

Football: Former CU Buffs tight end Nick Kasa shows NFL he's a quick learner

By Jeff Legwold *The Denver Post Boulder Daily Camera*

Posted:

Buffzone.com

MOBILE, Ala. -- He is surrounded by all-conference players, All Americans and bowl game MVPs, yet Nick Kasa still has found a way to stand out.

He is in a crowd of NFL hopefuls he never expected to be in, playing a position he had never tried until his career at Colorado was in its final stages.

"There's no way I thought I'd be in this position," Kasa said. "Just no way. Not even close, not even close. And if I wouldn't have switched positions, I wouldn't be."

Kasa is the lone representative from a football-playing college or university in Colorado at the Senior Bowl this week. The former prep All-American defensive lineman at Legacy, now is a tight end who has put himself on the NFL's radar.

With disappointment weighing on him and his confidence draining, Kasa talked to former Buffs coach Jon Embree about a position switch from the defensive line eight games into the 2011 season. Embree, a former tight ends coach in the NFL who was hired by the Cleveland Browns on Thursday to coach the position again, saw potential and Kasa saw freedom.

"I really wasn't doing anything on the D-line," Kasa said. "I was just kind of filling a slot on the roster. Coming in as a big recruit, it just wasn't right for me. I felt like I needed to accomplish something for the team. I was just getting in there being a filler, for reps. And without coach Embree talking to me about it, and then moving me over, none of this happens."

"He's a big guy that can run, very athletic," Embree said. "J.D. Burkhardt (former Buffs tight ends coach) did a great job of working with him on a daily basis and helping Nick with his confidence. Nick being there this week is a testament to his work ethic and his desire and want-to. I'm very happy for him, I actually talked about him in my interview with Cleveland."

At a time when the tight end has become the match-up offenses believe they can win all over the field, Kasa has shown the speed of a smaller player despite being 6-foot-5 1/2-inches tall and 271 pounds.

As the week progressed in Mobile, scouts from several teams said Kasa seemed to catch the ball better every day against some of the nation's best defensive prospects. In a red-zone drill during Thursday's practice, Kasa plucked a low fastball with a defender hanging all over him.

"In a lot of ways, I think the sky's kind of the limit for me and I think I've only scratched the surface of what I can do," Kasa said. "I've done pretty well with just one year under my belt. I'd like to see what I can do with eight like most of these guys have. I know there's a lot I still have to learn, but I'm learning fast."

"This all has turned football around for me. I was really down on myself. And even as disappointing as it was this past year (when the Buffs finished 1-11), I felt like I kind of discovered the game again."

Embree said Kasa's time at defensive end -- Kasa played in 24 games on defense in his career in Boulder, including one start, against Texas Tech in 2010 -- could help his cause.

"You look at the way Nick can run, that athleticism and that he plays with that mindset of a defensive player, he should impact things on special teams right away," Embree said. "That defensive background will be a plus for him."

The Oakland Raiders staff, including coach Dennis Allen, a former Broncos defensive coordinator, is expected to give Kasa plenty of playing time in Saturday's game. Kasa has often worked with the North's No. 1 offense in practices this week.

"I can move pretty well for being as big as I am," Kasa said. "That's kind of the thing in the NFL right now. But obviously I'm still pretty inexperienced, but a lot of teams say just keep doing what you're doing," Kasa said. "I'm staying on track and I'm trying to do as well as I can."

"He'll have bright future no doubt," Embree said. "His strengths will be a premium for what offenses are doing right now."

But as for all of those calls Embree has received this week from tight ends coaches around the league about Kasa? Well, the Browns' newest assistant coach says those will have to wait.

"I have some of them trying to get information, but I'm not giving it out," Embree said with a laugh. "They're going to have to figure it out on their own right now, because Nick has an opportunity to realize a dream."

Former CU coach hired as Cleveland's TE coach

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

University of Colorado administrators and football fans might not think much of the coaching abilities of former head football coach Jon Embree and his assistants, but there appears to be plenty of respect for them in the football community.

Embree was hired as tight ends coach by the Cleveland Browns on Thursday nearly two months after being fired in Boulder. He produced a 4-21 record over two years trying to rebuild his alma mater.

Embree will work for newly hired Cleveland head coach Rob Chudzinski and offensive coordinator Norv Turner.

