



*CU defensive coordinator Greg Brown has his hands full preparing for CSU and its new coaching staff.*  
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



## Brooks: Buffs 'D' Works Hard To Unravel The Unknown

Release: 08/28/2012 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

**BOULDER** - Just beyond the three pair of running shoes and socks, Greg Brown points to four piles of notes and diagrams stacked neatly on the floor of his office in Colorado's Dal Ward Athletic Center.

One stack is labeled Alabama. The next: Michigan State ... then Utah State ... then New Mexico.

Together the four stacks represent the most recent four schools where new Colorado State coach Jim McElwain and his offensive coordinator, Dave Baldwin, have worked.

Their four offenses - large chunks, small clumps, a play, a formation, a shift, a motion there or here - are what Brown is trying to sift through as he prepares his young CU defense for Saturday's season-opener in Denver.

"We don't know what they've taken from each (offense),"

### BUFFALO EXTRAS



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Brown said. "All the cards are up their sleeves. It's a hard deal . . . a hard opener. Where do you spend your most time? What style of offense will we see?"

The offensive resumes of McElwain and Baldwin are heavily weighted with yards, touchdowns and, of course, talented personnel. Alabama won the last BCS National Championship running McElwain's offense, while Baldwin was chosen the WAC's 2011 Offensive Coordinator of The Year (Rivals.com) at his last stop, Utah State.

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Baldwin is a Denver native who spent the early part of a 33-year coaching career under the late Jack Elway at Cal State-Northridge, San Jose State and Stanford. And both McElwain and Baldwin are well-acquainted and of like minds, having coached together at Michigan State.

Said Brown: "You watch (McElwain's) stuff from Alabama, and the guy's a nightmare to prepare for. We'll get CSU's best shot - we always do - and this year it's coupled with some prolific schemes and ideas. Those two guys are well-proven coaches."

Brown doesn't like to be "schemed" - and it doesn't happen often. But there are times . . . Take last season's opener at Hawai'i. On their first possession of the second quarter, the Warriors shocked Brown and his Buffs defense by throwing in the zone read option.

Quarterback Bryant Moniz, who had carried only six times for minus-five yards the previous season in Boulder, utilized the zone read nine times for 120 yards and two TDs - in the first half.

When the Buffs' long night in paradise was done, Moniz had accounted for 299 yards in total offense, two more TDs passing and had directed a 34-17 Warriors win. A day later, Brown grudgingly tipped his cap to the UH staff.

Here's why: In watching hours of tape and charting nearly 1,000 Hawai'i offensive snaps from 2010, he saw the Warriors run the zone read three times - with Moniz' backup running it twice. Surprise: it was still in the UH playbook and it came out at the most opportune time.

"We know we prepared for Hawai'i but probably not enough," junior defensive back Parker Orms said. "This year we've taken that to heart and are preparing as much as possible for the first game."

But where to start? And how much can be digested?

Calling preparing for an opener against a new staff "unique," CU coach Jon Embree said, "There's a lot you have to look at and filter through to figure out what it is exactly you think they might do. It definitely limits what you're capable of doing . . . but at the same time you have to have enough in your package so if you need to make adjustments you have something you can go to."

Embree also noted that while players can become overstuffed with game preparation, that's not the case for coaches. "As much tape as there is, you're going to watch it," he said. "You want to feel like you haven't left any stone unturned . . . from a coaching standpoint, no, there's never enough film. But from what you filter out and try to give your players, yeah, we try to give them something to grasp and remember and understand. Give them too much and they won't understand any of it."

There are no *Cliff Notes*, so you work the basics, hope those are digested and then prepare to be flexible for the final three quarters.

CU linebacker Doug Rippy believes the Rams will mostly utilize two-tight end, one-back sets, featuring 216-pound running back Chris Nwoke. And Orms says the Buffs must be wary of quarterback Garrett Grayson, who

might not be as nimble as Moniz but nonetheless is mobile enough to create problems for a defense caught off napping.

"We actually don't know what they're going to do, just based off of what Alabama did and then their offensive coordinator being at Michigan State and New Mexico," Rippey said, noting that in-game adjustments become essential after a defense sees about 15 plays.

"Then you might see six or seven of those plays throughout the game. We've just got to make adjustments to the different formations and shifts and stuff like that - especially in goal line, that's a big thing."

Added Orms, whose personal degree of difficulty has increased because he's preparing to play three positions (safety, nickel back, cornerback): "We know (Garrett) is a good player. We have to prepare for the run and the pass - really for everything. Coach Brown has us doing a lot of stuff."

Embree said while this opener presents a challenge, future openers won't be significantly different because of head coaching changes, individual assistant changes, schematic changes, etc. Essentially, all the comings and goings that transpire in college football during any off-season.

"You're always going to have those wrinkles you have to adapt to in the first game," he said.

For proof, look no further back than CU at Hawai'i on Sept. 3, 2011.

On Sept. 1, 2012, Brown & Co. have no desire to be "schemed" again. As the Buffs know, it's not a good way to start.

