

Will Pericak hopes to lift his NFL hopes from Colorado Buffaloes

roots

By Jeff Legwold *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*

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When Jacoby Jones scored two touchdowns in the Super Bowl just over a week ago, he provided another ray of hope for those draft hopefuls who don't find themselves on the seemingly endless list of bowl games or in the weekly slate of primetime matchups through what becomes an autumn of football struggle.

As a junior at Lane College in 2005, Jones' team went 0-10. That had followed a 3-8 season in '04. For those players the weeks and months leading up to an NFL draft are what they make of it.

Boulder native Will Pericak knows this. Pericak was a four-year starter for Colorado, a hometown guy who arrived on campus as a tight end, but was switched to the defensive line just days into his redshirt year.

The Buffs finished 1-11 this past season, on the receiving end of almost weekly blowouts. They were 3-10 in 2011, 5-7 in 2010 and 3-9 in 2009.

"It definitely didn't help being on a team that finished 1-11," Pericak said. "But at the end of the day, what you put on tape shows the NFL what you're about, that you'll play hard, regardless of the circumstances, that you'll run to the ball, do what you can to make some plays."

And the NFL scouts made the requisite trips to Boulder, but it was more due diligence than anything else really, the Buffs were not must-see, that's just the way it goes. Pericak was certainly on the radar, as a four-year starter at a BCS program would be, but in recent weeks he has picked a good time to pump up his status.

He went to the East-West Game last month and impressed scouts with his ability to play with power and quickness against plenty of offensive linemen with draftable grades. Several scouts said in the three days of work in full pads leading up to the all-star game, Pericak consistently flashed the ability to make plays.

Pericak also had to do it against several players who had the benefit of bowl game practices, basically an extra two month of football in some cases. The Buffs played their season finale — a 45-32 loss to Utah — on Nov. 23.

"Absolutely it helped to go there, it's all about the practice," Pericak said. "The game, sure they want to see you perform and your family can see you, but the week, those practices, are really important. Especially for a guy like me.

"I don't really know what they thought of me before that, and I think there was some rustiness when I first got down there, but I hope I showed them I can practice well, play well. You want to make some plays, win some of those 1-on-1s."

Pericak also has the benefit of versatility on his side of the ledger as well. Much like Broncos defensive end Derek Wolfe played up and down the defensive line in his collegiate career at Cincinnati — that certainly helped his draft cause before the Broncos took him with the 36th pick of the draft and he went on to start every game of his rookie season — Pericak has done much the same in his career.

He has played defensive end, lined up directly across from opposing centers, a nose tackle spot in the Buffs' 4-3 scheme and has lined up at the other defensive tackle spot — the 3-technique, in the gap between the guard and tackle, usually slightly closer to the guard.

And with all the situational defense teams play these days, with different rotations in the defensive line with their base, nickel (five defensive backs) and dime (six defensive backs) packages, any player who can fill multiple roles with some effort could carve out a roster spot.

"I hope that's the case," Pericak said. "I played defensive end this past season because we had a need there, and the coaches thought it would be good to show everything I could do. Hopefully some people see what they wanted to in that."

Pericak's pro day, along with the rest of the Buffs draft hopefuls — tackle David Bakhtiari and tight end Nick Kasa were invited to the NFL scouting combine, which opens on Feb. 20 in Indianapolis — will be March 13 in Boulder.

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