



*The Pac-12 held its 2011 football media day at the Fox Studio Lot.
Photo Courtesy: Pac-12 Conference*



Brooks: Football Media Days Are Happy Days (Usually)

Release: 07/23/2012 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

UNIVERSAL CITY, CALIF. - The last I saw of [Ray Polk](#) and [David Bakhtiari](#) early Monday afternoon, they were standing in a long, meandering fast food line, only a squib kick away from the Universal Studios theme park entrance.

Take a few steps into a place like that and sensory overload is immediate. In a football player's case, particularly that of an offensive lineman, the appetite is the first to yield.

Bakhtiari, a 290-pound Colorado junior tackle, had been contemplating his next meal since boarding a jet 21 1/2 hours earlier at DIA. Now, he was seriously contemplating a burger and fries, while Polk, a senior safety, was pondering a funnel cake.

Neither choice might have been what Jake Cox, CU's newly appointed Director of Nutrition and an addition to [Malcolm Blacken](#)'s strength and conditioning staff, would have had them order. But hey, let's cut these guys some slack. Training camp opens in less than two weeks (Aug. 6) and I'm guessing funnel cakes aren't going to be a routine chow line choice for the 2012 Buffs.

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As a matter of full disclosure, I didn't stick around to watch Bakhtiari and Polk order; they could have exercised a last-minute option for a spinach salad, hummus and sprouts. Doubtful, but there's always that outside chance. (UPDATE: Bakhtiari went healthy, ordering chicken, rice and mixed vegetables; Polk got his funnel cake, along with the burger and fries his teammate was contemplating.)

And as a matter of full disclosure Part II, I wasn't there to hear Bakhtiari's and Polk's choices because there was a Ben & Jerry's just around the corner. Luckily for me, B & J's didn't offer anything with a base ingredient of spinach, hummus or sprouts. My two scoops of the Americone something-or-other were heavenly and I'm not reporting to the new director of nutrition.

Bakhtiari, Polk, coach [Jon Embree](#), a couple of athletic media relations staffers ([Dave Plati](#), [Curtis Snyder](#)) and another hanger-on (me) are here for CU's second Pac-12 Conference Football Media Day. It's Tuesday at Universal Studios, with the [Buffs contingent up early \(10:15 a.m. MDT\)](#).

There are countless reasons to like CU's move last summer to the Pac-12, but you tell me, is staging a football media day at Universal Studios just a bit more appealing than a hotel ballroom near the Kansas City or Dallas airport? Nothing against those fine Big 12 burgers and their fine hotel ballrooms, but a nod to Universal Studios (last July the Pac-12 got the Fox Studios Lot for a day) should be a no-brainer.

Before we left Denver, Bakhtiari and Polk wanted a casual briefing on what might be asked of them on Tuesday morning. A handful of possible questions from a media contingent that still needs to be convinced that the Buffs belong in their new western digs:

- Does CU expect to be better in Year 2 in its new conference than it was in Year 1 (3-10 overall, 2-7 conference)? If so, why?
- In 2011, the Buffs took up positions at or near the bottom of the conference statistics. How will your respective positions - the O-line and the secondary - be improved?
- Your head coach said repeatedly on National Signing Day and during spring drills that members of his second recruiting class would be given every chance to see the field on opening day. How difficult is it going to be to turn things around possibly playing that many freshmen?
- From what you've seen in summer workouts, who's the best bet to be your starting quarterback?
- Is [Paul Richardson](#) as far ahead in his recovery (ACL surgery in April) as his tweets suggest? How much would his presence early (or at all) mean to this team?

Of course, there will be more - some pointed more toward CU/Pac-12 football, others perhaps even pointed at the Penn State debacle, and still others perhaps aimed at what has been a very difficult summer in Colorado.

Embree didn't fly out Monday morning with the rest of the CU contingent, instead coming in later Monday night after attending to another day of late details that kept him in Boulder. Like the rest of the league's coaches, he's probably more than a little relieved that this season's preseason media responsibilities are limited to the West Coast. Last summer, there also was an East Coast junket that new commissioner Larry Scott believed would help introduce his new brand to the New York media.

What questions can Embree expect on Tuesday morning? For starters, see the speculative list above . . . then maybe stir in these:

- With one season under your belt, what were your first impressions of the Pac-12?
- How quickly can the Buffs win in this league?
- Did a three-win debut season take any personal toll?
- You faced a brutal schedule (13 straight games, no bye week) in your break-in season. Do you see your 2012 schedule as any more forgiving?
- When you were hired, you made a point of emphasizing the need for a strong running game. Will you be closer to having one this season?

The Pac-12 has new coaches this season at UCLA (Jim Mora, Jr.), Arizona (Rich Rodriguez), Arizona State (Todd

Graham) and Washington State (Mike Leach). Not-so-bold prediction: Among that group, the pirate from Pullman (Leach) will come away as the media day darling. Happened in the Big 12 when Leach was at Texas Tech and I'm betting he hasn't undergone a personality bypass. Leach is a character - plus, he can coach.