**Contact:** [BG.Brooks@Colorado.EDU](mailto:BG.Brooks@Colorado.EDU)

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## Football: CU Buffs' Jordan Webb will be allowed to call audible

By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Decisions, decisions, decisions.

Jordan Webb has the experience and the intelligence to make the right ones.

That's why Colorado head coach Jon Embree decided to go with Webb as his 2012 starter instead of Connor Wood or Nick Hirschman.

Now the Buffs suddenly have a decided advantage in experience at the quarterback position entering Saturday's opener against Colorado State at Sports Authority Field in Denver.

"He was good with decisions -- where to go with the ball, when to go with it, when to run, when to work the pocket," Embree said of Webb. "He's very good at making decisions."

Even though Webb just transferred to CU from Kansas in July, the junior signal caller is already enjoying more freedom in Eric Bienenmy's offense than he ever did in Lawrence.

Webb will be allowed to change plays at the line of scrimmage if he doesn't like the look the Rams are giving him.

"It's more responsibility than I've ever had at this position," Webb said. "I'm looking forward to it."

The Buffs don't know how CSU's defense will try to play them. Webb said it really won't matter.

"Whether I'm hitting a bunch of 50-yard bombs or checking down to the running back, I know we can be successful either way," Webb said. "I just have to take what the defense gives me."

The Rams' secondary -- led by starters Bernard Blake (left cornerback), Momo Thomas (right cornerback), Trent Matthews (strong safety) and Austin Gray (free safety) -- is considered to be the strength of their defense.

"They have some good talent back there," Webb said. "They have some spots we need to look at opening up."

Webb, who threw for 3,079 yards with 20 touchdowns and 20 interceptions in 19 starts at KU, expects the entire playbook will be available for his CU debut.

"I don't want them to hold back anything because of me," Webb said. "I want to work hard to make sure I'm sharp on Saturday. It should be a good day for us."

CSU's starting quarterback, sophomore Garrett Grayson, had two touchdowns and six interceptions in four games last season.

"If I was to go into this first game (without playing as a freshman), I would have jitters like it's unbelievable," Grayson said at CSU media day earlier this month. "Going to Mile High and playing CU, the big rival, I would have so many jitters. But now that I've got a few games in my system and know what it's like playing Division I football, all of that will come together."

Embree said on Tuesday that a decision had not yet been made on whether Wood or Hirschman would be the No. 2 quarterback for the Buffs on Saturday.

Youth movement ready

CU is expected to play 16 true freshmen on Saturday. The Buffs played 15 true freshmen last season.

These are good developments, according to veteran players and coaches who have been observing the talented young roster carefully throughout fall camp.

"We've got a freshmen group here and a group of young guys, redshirt freshmen and sophomores, that are just flipping spectacular, honestly," Webb said. "Lot of talent. They're also smart on the field, which is huge for freshmen."

## Healthy Buffs

Starting left guard Alex Lewis (ankle sprain) is listed as probable for Saturday's game. He is the only player on the CU injury report this week other than wide receiver Paul Richardson (knee), who has been ruled out for the first two games of the season.

## Notable

Firefighters who battled the devastating fires in the state this summer will be honored by both universities during the pre-game on Saturday at Sports Authority Field. CU and CSU are also working with the Colorado State Fire Chiefs Association to distribute tickets to worthy firefighters. ... Gov. John Hickenlooper will conduct the coin toss. ... Craig Bolerjack (play-by-play), former CU quarterback Joel Klatt (color) and Petros Papadakis (sideline) will handle the broadcast on FX.

Follow Ryan on Twitter: @RyanThorburn.



## No consensus in Pac-12 on new kickoff rule

Camera staff Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

There is no better place to start our first notes column of the college football season than where the season literally begins -- the kickoff.

Perhaps the most significant rule change the NCAA instituted in the offseason is moving the kickoff point back to the 35-yard line and limiting members of the kickoff team to no more than a five-yard running start before the ball is struck.

The NCAA made the change hoping it would help cut down the number of concussions suffered by players. Some coaches believe it's a ridiculous change -- one Colorado assistant called the idea "stupid" -- because most players will still have a good 40 yards to sprint before trying to make a tackle. So why will there be fewer concussions?

Coaches have been fielding questions about the new rule since spring ball and they did so again Tuesday during the first Pac-12 Conference coaches teleconference of the season. There is no clear indication of a majority in terms of how coaches in the conference plan to handle the new rule, but the guess here is that most will be content to boot the ball out of the back of the end zone.

That is where the other major part of the rule change comes in. Kickoffs that result in touchbacks will now mean the receiving team starts its drive at the 25-yard line instead of the 20.

So the dilemma for coaches is whether they're comfortable giving up those extra five yards or do they ask their kicker to try to squib kick, kick the ball high and short of the goal forcing a return or kick the ball just two or three yards into the end zone and force return men to make decisions?

