



# COLORADO BUFFALOES

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**Linebackers coach Brian Cabral, a Buffs fixture, won't be on the CU sidelines in 2013.**

Photo Courtesy: Associated Press



## Brooks: Cabral Reflects On Unparalleled CU Career

Release: 01/03/2013 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

**BOULDER** - In a profession as transient and volatile as coaching, leaving on your own terms is rare. Most coaches dream of it being that way, but Brian Cabral never did.

From start to finish of an extraordinary 24-year career at the University of Colorado, Cabral strongly believed the terms were set, the shots called, by Someone with more authority than whatever head coach he happened to be working for.

And Cabral worked for five of them, a remarkable run as an assistant coach, role model and mentor. The long run is over. He knew it would happen, the only unknown was when; the call came a week before Christmas.

Cabral won't be retained by new CU head coach Mike MacIntyre. But here's what separates Cabral from his profession's pack: He is as much at peace with MacIntyre's decision as he is with his two-plus decades as a CU assistant and the four before that as a celebrated Buffaloes player. His 23 years as a full-time assistant are the most at the school in any sport, but Cabral's legacy won't be measured in seasons worked.

"All good things have to come to an end - and here it is. I just want to say 'Aloha' and 'Thank you' to all the

### BUFFALO EXTRAS



Photo Gallery



B.G.'s 2010 Column On Cabral



Brian Cabral Photos

supporters, fans and people that believe in the Buffaloes," Cabral said during a long and emotional conversation in a Boulder coffee shop.

**HE IS AS UPBEAT NOW** as he was when he stepped on campus four decades ago to play for Bill Mallory. "I'm leaving here on a positive note with no regrets," Cabral said. "I've been fortunate, privileged and blessed for 24 years. I can't tell you how fast it's gone. It felt like the blink of an eye . . . but it's all been good and it's not a shock. For some reason, I was preparing myself for this year."

It might be difficult for some to believe, but Cabral and the head coach who finally let him go "connected" - that's Cabral's term - in what turned out to be Cabral's exit interview. "I feel very confident and comfortable knowing him," he said of MacIntyre. "I can still be a Buffalo; I can cheer for Mike MacIntyre. He impressed me very much . . . everything I know about him, he's in it for the right reasons. I'm excited about it."

That endorsement speaks as much about Cabral as it does about MacIntyre. Those who know Cabral shouldn't be shocked; if MacIntyre had failed to impress him, Cabral would have grinned, kept it to himself and let others form their own opinions over time. Cabral is a man of very few discouraging words.

After a stellar playing career at CU in the mid-1970s, he returned in 1989 to work as a graduate assistant coaching the inside linebackers on former coach Bill McCartney's staff. A year later, he was named linebackers coach, and his list of pupils since then reads like a college Who's Who at the position: Greg Biekert, Chad Brown, Ted Johnson, Matt Russell, Jordon Dizon . . . the roll call is nearly endless.

Ask any what Cabral meant to them and their answers would be along the lines of what Dizon told me in the winter of 2007 when his CU career was done. Dizon was as intense and instinctive a linebacker as Cabral ever coached, and he had just been named the Big 12 Conference's Defensive Player of the Year.

I asked Dizon to reflect on his career and what motivated him to stay at full throttle every play, every Saturday.

"It was simple," Dizon answered. "I never wanted to disappoint my coach . . . never."

Added Matt Russell, CU's 1996 Butkus Award winner: "I never wanted to get that look from him, the one that said he was disappointed in what I'd done. That was my greatest motivation. I think going back to Biekert, Johnson, Brown, (Ron) Merkerson - everybody he coached, the loyalty Cabral instilled in us was tremendous. All of his players were pleasers."

**A COACH DOESN'T IMPACT** his guys like that unless he cares about them from the time the pads first go on until they come off for the final time. And make no mistake, Cabral cared - deeply.

Russell, now in his fourth season in administration with the Denver Broncos and about to complete his first as director of player personnel, invited Cabral to be a groomsman in his wedding. Russell has not lost touch with Cabral and vows he never will.

"He's literally second to my dad as being the most influential in my life," Russell said. "I can't thank him enough for what he's done for me and every guy he coached. He treated us all like sons. There's obviously the football aspect, his resume speaks for itself. But any issue away from football, he was always there to offer his wisdom. He loved every one of us."

It was simply how Cabral coached his players and conducted his business. He is not a showman, not a spotlight seeker, not a screamer. His trademarks are humility and a hunger to make a difference.