Among the things to like about football media days is the optimism (for the most part) of coaches. All of them are unbeaten, no starters have gone down with injuries yet, and media/alumni/fans haven't begun the barking that always comes so naturally in mid-November.

Something else - and this is the best thing - to like about football media days is what they signal: College football is very, very close to starting.

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SHOW MENU



Football: Expectations low for young CU Buffs

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

LOS ANGELES -- Football coaches and players from each school in the Pac-12 Conference will forecast the 2012 season today at Pac-12 media day at Universal Studios.

The focus will be on USC, a national title contender and favorite to win the conference as well as Oregon, which is seen as the biggest hurdle standing in front of the Trojans. Washington and former USC assistant coach Steve Sarkisian are a darkhorse in the race while Stanford is hoping not to slip too much after losing quarterback Andrew Luck to the NFL.

Arizona, Arizona State, Washington State and UCLA feature new coaches and what those men add to the conference is another major story line.

But Colorado coach Jon Embree will take the podium first after commissioner Larry Scott. Embree will be flanked by junior tackle David Bakhtiari who was named to the Lombardi Award and Outland Trophy preseason watch lists and senior safety Ray Polk, who was on the Lott IMPACT Award watch list.

The major topic of conversation with the Buffs is expected to be how Embree and a small group of veteran players can improve on a 3-10 season as the least experienced program in the nation this fall.

Expectations are low for the Buffs in their second season under Embree, in large part, because the team is so inexperienced and will have a new starting quarterback. Only one team in CU history has had fewer seniors than this year's eight member senior class. The 1995 team had just seven seniors.

Few expect Colorado to earn a trip to a bowl game for the first time since 2007 or produce a winning record for the first time since 2005 because it will rely on so many freshmen and sophomores with a total of just 32 juniors and seniors on the roster.

But it turns out having so little experience might not be much of an excuse for Colorado if things go bad again this fall.

In his preseason magazine, college football analyst Phil Steele publishes an experience chart rating each team in the Football Bowl Subdivision based on senior starters returning, seniors in the two-deep depth chart, lettermen returning, percentage of offensive yardage returning, percentage of tackles returning and career starts by offensive linemen. Colorado ranks last among the 124 teams with only six senior starters and just 22 percent of its offensive yardage production in 2011 returning.

That would lead most to believe the Buffs have little hope of improvement in the wins column. However, recent history shows that inexperience doesn't necessarily doom a team.

Brandon Pertner, an assistant editor at Phil Steele Publications, assembles the experience chart for the magazine and reports some of the least experienced teams in the nation from the past five seasons have gone on to have excellent seasons.

Pertner looked at the five least experienced teams in the nation heading into each of the past five seasons to see how those teams fared that year. His researched showed that 11 of the 25 teams finished with winning records and a 12th team finished .500.

TCU went 11-2 in 2011 and Oklahoma State went 11-2 in 2010 despite being among the least experienced teams in the nation in those seasons. In fact, according to Steele's formula, OSU was the least experienced team in 2010.

In 2011, Auburn, Louisville, Iowa, Memphis and TCU entered the season as the least experienced teams in the nation. Auburn was the least experienced and was coming off a national title in 2010. The Tigers went 8-5 after

finishing 14-0 the previous season, and all five of their losses came against ranked teams, including Alabama and LSU, which played in the 2011 national championship game.

Perhaps Louisville, Iowa and Memphis are better comparisons for the Buffs. . Louisville and Iowa finished with winning seasons at 7-6 despite being among the least experienced in the nation and Memphis improved its record by one game over 2010.

In the spring, Embree said he would not use the inexperience factor as an excuse for his team. He tried to put a positive spin on it.

"If you have enough leadership and things fall the right way, it can be, obviously, a huge benefit to play some guys when they're young," Embree said.

Pac-12 football preview capsule for Colorado

By Jeff Faraudo jfaraudo@bayareanewsgroup.com San Jose Mercury News

Posted:

InsideBayArea.com

2011 RECORD: 3-10, 2-7/tied 5th in Pac-12 South

KEY PLAYERS: OT David Bakhtiari, a graduate of Serra High-San Mateo, earned second-team all-Pac-12 honors last season as a sophomore ... LB Jon Major led the Buffaloes with 85 tackles a year ago ... A tough guy? Saf Ray Polk played three-fourths of last season with a cracked sternum.

OUTLOOK: The Buffaloes haven't fashioned a winning record since 2005, and it seems a longshot they will get there this season. Second-year coach Jon Embree begins fall camp without a starter at quarterback and with freshmen expected to challenge for starting spots at wideout, tight end and running back. This team is just too young.