The thing is, you need a kicker who is capable of placing the ball where you need it for all those options to even be on the table. I'm here to tell you, there are a lot of college teams who don't have kickers with that consistent ability. So I believe most will opt for the touchback.

Colorado coach Jon Embree echoed many of the other coaches Tuesday in saying he is eager to see how others handle it. Coaches are copycats. Embree said somebody out there will devise a clever way to use the rule to their advantage and everyone else will begin copying it.

Utah coach Kyle Whittingham was willing to show his hand before kickoff, and why wouldn't he? The Utes have been among the very best in kickoff coverage in recent years.

"We think we can do better than the 25," Whittingham said. "So if we hang it up there and run underneath it and pin them inside the 20 or maybe even the 15 cause we're now starting at the 35-yard line."

Lucky Leach

A year ago as college teams around the country prepared to kick off the season, new Washington State coach Mike Leach was kicking back in Key West, Fla., plotting his next move after his ugly parting from Texas Tech.

Tuesday Leach was asked about the difference a year makes.

"I'm very lucky," Leach said. "Two times in a row I got to live in two of most beautiful places in the country. Here it's beautiful, green, foothills and mountains. I feel like I'm really lucky. I get the contrast and I get really scenic places but scenic in different ways.

"It's pretty laid back here. I have to say. It's every bit as laid back here as it is in Key West."

Leach is taking a laid back approach to announcing his starting quarterback for the season opener Thursday at BYU.

Leach said both Jeff Tuel and Connor Halliday have played well this month.

Leach doesn't like the idea of playing both quarterbacks.

"I can't think of very many people who have done a good job of that," Leach said. "With rare exceptions, I can't think of many teams that were very good at it."

The opposite approach

While Leach might not like the idea of using two quarterbacks much, fellow first-year Pac-12 coach Todd Graham at Arizona State is planning to play both Taylor Kelly and Mike Eubank on Thursday against Northern Arizona.

Graham isn't going in that direction because one has failed to earn the starting role. Kelly has been named the starter. Graham simply likes what Eubank has to offer. He said possessions won't be split equally, but Eubank will get plenty of opportunities.

Rough start

Media covering the Pac-12 can understand what it's like when a team has a bunch of penalties in its first game or plays a generally sloppy game. The scribes got off to a rough start Tuesday on the conference call when no one asked Washington coach Steve Sarkisian a question in time before he happily hung up.

## THORBURN: CU-CSU needs spark or it's time to switch Buffs' schedule

By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Colorado vs. Colorado State.

Quick, name another "rivalry" contested every season at a neutral site between a team from a BCS conference and a team from a non-BCS conference.

Utah vs. BYU?

The Holy War is going on hiatus in 2013 and 2014 because the Utes are already playing nine Pac-12 games and recently added Michigan to a future non-conference schedule.

Notre Dame vs. Navy?

Doesn't really count since the Fighting Irish fight alone as an independent.

Tennessee vs. Vanderbilt?

Oh yeah, the Commodores are technically a "BCS" team.

Let's face it, the Buffs do the Rams a huge favor by putting up with the Rocky Mountain Showdown every year in front of shrinking crowds in Denver.

CU should rotate its opener against Air Force, CSU and Wyoming at Folsom Field.

And perhaps play Nebraska in front of a sold-out crowd at Sports Authority Field once every four years.

But the powers that be in Boulder "honor our contracts."

That is code for: Haven't found a way to get out of the series with CSU yet.

Super CSU donor/athletic director Jack Graham says the Rams are "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."

So fans are still stuck in Denver crossing their fingers that someone -- perhaps young coaches Jim McElwain and Jon Embree or new quarterbacks Jordan Webb and Garrett Grayson -- can do something to spark interest in these programs and the Rocky Mountain Showdown.

There is some hope. To be fair, the Colorado vs. Colorado State game used to have its moments.

Remember when ...

Sonny Lubick welcomed Gary Barnett back to the Centennial State with a 41-14 beat down at old Mile High Stadium in the 1999 tear gas game.

The Buffs returned the favor by the same lopsided score in 2001 en route to a Big 12 championship.

Bradlee Van Pelt spiked the football off of Roderick Sneed's helmet after scoring the winning touchdown in the Rams' 2002 victory over the nation's over-rated preseason No. 6 team.

Joel Klatt lit up the CSU secondary for 402 yards passing and four touchdowns to lead the Buffs to a dramatic 42-35 victory over the No. 23 Rams in 2003.



CU made a dramatic defensive stand -- stopping Marcus Houston on first-and-goal at the 1 and Tristian Walker for a 2-yard loss to end the game -- to pull off a 27-24 victory at Folsom Field in 2004.

Mason Crosby calmly made a 47-yard field goal to deliver a 31-28 victory for the Buffs in 2005.

"A classic for college football," Barnett said after his team overcame an 11-point deficit in the fourth quarter of that game and CU fans from a record Folsom Field crowd stormed the field.

Since that 2005 classic, things have been pretty forgettable for both programs, which explains all of the blue and orange seats in Denver dressing up like college football fans in recent years.

