



Head coach Jon Embree, David Bakhtiari and Ray Polk address the crowd at Pac-12 Media Day.

Photo Courtesy: Associated Press



Brooks: Buffs Have No Time To Waste On 2012 Start

Release: 07/24/2012 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor









UNIVERSAL CITY, CALIF. - Jon Embree wanted (and got) a strong finish last season from his first Colorado football team. But a bigger wish for his second band of Buffs is a faster start.

In fact, it's even more imperative, Embree said Tuesday, for a team that expects to rely heavily on its incoming freshmen to get rolling quickly in September rather than be rolled. Been there, felt that.

Carrying the momentum created by winning two of last season's final three games and building a base that oozes confidence are two of the most critical early goals for the 2012 Buffs. They'd rather be riding a wave than be in recovery mode when they open Pac-12 Conference play at Washington State on Sept. 22.

"We need to set the tone early," CU junior offensive tackle David Bakhtiari said here after his allotted time on the Universal Studio Gibson Amphitheater stage at the Pac-12 Conference's annual media day. "We just can't come

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out and stick our toes in the water; we need to start swimming right away."

The tendency is to look at the Buffs' September schedule and conclude the early current won't be as perilous as it was last September. CU opened a brutal 13-game, 13-week schedule at Hawai'i, came home to face California and met Colorado State in Denver before traveling to Ohio State.

Embree's team was bobbing and gasping almost as soon as it entered the pool. It left September with a 1-3 record.

This season, CU opens against CSU in Denver (Sept. 1), plays its first home game against Sacramento State the following week, then closes out non-conference play at Fresno State (Sept. 15). On paper, it might not rival last September's beastly lineup, but Embree cares nothing for the look on paper.

Asked if this schedule is more conducive to a successful start than last season's, he answered, "Not necessarily . . . I think people have the tendency to look at our schedule and go 'we should, we should . . .' What people don't understand is that (opponents) look at us and say, 'we should, we should.' No one looks at Colorado with fear and say, 'Oh no, we have to play the Buffs.' Until we get back to that level there's nothing you take for granted . . . nothing."

Senior safety Ray Polk said the lightly regarded Buffs "have to be that upset" on their opponents' schedules. "Nobody but us knows the hard work we've put in. And we all know that it's not going to come for free. We've got to surprise some teams. That Utah win last year (17-14 in Salt Lake City) was a huge one for us; it just showed us that we can do it. I'm looking forward to surprising some teams this year."

Embree's coaching debut in Hawai'i last season was ragged. The Buffs opened offensively with a botched center snap, trailed 17-0 at halftime and wound up losing 34-17. Embree wasn't mystified by the uneven opening act.

"No . . . because I've been a part of new coaching staffs at UCLA and when Gary (Barnett) came in here after Rick (Neuheisel)," he said. "There were similar type (opening) games and results. It didn't surprise me. There's just a lot of stuff that goes through kids' heads. Starting with warm-ups, almost everything is different . . . kids are creatures of habits and routines. Sometimes if it's so radically different than what they're used to, instead of sitting there thinking about the game, they're thinking, 'Now what do we do?' We had a mock game, but until you do it it's going to be different."

When he addresses his players for the first time training camp - players report on Aug. 5 - Embree will stress the importance of getting out of the gate with a purpose: "It's very important for us . . . we'll talk about that in the first team meeting and the different things that we need to start doing - how we practice and the manner of our practice."

CU will be among the nation's youngest teams in 2012, with Embree intending to give his incoming freshmen ample opportunity in camp to solidify a place for themselves on the two-deep chart. But even with that potential youthful makeup, Bakhtiari and Polk don't believe the importance of a fast start will be that hard a sales job for the upperclassmen.

"They understand it," Bakhtiari said. "I've talked to kids who I think based on summer training are going to play a lot of football and I've told them, 'I can't see you taking a break; I need you up for every play. If you're playing next to me, I need you to understand that.' That's the kind of ego boost they need from a veteran; that really, really helps them take themselves up to the next level."

Added Polk: "It's hard because they haven't been in the program for four years and seen the struggles we've been through. At the same time, they're coming in knowing what they can do. And they're looking at us (upperclassmen) to lead them on the field. It's a drawback in one sense because maybe they don't have that same passion we have from being here for four years. But at the same time they're coming in with heads held high. More power to them; we just have to lead them.

"It's all about the confidence. But with young players you never know how it's going to go once the you-know-what hits the fan. You get that confidence behind them and you go with it. And slowly it builds. If you get it rolling, that's even better. It's all about that. You don't want to throw them in the fire too early, but you have to test them."

Embree listed the secondary, tight end, receiver and the defensive line as positions most likely to be impacted by incoming freshman. The only newcomer he views as questionable at this point is defensive lineman Kisima Jagne, of Phoenix.

"He's the only one we're waiting on. We'll get his test scores and figure out the different options with him. But everyone else is accounted for," Embree said, adding Jagne will be a part of the team but in what way is yet to be determined. It could be now or a "January deal," Embree noted.

'P-RICH' WATCH: Receiver Paul Richardson's progress in rehabbing from April ACL surgery has been ahead of schedule, and Embree said what he's learned about "P-Rich" is "you never count him out. Once he sets his mind to something, he's pretty hard to stop. There's some genetic things going on there that allow him to recover as quickly as he has."