"It's just good to get going again and be coaching," Embree said. "I'm excited to get going and work with Norv and Chud. Norv's track record as an offensive coordinator is pretty strong. So I'm excited to work with him and some of the things he does from a creative standpoint with the tight ends. It should be a lot of fun."

Embree is the fourth member of last season's CU coaching staff to be hired by another school or organization. Former offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy was hired by the Kansas City Chiefs as an offensive assistant coach, former defensive coordinator Greg Brown was hired by two-time defending national champion Alabama to coach defensive backs and former linebackers coach Brian Cabral was hired as defensive coordinator at Indiana State.

Prior to being hired as CU's head coach, Embree spent five years in the NFL coaching tight ends for the Chiefs and Washington Redskins.

Embree said he talked with numerous friends in coaching about living and working in Cleveland and received positive reviews. He said former CU quarterbacks coach Rip Scherer and offensive line coach Steve Marshall both coached in Cleveland and said good things about the city and the organization.

Embree and his wife plan to keep their home in Boulder and make it their permanent residence. He said they had talked about building a home in Boulder in the years before he was hired as CU's coach. Embree said that he continues to hear from many of the players he used to coach.

"When I look back on the time at Colorado, I look back at the relationships that I've had with the players and that I continue to have," Embree said.

Embree founded the Buffs4Life charity in 2005 to help former CU student-athletes in need. He said he plans to continue his work with the organization. Its latest endeavor is endowing a scholarship with the CU athletic department. Embree said Buffs4Life is also trying to provide assistance to the family of former CU offensive lineman Bryan Stoltenberg, who died suddenly earlier this month after suffering serious injuries in a December traffic accident.

Vincent re-enrolls

Sports information director Dave Plati said former CU wide receiver Austin Vincent has re-enrolled in classes

at CU but nothing has been decided regarding his involvement with the football team.

Vincent left CU last year after pleading guilty to exposing himself to a female student while she was showering in a campus dorm in November 2011. He received five years probation.

Plati said Mike MacIntyre has not spoken with Vincent. Plati said Vincent is paying his way at CU and would have to walk-on if he is welcomed back into the program in the spring. It is unclear if he would be academically eligible to compete right away if he was welcomed back to the program.

Former University of Colorado head coach Jon Embree hired as Cleveland Browns tight end coach

Embree fired after 4-21 record with Buffs

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CLEVELAND - Former University of Colorado head coach Jon Embree has been hired as the tight ends coach for the Cleveland Browns, the team announced Thursday.

Embree was let go from the Buffaloes last November after a 4-21 record in two seasons.

Last year, the Buffaloes had the worst season in the 123-year history of the program. They finished 1-11 with their only victory coming in a 35-34 win at Washington State on September 23.

Now Embree gets a fresh start with the Browns, coaching a position in which he has helped developed NFL stars like Atlanta Falcons Tony Gonzalez and Jacksonville Marcedes Lewis.

"Jon is an outstanding football coach, and he has proven himself at the collegiate and NFL levels," said Browns head coach Rob Chudzinski.

"He has coached some outstanding players in this league, and has also been instrumental in developing players in college who have gone on to productive pro careers," Chudzinski continued. "We believe he can have a great impact on our tight ends, and I look forward to working with him."

Embree's last coaching job in the NFL was as the tight ends coach with the Washington Redskins in 2010.

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Friday, January 25, 2013

Season review: Colorado

By Kevin Gemmell

COLORADO (1-11, 1-8)

Grade: D-minus

MVP: As voted by the Colorado players and coaches, defensive end [Will Pericak](#) quietly put together a very consistent season and ended his career having started all 49 games. He set the school record for most career starts despite being a Type I diabetic. He posted 62 tackles, eight stops on third down with a pair of sacks, and four tackles for a loss. He was also tied for second in the conference with four forced fumbles.



What went right: Colorado's three-touchdown outburst and come-from-behind win at Washington State back in September was certainly a bright spot in a season lacking them. There was no lack of effort, and that kept them from an 'F.' [Nick Kasa](#) emerged as one of the more steady tight ends in the conference, and running backs [Christian Powell](#) and [Donta Abbron](#) combined for 947 rushing yards and nine touchdowns -- giving the Buffs a good-looking, young tandem to keep an eye on as the team transitions into the pistol. It's worth noting, too, that they cut the total number of penalties from 103 to 73 -- which was fifth in the league. And as far as we know, Ralphie didn't break a leg or sprain a hoof.