After a win over Missouri on Nov. 5, 2005, the Buffs were 7-2 and ranked in the top 25.

Then the Barnett era ended with a sickening thud as CU suffered losses to Iowa State (30-16), Nebraska (30-3) and Texas (70-3, Big 12 championship).

The Buffs finished the fateful campaign with a loss to Clemson in the Champs Sports Bowl.

And then Hawk-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named extended the program's losing skid to 10 games -- including a 14-10 loss to CSU in Denver that set the game back about 60 years -- by starting his era 0-6.

Over the last six seasons, CU has an overall record of 24-50 (14-35 in conference play) with one bowl appearance.

Meanwhile, CSU has unceremoniously fired the legendary Lubick and his replacement (Steve Fairchild) while compiling an overall record of 23-49 (10-37 in the Mountain West) with one bowl appearance in the last six seasons.

Expectations for 2012 aren't any rosier with CU receiving the fewest votes in the Pac-12 preseason poll and CSU predicted to finish eighth in the 10-team Mountain West.

Embree named Webb, who transferred from Kansas this summer, the starting quarterback over Connor Wood and Nick Hirschman.

The Buffs' No. 1 receiver on the roster, Paul Richardson, will not play against the Rams this season.

Freshmen will be on the field for CU in key positions on offense, defense and special teams.

McElwain doesn't have as much talent or depth to work with, but the first-year CSU head coach does have the element of surprise on his side.

"People don't know who we are," CU senior linebacker Doug Rippy said on all of the unknowns surrounding Saturday's opener against CSU. "Obviously, with P-Rich being hurt, the only person they really know is Jordan Webb right now because he's been named our starting quarterback. With a new coaching staff over there, I don't know too much what's going on over there. So I can't really speak about that.

"But nobody knows who we are as Colorado, and we're looking to change that."

Something has to change. CU vs. CSU needs to get good again, or go away.

## Football: Cohesive coaches will benefit CU Buffs this year

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Outside of the Colorado campus, not much is expected of the Buffaloes' football team. Youth and inexperience are the main reasons for that.

While the Buffs are a little greener than they were a year ago, they do have one advantage over the 2011 squad: a more cohesive coaching staff.

Head coach Jon Embree is entering his second season with the same group of assistants he had a year ago.

"I think that's big," said linebackers coach Brian Cabral, who is entering his 24th year on CU's staff. "It's very big. We know exactly what the expectations are. We know exactly how each other operates."

That all starts at the top.

A year ago, Embree was entering his first season as a head coach. He had been a coach for 18 years, but never as the head man. Although it's only been a year, he is clearly further along in his job.

"I feel like I'm more patient," he said. "There's so many things that you're trying to do and so many things that you want to get accomplished and you realize you can't get it all done in one year. That hits you in the face about once a month. I'm more patient, and obviously more comfortable with our team and our players, knowing what I expect of them and how I react to certain things."

Senior linebacker Doug Rippy said the known expectation has led to more intensity in practice. Rippy also said that, just one year in, he has grown close to Embree.

"I probably would never tell coach Embree this, but I love him like he's my father," Rippy said. "Just to be able to have a relationship with him this past year, it's been a great thing."

It's not just Rippy, either. He said Embree has had an impact on the entire team.

"One thing I can say about coach Embree is he pushes us," Rippy said. "No matter how he's got to do it, he's going to get the best out of you."

It appears Embree and his coaches have gotten the best out of each other, too. As a group, they are all on board with the mission of the program, and that has made working together an easier task.

"The thing that I've always liked about this staff was the fact that there's former Buffs, there's coaches that have been a part of successful Colorado teams," Cabral said. "We understand how it got that way. That's probably even better, not just are we the same staff, but we know what we're working for, we know how it's been done and know what the expectations are."

While they all had some of that understanding last year, there were clearly some kinks to work out as they worked together as a group for the first time. Those kinks are gone, for the most part, now.

"The continuity of the staff I always felt was a very big deal," said J.D. Brookhart, special teams coordinator and tight ends coach. "It makes a big difference, just getting used to each other, anticipating things, getting along. Those expectations are set and we know what to expect from each other right now. That always helps because I think there are things that can build frustrations and now we know where each other is coming from and that makes a lot of difference."

"The biggest difference (among the staff) is there's less frustration because the standard's been set."

It's tough to measure how much the frustration and staff growing pains impacted CU's 2011 season, which concluded with a 3-10 record. Brookhart, however, said that eliminating those can only help the Buffs moving forward.

"All the pieces add up and that's certainly part of growing the program is the staff continuity," he said. "I anticipate that to be way different (this season)."

As the Buffs prepare to open the season on Saturday against Colorado State, they know plenty of inexperience will be on display on the field. They also know that, as coaches, that isn't an excuse anymore.

"We're all a year better," Cabral said.

Follow Brian on Twitter: @BrianHowell33.

## Football: Great unknown surrounds CU-CSU matchup

By Brian Howell, Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Colorado head coach Jon Embree isn't revealing too many secrets about his team in preparation of Saturday's opener against Colorado State.