"To know that I've influenced, impacted a young man's life for the good, the better, and been a positive influence, it means the world to me," he said. "My goal has always been to help those guys be their best. Every one of them was so different and needed to be motivated so differently. The fun part of coaching is learning how to push the right buttons to get the response they need to give."

"Just to know that I did make a difference in someone's life, that means more than any championships. In reality, I do what I do because of what a coach did for me - the same things. A coach (the late Dan Stavelly) impacted who I am, who I became, why I do what I do. That, to me, is the greatest reward . . . that, yeah, I did touch someone."

But Cabral touched more than CU's linebackers. He has been the school's assistant head coach and associate head coach, and on two occasions (2004, 2010) he served as the program's interim head coach, with the latter appointment following the in-season firing of Dan Hawkins.

**IN NOVEMBER OF 2010**, the Buffs had splintered in almost every area; Cabral's calling was to pull them back together for the season's final three games.

CU won the first two, defeating Iowa State (34-14) and Kansas State (44-36). The team had been reunited and reignited. Before the win against K-State, Cabral had CU's poignant slogan from the McCartney Era - *"The Pride And Tradition Of The Colorado Buffaloes Will Never Be Entrusted To The Timid Or The Weak"* - reprinted high above the stage in the auditorium of the Dal Ward Athletic Center. It remains there.

After CU had won its first two games under Cabral, a reporter asked then-offensive line coach Denver Johnson if the Buffs had been playing for Colorado or for Cabral in that pair of victories. Johnson chuckled and answered, "They're one and the same." Indeed, Cabral's long and rewarding fit in CU football was as perfect as Ralphie's.

The following week, at a press conference prior to what would be the Buffs' final trip to Nebraska, Cabral reflected on his interim status and what it meant at that stage of his career.

"In the quiet moments, I think about the honor, the privilege I've had the last couple of weeks and this week," he said. "I represent every Buff that wore that helmet, every guy that put on black and gold . . . I'm living a dream right now.

"To be in this position and lead a team like this into a week like Nebraska and into a place like Lincoln, I'm so privileged, so blessed to have this opportunity. Where it goes from there, who knows? We'll see. That's out of my control. My goal, my purpose is this team, this game, this time. But I count it as a great joy to be where I am right now."

The Buffs lost 45-17 and began competition in the Pac-12 Conference the next season. The Cornhuskers won their final Big 12 North Division championship and left the following season for the Big Ten.

Remembering that defeat, Cabral said last week, "We just ran out of gas in Lincoln. I just thought, 'Doggone it, if we can just get the Huskers.' I wanted it more for the players . . . but to have that team win those two (previous) games was important to them."

That interim head coaching experience was just as important to Cabral. During that three-week period, "I never had so much fun coaching in my life," he told me. "I was consumed, I mean 24-7, and it was awesome. I never had so much fun. But it was important for the program and for those kids. That was my time, my opportunity as I look back on it. I'm very grateful and thankful to be in those situations.

"It was an important time for me in the sense of stepping in and helping a program I love . . . anytime you're an interim, it's during a turbulent time. I have experienced that two times and felt like my role, my calling, was to stand in the gap and calm the storm. I feel like I served the university, the program, our players and staff in that way."

**IT ALSO SERVED HIM** in the sense that it clarified and redefined a long-time goal. Cabral, who will turn 57 in June, has never given up on the idea of being a head coach. He believes that opportunity - or at least one to continue coaching in some capacity - is still out there. He will retire from the university and draw his pension, but he also plans to pursue an out-of-state coaching job.

"I'm going to keep all options open," he said. "I feel like I have a lot of freedom in retiring and finding where I want to go coach. One, I'm happy to have earned my pension, and two, I see it as my second career. I'm very much looking forward to that. It really doesn't matter what level (of coaching).

"I just want to go somewhere where I can be helpful. I want to continue to work with young men. My strength has always been my relationship with players. I want to continue that. I think I have a lot to offer to a lot more young men. It's going to be a bigger challenge in light of these last couple of seasons, but my goal is still to be a head coach. I don't know where or when; that's to be determined."

Russell, for one, isn't surprised by his former coach/mentor's plan. "He'll be an asset wherever he goes . . . it would be a wise choice for someone to hire," Russell said. "There's a lot of football left in him."

Because of the university/state pension he will draw, Cabral must seek a college coaching position outside of Colorado. That means he and his wife, Becky, must leave the Boulder home where they've lived for the past 24 years and raised their three children.

