb has already streamed out of Boulder, and now it is coming from the Colorado State campus.

CSU coach Jim McElwain was complimentary of the Buffs' quarterback, who his team will try and slow down in Saturday's Rocky Mountain Showdown.

"He's got a quick release... got a very strong arm," McElwain said today in the first of his weekly Monday press conferences. "Now how does it fit in their system is kind of to be determined."

Webb, who just transferred to Colorado from Kansas in July, won the starting nod over Connor Wood and Nick Hirschman in a competition decided by his ability to consistently make plays and move the team in practice.

"Here's a guy that's played at a high level in a very good conference," McElwain said.

"And we're starting a quarterback that, yeah, he got some reps last year but how valuable were they? He hadn't played in this rivalry game. Obviously their quarterback has played in rivalry games. And it sounds like he has done a great job rallying and becoming a leader of that team, and that's a credit to him, to be able to come in like that and take over from a leadership standpoint, that speaks volumes about who he is."

McElwain danced around the question of what specifically concerns him about the Buffs, but offered:

"They've brought an NFL mentality, they've brought a physical mentality. They've got very good coaches on both sides of the ball and in special teams. I think they are very sound in what they do. They are not going to try to beat themselves, yet pick their spots to take their shots. You break down all of last year's stuff, but they may have totally changed who they are offensively and defensively.

"In that standpoint, that's where you need to have the foundation of you plan to adjust to whatever. Because they had summer studies, so they've got new wrinkles. It isn't just what they did last year. That's where as a coach we've got to be able to make game-time changes, game-time adjustments based on the things we haven't seen. And that's all part of that first game."

Also, Colorado State released its first depth chart today, and there were a few surprises contained within it. Read more at The Field House blog.

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Facing a first-year CSU coach, Buffs expecting the unexpected

By Tom Kensler *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — Preparing a college football team for a season opener is challenging enough. Throw in the additional variable of facing a first-year coach such as Colorado State's Jim McElwain, and it's just something more to think about. And fret about.

For example, which opponent game films does a team analyze?

"It's tough," said CU senior defensive tackle Will Pericak. "With the first game of any season, you never know what they're going to run. But going against a new coach, it's a whole different ballgame. You have no idea what they're going to run."

Saturday at Sports Authority Field at Mile High, CSU's McElwain becomes the first of six first-year coaches on Colorado's 2012 schedule — half of CU's opponents for the regular season.

Following McElwain as head coaches facing Colorado while in their season at their school will be, in order: Fresno State's Tim DeRuyter (Sept. 15), Washington State's Mike Leach (Sept. 22), UCLA's Jim Mora (Sept. 29), Arizona State's Todd Graham (Oct. 11) and Arizona's Rich Rodriguez (Nov. 10).

Yes, that's five new opposing coaches in Colorado's first six games. CU coach Jon Embree must hope this is a once-in-a-coach's lifetime nightmare.

"We're probably going to have to make adjustments on game day, as for what Colorado State does," Embree said. "You have to have a lot of flexibility in your game plans. It's definitely a challenge. But you have to just be ready to adapt and go play."

In preparing for Colorado State, the Buffaloes have looked at some film of Alabama, where McElwain was offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach from 2008 through the Crimson Tide's victory in last season's national championship game.

But new CSU offensive coordinator Dave Baldwin has made a dozen stops during his 33-year coaching career, the most recent at Utah State (2009-11).

Alabama ran a rather standard pro-set offense, while Utah State favored the spread formation.

"We've looked at a lot of everything," said CU defensive coordinator Greg Brown. "We've looked at a lot of Utah State tape. With Jim McElwain and Dave Baldwin, you're talking about two tremendous offensive minds. They have a proven track record. They know what they're doing. They know how to attack defenses.

"To think about putting those two minds together, it's a scary thing for us. As an offense, CSU could come out in anything."

Colorado offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy faces a similar challenge. CSU has co-defensive coordinators. Marty English came from Wyoming (2003-11) and Al Simmons most recently was at Texas-El Paso (2011) and California (2008-10). Before Saturday's game against CSU, Bieniemy said he will have reviewed film of last year's Wyoming, UTEP and California defenses.

"You have to find out where they've coached, where they've worked, and try to get a feel for the scheme," Bieniemy said.

Perhaps half-joking, McElwain said CU defensive coaches will have to go back to his days at Eastern Washington (1985-94) and Montana State (1995-99) to study what CSU is offensively.

"Or maybe a little more Louisville (2000-02)," McElwain said. "It's all based on who you have (on the coaching staff). I didn't put my name on some system. The system has been learned from different guys who have done it, trial and error.

"But that's the least of my worries. The worries are: How do you play? How do you perform as a player? How are you focused? That's what we really concern ourselves with. I've never gotten caught up in, 'I hope they don't know what we're doing.' "

Staff writer Christopher Dempsey contributed to this report.

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Former Chatfield standout Slavin moving up Colorado depth chart

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

BOULDER — Colorado tight end Kyle Slavin didn't catch a pass in 2011 as a redshirt freshman, but things could be different in 2012.

The former Chatfield star is listed on the second team, behind starter Nick Kasa. Slavin (6-foot-4, 245 pounds) has earned props from CU coach Jon Embree.

"Kyle has done well," Embree said. "He's continued to work and improve this summer on the things we wanted him to get better at.

"He's got very good hands. He can work in the shorter and intermediate routes pretty effectively. Kyle will be important for our ballclub."

Kasa (6-6, 260) is the former 4-star, bluechip defensive end from Legacy High School. He converted to tight end late in the 2011 season and caught one pass for eight yards.

Embree has said that at least one true freshman tight end will play this season. That could be Vincent Hobbs (6-3, 240) from Mesquite (Texas) Horn HS, who has been mentioned by Embree as impressing during August drills.

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Colorado brought in two transfer quarterbacks to compete for the starting quarterback spot left vacant by the graduated Tyler Hansen.

One had the hype. One had the experience. Wisdom won out.

Former Kansas starter Jordan Webb got the nod over once-hotshot Texas Longhorn recruit Connor Wood and a cast of others, despite arriving late to the party.

Webb only ventured to Boulder midway through the summer to vie for a job thought to have been secured during spring ball by Wood, ranked the No. 9 quarterback by Scout.com coming out of Houston's Second Baptist High. Only Wood wobbled and ultimately wilted.

"Each day, it was becoming more and more evident," Colorado head coach Jon Embree told Tom Kensler of the *Denver Post*. "He just consistently made plays, made good decisions. He's very accurate with his ball. ... I wasn't into playing (mind) games. I was going to let the team know as soon as I made a decision."

While Webb's know-how extends to the classroom -- he graduated from Kansas early, will take graduate courses at Colorado and still has two years of eligibility remaining -- he must cut down on some of his costly mistakes to keep Wood relegated to the bench.

Webb threw 20 interceptions to match his 20 touchdowns in 19 career starts for the Jayhawks, who went just 4-15 during his tenure. But he won the job relatively early in fall camp, even though Embree was completely unsure of how the race would play out during Pac-12 Media Day. The uncertainty seemed to remain throughout the first week of fall camp before Embree even startled Webb with the announcement.

"I am surprised (at the timing)," Webb told Kensler. "I guess the coaches just felt it was the right time, and I'm definitely not going to argue with that. I actually thought they would let it play out in our scrimmage on Saturday. But I think it's great to get it done now, so I can (get more repetitions) and get used to our receivers and we can get better together."