During Tuesday's press conference, Embree was asked, "What can fans expect to see from the CU Buffs on Saturday?"

His response: "You'll see us in black jerseys and gold pants."

The great unknown seems to be the theme of this year's Rocky Mountain Showdown, which kicks off Saturday at 2 p.m. at Sports Authority Field.

With 23 freshmen and a junior quarterback (Jordan Webb) that didn't arrive on the Boulder campus until July, few know what to expect from CU.

Then again, the Buffs aren't exactly sure what to expect from the Rams, as new head coach Jim McElwain begins his tenure.

"It's a real unique situation," Embree said.

McElwain has spent the past four years as the offensive coordinator at Alabama, with a year at Fresno State before that. Rams offensive coordinator Dave Baldwin spent the previous three years at Utah State and co-defensive coordinators Marty English (Wyoming) and Al Simmons (UTEP) bring experience from other places, as well.

Throw in the fact that the Buffs also need to watch film of CSU's personnel, there's really no telling what the Buffs will see.

"Especially with this game, we really don't know what they're going to do," senior linebacker Doug Rippy said. "Coming into the game, there's going to be defensive changes all the time. We'll make adjustments."

Buffs coaches have spent countless hours breaking down film of CSU, Alabama, Utah State, etc., in preparation.

"For the coaches, as much tape as there is you're going to watch it because you want to feel like you haven't left any stone unturned," Embree said. "From a coaching standpoint, no, there's never enough film.

"There's a lot that you have to look at and try to filter through to try to figure out what exactly you think is going to be the fit, what you think they might do. It definitely limits what you're capable of doing, because you don't know. At the same time, you have to have enough within your package that once you figure it out if you need to make adjustments, you have something you can go to. It presents a challenge, but it's going to be like that every year with your opening game."

As for the Buffs, fans don't know a whole lot about the team. Webb has never suited up in a CU uniform and there will be a host of players making either collegiate debuts or their first collegiate start.

"You'll see a lot of new faces, so keep your program handy," Embree joked.

Of course, the Buffs won't reveal much about what they've been working on during fall camp. There's a reason Embree closed the doors to all the practice sessions.

Rippy, however, said the Buffs are tougher than they were last year, and Embree added, "You'll see a team that's physical running the ball, a team that runs to the ball defensively. You're going to see a lot of young talent. More team speed."

Ultimately, however, Embree is a lot like the fans. He hasn't seen many of his Buffs play a game, either.

"I'll be just as excited as them to see what transpires," he said.

## Notable

Embree said he has not settled on a No. 2 quarterback. Nick Hirschman and Connor Wood continue to battle for that spot. "We'll continue to talk and work our way through that and figure out what we want to do for Saturday," Embree said. ... Since 1899, CSU's first-year head coaches are 0-11-1 against CU. The only non-loss came in a 0-0 tie in 1906. ... CSU hasn't had a coach win his Rams debut since Jerry Wampfler defeated New Mexico in the 1970 opener. Overall, only three of CSU's 19 previous head coaches won their debut game. ... Guard Alex Lewis (ankle) and receiver Paul Richardson (knee) are the only two players listed on CU's injury report. Lewis is likely to play, but Richardson is out.

Follow Brian on Twitter: @BrianHowell33.

## CU, CSU join college football crowd by closing practices

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

Posted:

DenverPost.com

FORT COLLINS —The fences that line Colorado State's practice fields could barely keep a determined animal from climbing over and getting in, much less keep prying eyes out. The fact that the practice field sits next to one of the busiest streets in the city, Shields, isn't much help. "I know there's people looking," CSU coach Jim McElwain quipped. "I didn't just fall off the turnip truck yesterday."

Yet, increasingly, college coaches are finding the issue of closing practices is no laughing matter. McElwain, in his first year at the school, has closed nearly all access to practice from media, allowing just the first 20 minutes or so to be viewed. Every part of the Rams' preseason scrimmages was off-limits.

Colorado coach Jon Embree has in the past had most of his practices closed to the media and public but allowed viewing of select scrimmages. Not this year. He has completely shut out the media from practices and scrimmages.

That means virtually no one outside the two programs has watched either team practice before they step on the field Saturday in the season opener at Sports Authority Field at Mile High.

At CSU, the closed-door policy has been a bit of a culture shock.

After all, iconic Rams coach Sonny Lubick left his practices open for all to see for the better part of two decades. "Who are we locking in or who are we locking out?" Lubick said. "I never worried about it at all."

Steve Fairchild, whom McElwain replaced, also had much more of an open-door policy.

But a new media universe in which anyone with a smart phone can take a picture or a video and post it online seconds later has coaches spooked. Couple that with fans who are much more knowledgeable about what they see and what information might be helpful to opponents is leading more college coaches to shut everyone out.

Lubick understands the paranoia of today's coaches, although not always for strategic reasons.

