

CU Buffs' David Bakhtiari says he's ready to go to work in NFL

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

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INDIANAPOLIS — As former Colorado offensive tackle David Bakhtiari stands on the doorstep to the NFL, he has a different perspective on the business of football. Not all endings are happy.

"I know it's a business. I know how hard it is to get into the league and to stay in the league," Bakhtiari said. "I grew up around it, but it's still my dream."

Bakhtiari's brother, Eric, is a linebacker who has been released from an NFL team 14 times since completing his playing career at the University of San Diego in 2007. Eric Bakhtiari was released twice last season by the 49ers, who are coached by Jim Harbaugh, his collegiate coach. That includes being cut in January just before San Francisco began its playoff run to the Super Bowl.

Nevertheless, after the Buffs went 1-11 in 2012, David Bakhtiari elected to forgo his final season in Boulder to plunge into the uncertain waters of the NFL draft. And he said he did it knowing the challenges that would follow.

"(Eric) has been there through the whole process, through every little thing, through deciding whether to come out, everything at Colorado, including my game," Bakhtiari said. "And even now he's helping me train. It's hard to get cut when the team goes to the Super Bowl, but I've talked to him about all of it."

"A lot of guys don't know what to expect or how it is, or what coaches want. I feel like I know exactly what they want because he's shown me, told me all of the things he's been through."

Bakhtiari was a three-year starter at tackle for the Buffs, the past two seasons at left tackle and one season at right tackle when future first-round pick Nate Solder was at left tackle. Bakhtiari missed only one game in those three seasons — against Oregon in 2012 because of a knee sprain — and has declared himself for one of the deepest drafts among offensive linemen over the past two decades.

He is slightly undersized for the NFL, measuring 6-foot-4, 299 pounds at the scouting combine. Some teams see him as a potential guard prospect as he moves into the pro game.

Bakhtiari also said because of the Buffs' recent struggles — 13-28 in his past three seasons — he felt like an unknown to many teams during his four-day stint at the combine.

"I never went to a bowl game. I told every scout I went through so much adversity, but I was able to prosper in that adversity," Bakhtiari said. "I showed up week in, week out and played consistent ball. I think it spoke volumes about the kind of character I have. I was still out there making plays."

"A lot of teams were just trying to get to know me because I am a redshirt junior."

Bakhtiari said he believes his NFL position will be at left tackle but that he is willing to move to any position that an NFL team wants.

Bakhtiari showed some quickness with a 5.09-second clocking in the 40-yard dash, 12th fastest among the

offensive linemen. But several scouts say he needs more strength. Bakhtiari's arm measured at 34 inches, shorter than many personnel executives want on an offensive tackle who has to battle edge rushers standing 6-4 or 6-5, on average.

"I can play any position," Bakhtiari said. "I don't think the height is an issue. At the next level, you need to have the athleticism to play on the outside, and I think I have athleticism to play on the outside, and I have the leverage to play on the inside as well.

"I have guys tell me I'm suited for left tackle and I've had teams say even center. I tell them I would just love to play. I want to get on the field, left tackle, left guard, center, right guard, right tackle, extra tight end, whatever."

Bakhtiari said he went to visit Solder this past season — for a Dec. 16 game against the 49ers when his brother, Eric, played on special teams for San Francisco. That's when David Bakhtiari started to think the NFL should be his next move.

His next test will be the Buffs' March 13 pro day.

"The biggest point I came up with was I felt I was mentally mature enough; I wanted to make this my career. I want to treat it like a full-time job, and I want to be surrounded by guys who also want this to be their job," Bakhtiari said. "Someone told me if you go to the next level, you're going to be taking a grown man's job, steady income from somebody. I said yes, I understand, and I was able to cope with it.

"I want the next step."

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MacIntyre to be positive, firm with Buffs

By Ted Miller

Nothing so represents the bravado of football than a team running out of the stadium tunnel to a pregame eruption of cheers or -- on the road -- boos and catcalls. It's a moment of machismo and chest pounding, as two groups of young men attempt to exude confidence and swagger under a scoreboard reading 0-0.

So just imagine what it was like for Colorado over the final third of the 2012 season.

The Buffaloes would sprint onto the field ... and ... and ... be a punchline. It was impossible for them not to know this. They'd take the field and know they were terrible and about to get pushed around.

Not exactly why an athlete dedicates so much time and sweat to an enterprise.

The Buffs ranked 120th -- last -- in the nation in scoring defense in 2012. They were 117th in scoring offense. They "led" the nation with a negative-28.17 scoring differential, despite playing four games decided by a touchdown or less, one of which was a loss to FSC Sacramento State.



Coach Mike MacIntyre has re-built programs before, and Colorado proves to be no different in 2013.

This is the mess new coach Mike MacIntyre inherited. It will not fix itself overnight.

"It's a process -- daily," he said. "It's not waving a magic wand. It's an all-the-time thing."

Part of the reason MacIntyre was hired after Jon Embree was controversially fired after just two seasons -- albeit miserable ones -- is that he's coached a team wallowing in the mire before. He took over a San Jose State squad that went 2-10 in 2009 and, well, he went 1-12 in 2010.

But then he went 5-7. This past fall, the Spartans were one of the season's feel-good stories, going 11-2 and winning a bowl game, while only losing to Stanford and Utah State.

He has a blueprint for how to rebuild a program, though obviously he's in the Pac-12 now, where there won't be as many Texas-San Antonios, Texas States and New Mexico States propping up the win-loss record.

It starts with small goals -- weight lifting totals, body fat percentages and running times. Then it moves onto the field, as it will when spring practices start on March 7. The Buffs have a lot of questions, a lot to work on and a

few supporters who believe much good is going to happen in 2013.