What went wrong: Besides the 11 losses? It started early when they couldn't hold double-digit leads against Colorado State and FCS Sacramento State, and it snowballed. If you want, you could really go back even earlier with the loss of wide receiver [Paul Richardson](#) in the preseason with a knee injury. Colorado ranked 100th or lower in 19 major statistical NCAA categories. The Buffaloes turned the ball over 34 times, which teams turned into 22 touchdowns and 160 total points. There was inconsistency at quarterback, which led to the worst third-down percentage in the league (29.9 percent). There's no need to pile on all of the things that went wrong statistically for the Buffs (which led to the firing of Jon Embree). It was a bad season. Plain and simple.

Outlook for 2013: With a new head coach comes the promise of optimism. And Mike MacIntyre certainly has the resume needed for rebuilding a program. He turned San Jose State into a 10-win program. In 2012, Colorado's true freshmen combined to start more games than any other team in the nation (57). No one has transferred or left the program (except [David Bakhtiari](#), who declared early for the NFL draft) so there is continuity across the board, and some youth that gained a lot of experience -- albeit the hard way. The bulk of Colorado's new staff has worked together for three seasons, so there is continuity and familiarity there as well. Don't expect six wins and a bowl game in 2013, but hoping for three or four wins shouldn't be too much to ask for.



Cleveland Browns hire Jon Embree to coach tight ends and Brian Baker for outside linebackers



By [Mary Kay Cabot, The Plain Dealer](#)

on January 24, 2013 at 12:29 PM, updated January 24, 2013 at 4:17 PM

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CLEVELAND, Ohio - The Browns have hired former Colorado head coach Jon Embree to coach tight ends on head coach Rob Chudzinski's staff.

Former University of Colorado head coach Jon Embree will join Rob Chudzinski's staff with the Cleveland Browns, The Plain Dealer learned today through a source.

AP file

They also have added former Cowboys defensive line coach [Brian Baker](#) to coach outside linebackers.

Embree, a former tight end for the Rams in 1987-88, spent the past two seasons as head coach of the Buffaloes, where he went 4-21, including 1-11 in 2012 before [being dismissed in November](#).

Prior to that, Embree was tight ends coach of the Redskins in 2010 and the Chiefs from 2006-08.

Embree also spent three seasons as an assistant at UCLA and 10 at Colorado, his alma mater. He takes over a position that includes Jordan Cameron, Alex Smith and Ben Watson, who will become a free agent on March 12.

"Jon is an outstanding football coach, and he has proven himself at the collegiate and NFL levels," Chudzinski said. "He has coached some outstanding players in this league, and has also been instrumental in developing players in college who have gone on to productive pro careers. We believe he can have a great impact on our tight ends, and I look forward to working with him."

Baker coached the Cowboys' defensive line the past two seasons under former Browns defensive coordinator Rob Ryan, who was fired by the Cowboys. In 2012, the Cowboys finished 19th in defense, including 22nd against the run and 19th against the pass. They were 16th in sacks per pass attempt.

Baker brings 17 years of NFL coaching experience, mostly with the defensive line. The Browns have hired former Jaguars assistant Joe Cullen to coach their defensive line, but Baker played outside linebacker at Maryland (1981-83) and coached the position at Georgia Tech from 1987-95.

"Brian's addition to our staff gives us another coach with extensive NFL experience," Chudzinski said. "His players have consistently achieved a great deal of success and he has coached numerous Pro Bowl-caliber players. He has coached in several defensive schemes in his career and that versatility will be valuable as he works with Ray (Horton) and the rest of our defensive staff."

Before joining the Cowboys, he coached for the Panthers, Rams, Vikings, Lions and Chargers. In the first of his two seasons with the Panthers in 2009, his line accounted for 25.5 of the team's 33 sacks. That season, end Julius Peppers recorded 10.5 sacks to earn his fifth Pro Bowl selection, and Baker helped the defense finish fourth in the NFL in both pass defense and percentage of passes intercepted. In 2010, he guided a Panthers line that had three of its members finish in the top-10 on the team in tackles.

Chudzinski will add a few more assistants, including a running backs coach. Gary Brown is not expected to be retained.

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