"Sometimes a coach or assistants cannot be themselves," Lubick said. "It gets tweeted out. What worries me is if someone puts something out there if a coach gets mad at a kid."

Closed practices are not a new phenomenon at Colorado. Former coach Gary Barnett closed practices during the majority of his tenure. After Barnett's ouster, the Dan Hawkins era featured more open practices as the university looked to usher in a new era of transparency, but Hawkins later began tightening access.

Embree said his decision to close all practices this fall is about keeping his players focused.

"We had so many young guys that are going to be contributing and playing," Embree said. "I just didn't want them to read or hear how good they were or weren't. They have a bad practice and all of a sudden that's the day (a reporter) is doing a feature story on them. I didn't want the quarterbacks going through that, either."

In 2009, Hawkins closed spring practices to the public when he felt too much information about his team's formations, plays and players' roles started showing up on message boards and blogs.

"The reality is we try to be fan-friendly, as media-friendly as we possibly can," Hawkins said at the time. "For some people, they can't resist the temptation (to post on the Internet)."

In 2010, Arkansas conducted a study under then-coach Bobby Petrino, getting responses from 116 FBS programs about their practice policies. A review of the data showed 64 programs (55 percent) had closed practices — and that



included the trend of opening the first 30 minutes of practices to media, mainly for picture and video purposes, before shutting down the rest of the session. Of the other 52 schools, 44 programs had fully open practices. Other programs had policies varied enough not to be placed on either list.

That was then. The number of schools running truly open practices continues to shrink. In that study, every Pac-10 school was listed as having open practices. In the current Pac-12, only four schools do, with others varying their practice policies without totally cutting off access. Oregon, Colorado, Stanford and Washington State have closed all practices this fall.

"I think every situation is different," said New Mexico coach Bob Davie, who spent five seasons coaching Notre Dame. "I learned early on when I was at Notre Dame, if you allow people to come to practice, which I really have no problem doing, but then they have a responsibility to write everything they see. You can't have somebody come to practice and then say, 'Hey look, man, don't write that.' "

And yet many coaches do, both in college and in the NFL, as a compromise to allow the media to get a better feel for the athletes they are reporting about. Arizona coach Rich Rodriguez allows beat reporters to watch practice, but not report on practice.

But that's the exception in an era of ever tightening access.

"In today's world, of all of the things that now get out, it's just the way it is," McElwain said. "Before maybe there wasn't that sense of having, for lack of a better term, secrecy."

Staff writer Tom Kensler contributed to this report.

Christopher Dempsey: 303-954-1279, [cdempsey@denverpost.com](mailto:cdempsey@denverpost.com) or [twitter.com/dempseypost](https://twitter.com/dempseypost)

## Colorado coach Jon Embree expecting the unexpected in opening matchup

By Tom Kensler The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

**BOULDER** — Has there ever been a football matchup between Colorado and Colorado State with more unknowns?

CU coach Jon Embree, addressing the media Tuesday during his first weekly luncheon, said he couldn't speak to that historical perspective. But, yes, there appears to be a ton of uncertainties for both sides in preparing for Saturday's Rocky Mountain Showdown.

Colorado State, 3-9 in 2011, has a new head coach in Jim McElwain, with a new staff and new ideas. Colorado lost 28 seniors from last year's 3-10 squad, has a new starting quarterback in Kansas transfer Jordan Webb and includes 16 freshmen on its two-deep, including kick returners.

Nevermind preparing for potential surprises by Colorado State, Embree said he had little clue about how his own team will play. CU's senior class of just eight members is tied with Indiana and Rice for fewest among major college teams.

"I'm not a prediction guy. You know me," Embree said when asked about his team. "I'll be just as excited to see what transpires.

"You'll see a team that's physical running the ball. And a team that runs to the ball defensively. You're going to see a lot of young talent out there. We have more team speed than what we've had in the past. Now, whether (that speed) goes in the right direction or not, we'll see. But it will go fast."

Embree and his defensive staff no doubt will be holding its breath when CU's youngsters in the secondary are defending the pass. Kenneth Crawley, a true freshman from Washington, D.C., is listed on the depth chart as the starter at left cornerback and is backed up by another true freshman, Jeffrey Hall of New Orleans. Also, true freshmen are listed as the top reserves at free safety (Marques Mosley of Upland, Calif.) and right cornerback (Yuri Wright of metropolitan New York).

Other first-year CU players expected to see significant action Saturday include wide receiver Gerald Thomas, fullback Christian Powell and defensive tackle Josh Tupou. Also, Mosley (kickoffs) and Crawley (punts) will be the primary returners.

"We've got freshmen that are looking spectacular, honestly," CU's Webb said Tuesday.

Embree often recalls that he played for Colorado as a freshman tight end in the 1980s and this group ought to be able to handle it as well.

"It's their first game," Embree said, "but what we're trying to get done here is to get guys to understand that it doesn't matter who you're playing, you have to play at a certain level and try to create that standard."

But, he added, opening jitters can cause funny things to happen.