Ah, but that's where MacIntyre's blueprint comes in. He's going to bang a relentless drum of positivity, while trying to push a team to reach his expectations.

Positive, mind you, isn't soft. Nor is it easy. MacIntyre wants to convince his players that focus, intensity, attention to detail and the daily exhaustion their pursuit demands are a sweet nectar worth seeking at every moment. Or something like that.

"I think it's positive and firm at the same time," he said. "Some people think when you say, 'Positive,' that you're saying that we're just going to look at everything and be happy and everything is going to be OK. It's positive and firm. And what I mean by firm is if you're supposed to do it a certain way, you do it that way. You don't demean them. You keep pushing them. And all the sudden the light goes on."

While there are questions all over the field, including a lack of overall team speed and massive issues with the defensive front seven, quarterback will be front-and-center for most fans. MacIntyre will bring in a new pistol offense for what figures to be a wide-open competition.

Spring practices will be wrapped around spring break, so it basically works out to two sessions. MacIntyre said the first session will be basic in terms of implementing his offense. He wants to see what each of his six QBs has to offer. They will be evaluated during the break, and the coaches will make a depth chart, with the intention of narrowing the race to three candidates.

"Then we're going to let them compete the last half of spring," he said.

And the true freshman [Sefo Liufau](#) arrives in the fall to perhaps thicken the plot.

As for the rest of the team, MacIntyre makes no secret that he's a bit of a mad scientist in terms of evaluations. He'll see a guy playing receiver and say, "tight end." He'll see a tight end and go "offensive tackle." Or he'll switch defensive backs to receiver. And vice versa. He likes to move guys around, particularly when the switch improves the athleticism at the new position. For example, he already plans to move junior [D.D. Goodson](#) from running back to receiver this spring.

But, really, the new Xs and Os and present talent aren't going to make things easy. As MacIntyre said, there's no magic wand on hand. While a new coach typically brings an uptick in enthusiasm for a program, the reality is the nattering nabobs of negativism aren't going to say or write many nice things about the Buffs this offseason. MacIntyre's biggest challenge is rebuilding his team's confidence and psyche.

"We can let the outside affect us," he said. "But that's hard because they get bombarded when things aren't going as well."

The offseason question will be how much legitimate belief can MacIntyre instill in advance of Colorado running out of the tunnel on Aug. 31 against a Colorado State team that established for the Buffs a pitiful trajectory for the 2012 season.

Ex-UT QB embracing fresh start at Colorado

By Tim Griffin, Staff writer

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BOULDER, Colo. — Fresh starts are all about moving forward.

Connor Wood figures he received a new lease on life when Colorado coach Mike MacIntyre was hired in December. It has given the junior quarterback an impetus to reboot his career and make the most of his opportunity.

The former four-star recruit from Houston Second Baptist High School was mired in a forgettable first year last season with the Buffaloes. His struggles mirrored those of his team, which limped home with a 1-11 record that was the worst in the 123-season history of the program.

“To me, it's about using that experience I got last year,” Wood said. “Those interceptions, those good plays and bad plays can be used to jump ahead to this new time and make a case for myself.”

Wood won the Buffs' starting job late in the season, but struggled with the opportunity. He made it through barely a quarter in his first start before he was pulled after throwing only six passes in a 38-3 loss to Washington. Colorado's struggles in that game underscored its offensive impotence that eventually cost second-year coach Jon Embree his job.

Four different quarterbacks saw action in 2012 as the Buffaloes sputtered, ranking 117th out of 120 FBS teams with a scoring average of 17.8 points per game. The defense ranked last nationally by allowing 46 points per game and was in the bottom six in the four major statistical categories.

Although he did not play in Colorado's season finale against Utah, Wood did see considerable action late in the season. His numbers weren't spectacular — he completed 21 of 42 passes for 265 yards with four interceptions and one touchdown.

“To me, it was disappointing, both from a team perspective and the fact that I don't believe that I've played to the abilities I know I can play,” Wood said. “But I can put a positive spin on it. You can't think about failure as anything but a learning experience.”

After starting his college career at Texas, Wood was involved in a ballyhooed positional battle to replace Colt McCoy in 2010.

Garrett Gilbert, Case McCoy and David Ash competed for the starting job with Wood, and the decision was made by then-UT offensive coordinator Greg Davis and coach Mack Brown.

But after earning a share of third string with Ash behind Gilbert and McCoy, Wood elected to transfer to Colorado to join Embree's program rather than sit on the bench in Austin.

“As a football player, you're confident in your own ability,” Wood said. “I believed that I could have gone to UT and could have played. I told the coaches I didn't agree with the decision on the depth chart when I was there, but I respected it because they were the coaches.”

Looking back, Wood said he has no regrets about his decision and doesn't hold any grudges against the UT coaches.

“It's a cliché to say, but you really can't live with regret,” Wood said. “Yeah, hindsight is 20-20, and there's a chance because of the way that the quarterback situation has worked out that I could have had another chance. But you can't think that way. I just think of the many positives of me being here.”

Wood will be involved in a six-way battle for the Buffs' quarterback position when spring practice begins March 7.

“Connor is a great young man and had a great high school career,” said MacIntyre, who led San Jose State to its first national ranking in 37 years last season. “I think his confidence level has bounced around a little. But this is a new start for all of the guys. And he's going to get a great shot like all of the quarterbacks.”

Wood is excited about the challenge of running MacIntyre's pistol-based offense, saying that it appears similar to the ground-heavy philosophy of former UT assistant coach Bryan Harsin.

But more than anything, the chance to begin anew is what is driving him with spring practice approaching.

“This is my fourth offense and basically my third different coaching staff since I've been in college football,” Wood said. “Their main impressions will be coming from spring football. It's good because I can take myself away from last season and concentrate because this is a new slate, a new time. It's exciting.”

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