

## Football: CSU's Jack Graham aims to limit trash talk with CU Buffs fans

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

The Colorado Buffaloes and Colorado State Rams won't meet on the football field for almost seven more weeks, but when they do, first-year CSU athletic director Jack Graham hopes the fans of both schools show each other more respect than he has seen during the rivalry in recent years.

During a recent wide-ranging interview with the Camera, Graham said his first eight months on the job have been hectic and a great learning experience. He said he has developed a good working relationship with his counterpart in Boulder, CU athletic director Mike Bohn.

Since he was hired in December, much of Graham's time has been focused on making the case for a proposed \$246 million on-campus football stadium in Fort Collins and raising money -- he says he hopes to double his department's \$26 million budget in three to five years. But Graham said another major item on his agenda has been working with Bohn on strategies to curtail some of the ugly behavior he says he has witnessed when the schools' meet in football, men's basketball and other sports.

"I think it's poor. I don't think it's what it should be," Graham said when asked about the state of the relationship between the two schools. "I think the level of sportsmanship that exists between the University of Colorado and Colorado State is not good and it has to change. I think the level of venom that gets expressed between CU fans and CSU fans at basketball games and football games is inappropriate and it's mean spirited.

"I think it's really important that we all grow up and understand that we're going to a football game, we're going to a basketball game and it's time for us to have a very, very strong sense of competitiveness and rivalry and let our football teams and our basketball teams go to war with another on the field and on the court and respect and appreciate each other in the stands."

Graham said he has seen CU and CSU fans spit on each other and throw drinks on each other in recent years and more often he hears common banter between fans of the programs devolve into shouting matches and even fisticuffs.

Denver police have described the past two meetings in football at Sports Authority Field as successful events with mainly alcohol related arrests. Earlier start times are credited for limiting the amount of time fans have to get revved up for the game. This season's game is scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 1 at 2 p.m.

Bohn, who once worked in the CSU athletic department, said he hasn't personally witnessed anything more than CU and CSU fans hurling insults. However, he said improving sportsmanship at CU athletics events has been a focus of his since he took over as athletic director in 2005.

Bohn said he personally addresses students about the issue numerous times each year and CU coaches do as well. He said improving sportsmanship is an ongoing process but it's one he believes CU has made progress with no matter the opponent.

"I'm cognizant of the challenges associated with our game-day pageantry any time we play Colorado State," Bohn said. "We have made significant improvement collectively and we are committed to continuing to make progress in conjunction with Colorado State. We will continue to spend a great deal of time and energy in helping our students, our fans and our community be more welcoming for all of our huge, marquee games.

"It was wonderful to have praise from Georgia fans and Oregon fans and members of the Pac-12 Conference recognizing how phenomenal CU and Boulder are as a community and a place to visit. We'll keep working to make progress on that, but it certainly doesn't stop with just one game. So as the University of Colorado continues to play major marquee games against marquee opponents year in and year out we will continue to focus on that as much as the unique aspects of playing in Denver."

Graham played quarterback for the Rams in 1973 and 1974 and he has attended hundreds of CSU sporting events

over the past 30-plus years, including quite a few with Wyoming, perhaps, the Rams' most bitter rival. Graham said he can't pinpoint one event that has led to what he believes is an increased level of animosity between the Buffs and Rams.

Nearly any time CU triumphs over CSU, Buffs fans can be heard chanting "It sucks to be a C-S-U Ram." And CSU fans have irked CU supporters in recent years. CSU students stormed the court in Moby arena last year when the Rams beat the Buffs in men's basketball and CSU fans stormed Folsom Field in Boulder three years ago when the Rams upset the Buffs on their home field.

"It's great for CU fans and CSU fans to express a good-humored rivalry with one another, but it crosses the line, well behind what I think is appropriate in my opinion, and a level of venom gets expressed way too frequently," Graham said. "Mike and I have been talking about this extensively and he and I agree that dynamic has to change and we're committed to changing it. So that the rivalry and the competitiveness that we all want when CU and CSU play each other is perpetuated, but the way in which we interact with one another is respectful, is humorous, is good-natured."

Graham said CU and CSU shouldn't aspire to create a rivalry like Auburn-Alabama, where the animosity runs so deep families are literally divided. He said he used to live in the Bay Area in California and regularly attended games between Pac-12 Conference rivals Stanford and Cal. He said that rivalry is a great example of what he hopes the CU and CSU series can become.

"Those two schools absolutely go at each other on the field and on the court and there's lots of good-spirited kidding and digging, but between those two universities, it rarely crosses the line in my opinion," he said.

While the two athletic directors have spent plenty of time talking about strategies for toning down the rhetoric and behavior when their teams get together, they haven't developed a plan for change. Graham said he hopes to have more to say when September approaches.

#### Buffs honored

CU left tackle David Bakhtiari was named to his second preseason watch list Monday and senior linebacker Douglas Rippy earned his first recognition.

Bakhtiari was named to the Lombardi Award watch list. The award is given annually to the nation's best lineman or linebacker, but it's limited to linemen who line up no more than 10 yards to the left or right of the ball and linebackers who line up no more than 5 yards off the ball.

Rippy was named to the Butkus Award watch list. That award honors strictly linebackers and former Buffs Alfred Williams and Matt Russell won it during their careers.

Safety Ray Polk (Lott IMPACT award), punter Darragh O'Neill (Ray Guy Award) and center Gus Handler (Rimington Award) were previously named to preseason watch lists. Bakhtiari had previously been named to the Outland Trophy watch list.

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## College football magazines giving Colorado little love

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

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If Colorado coach Jon Embree needs a show-and-tell prop to motivate his team at the beginning of August camp, he can prop up some of those pre-season college football magazines.

I have purchased Athlon and Lindy's, and neither expects much of anything from the CU Buffs in 2012.

Both pick Colorado to finish last in the Pac-12 South. Lindy's also ranks the conference teams 1-through-12, and has CU rated last in the league and only No. 77 nationally among 124 FBS (major-college) teams.

It gets worse. Athlon also ranks Pac-12 teams by their individual units, and Colorado only shows up well at linebacker.

With a veteran linebacker corps that features seniors Jon Major and Doug Rippy and junior Derrick Webb, Colorado ranks fifth-best at that position, trailing only the linebacking units of (1) Stanford, (2) Oregon, (3) Southern California, and (4) UCLA.

But other than at linebacker, the best the Buffs can do among Pac-12 units is rank 11th at offensive line and defensive line.

Athlon rates the Buffs dead last in the Pac-12 at quarterback, running back, wide receiver/tight end and defensive back.

Athlon was published before Colorado officially welcomed Kansas transfer Jordan Webb to its quarterback derby and it's unclear whether his addition may have pushed the Buffs out of last place at that position. Webb, a junior and two-year starter for the Jayhawks, is eligible to play immediately because he has earned a degree from KU.

Webb is expected to battle sophomores Nick Hirschman and Connor Wood for the starting job. Wood, a transfer from Texas, sat out the 2011 season under NCAA rules but participated in CU practices.

Unless wide receiver Paul Richardson makes it back from a torn ACL suffered in spring drills, Colorado returns just three starters on offense in offensive linemen David Bakhtiari, Ryan Dannewitz and Gus Handler.

The Buffs return six starters on the defensive side of the ball: defensive backs Greg Henderson and Ray Polk, defensive lineman Will Pericak and the linebacker corp of Major, Rippy and Webb.

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