"No matter how much you work on how we're going to stretch and this and that," Embree said, "trust me, you're going to have guys on the wrong end (of the field)."

As for preparing to face McElwain and his staff, Embree said: "There's a lot to have to look at (on film) and filter through. It presents a challenge. But I think it's going to be like that every year with your opening game."

Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280, [tkensler@denverpost.com](mailto:tkensler@denverpost.com) or [twitter.com/tomkensler](https://twitter.com/tomkensler)

## Colorado coach Jon Embree anxious to see how Buffs perform in opener

By Tom Kensler The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — Even as hard as the team works during August in all phases of preparation, college football coaches aren't quite sure what to expect in a season opener.

It's both an exciting and nervous time for everyone. So perhaps to break some of the tension, Colorado coach Jon Embree interjected a bit of levity Tuesday into his first weekly media luncheon.

Asked what fans can expect of Colorado in Saturday's Rocky Mountain Showdown at Sports Authority Field at Mile High, Embree quipped: "See some black jerseys and gold pants."

But seriously, folks ...

"I'm not a prediction guy, you know me," Embree said when asked about his team. "I'll be just as excited to see what transpires.

"You'll see a team that's physical running the ball. And a team that runs to the ball defensively. You're going to see a lot of young talent out there. We have more team speed than what we've had in the past. Now, whether it goes in the right direction or not, we'll see. But it will go fast."

Embree said he is impressed with Colorado State after reviewing last year's CSU game films.

Among his observations of the Rams:

"Offensively, the two guys that jump out at you are the center (junior Weston Richburg) and the running back (junior Chris Nwoke); those are two very good football players," Embree said.

"Defensively, you have to start with Barrett (junior right defensive end Shaquil Barrett), a very good player," Embree said. "He can come off the edge. He can come inside. He can cover. Skelton (senior middle linebacker James Skelton), I like him. He's an old-school, downhill linebacker that will hit you in the mouth. And I love (Austin) Gray, the (sophomore) safety. He has good range, and he likes to make every tackle."

Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280, [tkensler@denverpost.com](mailto:tkensler@denverpost.com) or [twitter.com/tomkensler](https://twitter.com/tomkensler)

The Field House — Blogs — The Denver Post

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AUGUST 29, 2012, 7:32 AM

## Colorado QB Jordan Webb expecting big things from freshman Gerald Thomas

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

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**BOULDER** — Can true freshman wide receiver Gerald Thomas assume Colorado's deep-threat role until junior Paul Richardson returns from rehabbing his surgically repaired knee?

Sounds like new CU quarterback Jordan Webb has confidence that Thomas, the first-year player who played high school ball in suburban Dallas, will make an immediate impact.

Originally from New Orleans, Thomas (5-feet-11 and 175 pounds) is listed as No. 2 at the "Z" wide receiver position behind redshirt-freshman Nelson Spruce.

"Gerald Thomas is a young guy (but) we're really going to count on him to make some big plays for us," Webb said. "I think he's ready for that."

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ARTICLE PRINTED FROM THE FIELD HOUSE

**<http://blogs.denverpost.com/colleges/2012/08/29/colorado-qb-jordan-webb-expecting-big-freshman-gerald-thomas/24462/>**

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## Frei: Rocky Mountain Showdown belongs on CU, CSU campuses

By Terry Frei The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

The Rocky Mountain Showdown, which will play out Saturday at Sports Authority Field at Mile High in front of thousands of empty seats, should be headed back to Fort Collins and Boulder.

The Colorado-Colorado State game has become a joke in Denver.

It's an oversimplification to entirely chalk it up to the recent struggles of both programs. The contracts with the financially struggling Denver Metro Sports Commission should be torn up, figuratively or in actuality. Those contracts run through 2019 but include escape hatches. This also can get into pragmatism and the right thing to do.

One year, the game should be at CU's Folsom Field.

The next year, it should be at CSU's Hughes Stadium or, if the project moves forward, the Rams' new on-campus stadium.

Yes, I've felt this way for a long time. My position previously has had little to do with the attendance figures for the game, which have been declining.

But with CSU's stadium campaign emphasizing the electricity and value of the on-campus football experience, and with another disappointing crowd figure looming for the game this weekend — and the official announced figure will be far higher than actual attendance — it underscores why the Rocky Mountain Showdown doesn't belong in Denver anymore.

The game isn't working as a neutral site for the schools' supporters to convene. It also is failing miserably to lure the nonaligned residents of a vibrant state with so many move-ins from other states who cling to past loyalties. Move it back to the college towns, where college football — despite a few successful exceptions involving bigger games played at "neutral" sites — belongs.

My alma mater, CU, should not be allowed to get away with haughtily demanding two home games to one at CSU in each three-year cycle.

Granted, this kind of in-state, nonleague matchup is unusual for CU's new conference, the Pac-12, which annually winds down with five deep-rooted rivalries — California-Stanford, Oregon-Oregon State, Washington-Washington State, UCLA-USC and Arizona-Arizona State. Utah-Colorado is never going to rival those matchups, because of tradition as much as boundaries.