"We're still in the same house," Cabral said. "My kids all went to the same high school, went away to college, came home and got married. In coaching that's unbelievable. For us to have done that, it's just such a blessing. Our lives are here, but my work, my calling in my second career, is somewhere else. I'm excited for that. Colorado is always going to be my home; when it's finally over, I'll be back here.

"I have to take it for what it's worth, and what's it's worth is nothing but thanksgiving. I'm thankful for every minute of it, for every part of it - the good as well as the bad."

The bad is blanketed by the good, the hard times hardly memorable in Cabral's rich recollections of being a Buff.

Since 1998, a Buffalo Heart Award has been given annually to one deserving player. A Buffalo Soul Award needs to be bestowed once, just once, to Brian Cabral. He's been nothing short of that to Buffs football.

CU won't see another like him.

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SHOW MENU



## Football: Mike MacIntyre hires six San Jose State assistants to join him with CU Buffs

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Colorado football coach Mike MacIntyre has hired six of his former assistant coaches at San Jose State to join him in rebuilding the Buffs in Boulder and was hoping to fill the remaining three positions on his staff by Thursday.

MacIntyre has hired Brian Lindgren as offensive coordinator and Kent Baer as defensive coordinator. Klayton Adams, Gary Bernardi, Charles Clark and Jim Jeffcoat also have been hired. What positions those four will be assigned to coach and what titles and responsibilities each will hold were still being refined.

It seems certain Jeffcoat will coach defensive line and Clark will coach defensive backs because both men played in those parts of the defense and have spent their coaching careers tutoring those positions.

Bernardi is likely to coach the offensive line after doing so for three seasons at San Jose State under MacIntyre and at numerous other stops during his 30-plus years in coaching. He also has coached tight end and wide receivers.

Adams also has coached offensive line in the past but he spent the past two seasons coaching tight ends at San Jose State.

It's possible MacIntyre could bring more members of his San Jose State staff with him and it's also possible he could retain Bobby Kennedy, who coached wide receivers at CU under Jon Embree and Rip Scherer, who coached quarterbacks under Embree.

MacIntyre also was talking with several possible additions to his staff from outside the CU and San Jose State programs on Wednesday. He is believed to be looking for a wide receivers coach, a running backs coach and a third coach whose responsibilities would include handling some or all of the special teams units.

MacIntyre said he hoped to announce all or most of his staff Thursday when he stopped for a moment in the Dal Ward Center late Wednesday on his way out to pick up his family at the airport.

Five of the six former San Jose State coaches were on campus Wednesday touring facilities and meeting with staffers to familiarize themselves with CU travel policies and other procedures. They are expected to hit the recruiting trail Friday along with MacIntyre.

Baer was the only one of the six who was not at CU Wednesday. He is expected to come to Boulder soon.

In addition to the assistant coaches, MacIntyre also plans to bring Bryan McGinnis from San Jose State to serve as director of football operations, the same job he filled with the Spartans. CU also is expected to hire a recruiting coordinator.

Sources have confirmed longtime CU linebackers coach Brian Cabral has told CU officials he plans to retire from the school. He could still coach elsewhere if he chooses.

Cabral was the longest serving assistant coach in CU history regardless of sport, coaching linebackers at the school for 23 seasons under five different head coaches. He also served as interim head coach twice during his stay. He was the fifth longest tenured assistant coach in the nation.

Cabral played linebacker for CU in the 1970s before moving on to a successful pro career in the NFL.

While CU is bidding farewell to an institution in Cabral it is retaining another legendary player whose future role with the program is still being designed. Darian Hagan, who was an assistant coach under Gary Barnett and Dan Hawkins and has worked in operations the past two years, will remain possibly as director of player development.

Hagan was the quarterback of the 1990 national title team at CU. He was seen showing several of the new assistant coaches around the CU weight room and athletic training room late Wednesday afternoon.

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# Mike MacIntyre begins filling staff at Colorado

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(Photo: Kyle Terada, USA TODAY Sports)

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — Colorado coach Mike MacIntyre has brought in a few familiar assistant coaches from San Jose State, hiring Kent Baer to run the defense and Brian Lindgren to direct the offense.

In all, six of MacIntyre's former coaches will join him in Boulder.

Baer served as the interim head coach for the Spartans once MacIntyre left and led the team to a win over Bowling Green in the Military Bowl. Baer wanted to stay at San Jose State, but was passed over for the full-time job in favor of San Diego's Ron Caragher.

So now Baer joins MacIntyre at Colorado as they try to turn around a program that has had seven straight losing seasons, including a 1-11 record this year that was the worst in the 123-year history of the program.

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