But neither should the Buffs' intrastate rivalry be treated as wedging in a game against, say Utah State. CU has been guilty of creating that impression in the past. It's galling and shortsighted all the time, but it's especially galling when the Buffaloes haven't been successful enough on the field to back up that air of superiority.

If Colorado State president Tony Frank gives the go-ahead soon to the on-campus stadium project — and his decision will focus on the economic viability and little else — I'll feel even stronger about this. I've been to more than 50 of the stadiums used by Football Bowl Subdivision teams. It takes an extraordinary environment, such as UCLA's home games in the beautiful Rose Bowl in Pasadena, to make the off-campus setting anything remotely as energizing as going back to a campus. That's true for the fan of the home school, but also for fans visiting a school for the first time, as a member of the media, an alumnus of the "opposing" school or as, say, a fan making check marks on a bucket list. In this case, it's also true of either CSU fans visiting the campus in what they belittle as "The People's Republic of Boulder," or CU fans venturing to a new CSU on-campus stadium and making cracks about "Aggies."

If CSU decides it must stick with Hughes, at least that's the Rams' home stadium, most likely re-embraced with improvements.

Put the game back in Fort Collins, and Boulder.

Terry Frei: 303-954-1895, [tfrei@denverpost.com](mailto:tfrei@denverpost.com) or [twitter.com/terryfreidenver](https://twitter.com/terryfreidenver)



## Reserved rivalry: CSU, CU football teams won't allow game to get best of them

Aug. 28

coloradoan.com

- Next up: CSU vs. CU, 2 p.m. Saturday, Sports Authority Field at Mile High, Denver
- TV/radio: fX/KLZ (AM 560), KCOL (AM 600), KOA (AM 850)

James Skelton wanted to say something more.

You could just tell.

But the CSU linebacker bit his tongue while talking to two reporters after practice Tuesday and said all the right things about the Rams' season-opening game Saturday in Denver against the University of Colorado. Players on both teams know this game is bigger than most, but no one wants to say so, knowing full well that it's only the first game in a 12-game season as their coaches keep reminding them.

"I just can't stop smiling, thinking about the game," Skelton said at his diplomatic best. "Playing them, there's that little bit extra to go get the job done."

Skelton, a senior from Littleton, is one of 35 players from Colorado on Colorado State University's roster. CU has 27, including senior linebacker Will Pericak.

"I grew up here in Boulder, so I'm very familiar with the CU-CSU rivalry," he said before practice. "I've seen the games growing up, and it's a rivalry. We're always playing as hard as we can; they're coming out fighting, we're coming out fighting."

"So every year, it's a good game because there's bragging rights attached to it."

CSU and CU won't ever have the kind of rivalry that exists between in-state schools Alabama and Auburn or Texas and Texas A&M or Southern California and UCLA. They don't play in the same conferences and don't have the kind of rich football tradition that makes those battles special.

"This rivalry isn't yet a rivalry where kids are raised where there is a line — you are either a Ram or a Buff," CU coach Jon Embree said.

The players and coaches involved might not particularly like each other, but they don't hate each other, either. New CSU coach Jim McElwain, the offensive coordinator for Alabama teams that won two national championships in the past three years, said he'd like to see both programs raise their profile and become "relevant" again on a national stage as they were in the 1990s, when they drew sellout crowds of more than 76,000 for their annual Rocky Mountain Showdown.

Saturday, with both teams coming off three-win seasons, they might not top the 57,186 who showed up a year ago.

"I'm really looking forward to the long haul of making this a relevant rivalry," McElwain said.

Both coaches are trying to keep their teams on an even keel emotionally, hoping they're fired up to play the game but not wound up so tightly that they lose their focus. It's a fine line in any game, let alone a rivalry game that also serves as the season-opener.

"It's hard to contain your excitement," said CSU H-back Jake Levin, a junior from Brighton. "But everybody works that way. You focus practice to practice; you don't ever look too far forward because it's all about what's happening right now instead of what's happening Saturday. You've got to get through Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday before you get to Saturday."

The Rams and Buffs got through Monday, and Tuesday they still were trying to keep their emotions in check. CU players, speaking before practice in Boulder, continually talked about how much improvement they've seen since the

end of last season as players adjust to Embree's coaching style. And CSU players, speaking after practice in Fort Collins, were eager to get out in front of their fans for the first time and show people what they've been working on since McElwain was hired as their new coach in mid-December.

It's still an emotional rivalry, especially for the instate players, many with friends and even family members at the other school.

"At the end of the season, a win is still just a 1 on the win-loss count, but it's one I've been watching since I've been a kid," said CSU tackle Joe Caprioglio, a senior from Highlands Ranch. "It's always been big in Colorado, so definitely it'll be fun to win.

"It'll be a good time if we get this one."

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- The Big Trend in Brewing: Single-Serve Coffee (T. Rowe Price)
- Raiders QB Terrelle Pryor: "Ohio State suspension screwed me" (SI.com)