Richardson recently touched a height of 11 feet, 4 inches in a vertical jump test in the CU weight room. But Embree said, "To me, it's how he does some football things - planting, cutting, all that. Because he had a non-contact injury . . . but I'm not counting him out of anything."

Embree reiterated that a decision on Richardson's status for 2012 would involve input from the player's family and taking a broad look at his career. "That's one of the unfortunate things about college football," Embree said. "At what point does it become not worth wasting a year for him? How many games . . . is it seven, eight, five, whatever it is?"

"You've got to decide what's worth it for him. It's not going to be an easy situation because I know him and I know his competitiveness and his heart. I know how his teammates feel about him. I just want to make sure we do what's best for his career."

The "cutoff" date for a decision on Richardson's 2012 status could be the week of Sept. 29, Embree said. CU plays host to UCLA on that Saturday in the fifth game of the season. Playing against the Bruins and the rest of the year would give Richardson eight regular-season games in 2012.

BUFF BITS: There is a possibility freshman receiver Peyton Williams can play this season. Embree said Williams has been rehabbing his knee (torn ACL) in Boulder and in Dallas. "I talked to him about four or five days ago just to see where he's at. He'll come back in August and we'll see how he is." . . . CU's starting quarterback likely will come from the trio of Connor Wood, Nick Hirschman or Jordan Webb. Embree said he hasn't asked for input from his players on how any of that threesome has fared during summer work. Webb, a Kansas transfer, was a late arrival. "I haven't talked with them about any of that stuff," Embree said. "I just want them to go out there and do their thing. I think the best way to be able to make this decision is to be as open-minded as possible. I don't want to have any preconceived (ideas). I don't want to know if this guy did this good or this guy was bad . . . I want to have a completely open mind so whoever wins this competition does it the right way." . . . CU has four remaining scholarships to get to 85, but Embree said there has been no contact from Penn State players possibly considering transferring in light of the recent NCAA sanctions against the school.

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SHOW MENU

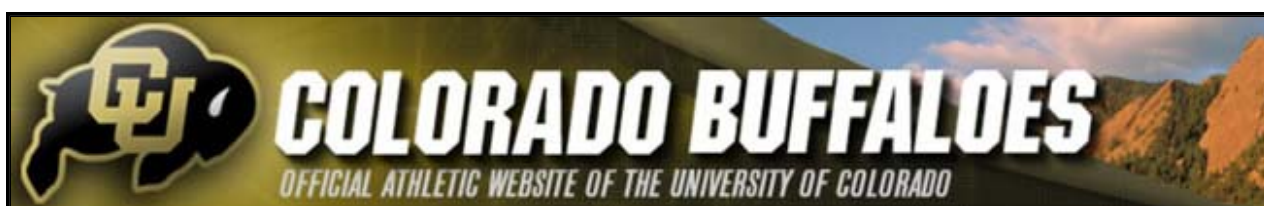


Photo Courtesy: Associated Press



Pac-12 Media Day Plati-'Tudes

Release: 07/24/2012 Courtesy: David Plati, Associate AD/Sports Information











David Plati

Welcome to a notes and comment column in its 13th year, penned by CU Associate Athletic Director David Plati, who is as of today, begins his 29th year as the Buffaloes' director of sports information.

Plati-'Tudes No. 96 ... Without a doubt, the most famous Buff who adorned uniform number 96 was Kanavis McGhee, an All-American and two-time All-Big 8 performer at outside linebacker from 1987-90 ... This is my second annual Pac-12 Media Day 'Tudes, shorter than most, but I'll try to jam pack it with information for you ... Today is the 28th anniversary of when Eddie Crowder named me S.I.D. - the last person he hired as athletic director as he retired a week later on August 1; so I am officially in year 29 beginning today ... It's been a great ride for the most part, a lot more good than bad; very fortunate to work with so many quality young people through the years ... The 2012 media guide, otherwise known as the "Information PDF, Football Edition" should be finished and on-line around August 20; just a

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tad behind this year ... Tuesday's media day took place in the Gibson Amphitheatre, formerly known as Universal Amphitheatre; déjà vu for me, as I was here on December 31, 1999 for Jimmy Buffett's Millennium concert (caught plane from Tucson after CU's 62-28 drubbing of Boston College in the old Insight.com Bowl); by the way, it was announced today that the new name for that very bowl game is now the Buffalo Wild Wings Bowl ... As you can see from the photo, all the coaches and players posed in front of Universal park prior to the day's events.

The Media Day Drill

Another very cool location for media day; all the coaches, players and support staff took the Universal tram from the Hilton to the Amphitheatre. The day began with a Pac-12 "state of the union" from commissioner Larry Scott, followed by Gary Stevenson, head of the Pac-12 Network (I had asked him the day before for those of us who recruit the state of Texas heavily, if there is a chance that the Pac-12 Network could be in more homes in Texas than the Longhorn Network...he didn't rule it out). The CU contingent then took the stage first, with **Jon Embree**, **David Bakhtiari** and **Ray Polk** answering a series of basic questions; no one thought to ask Embo about his recent safari to Africa (which he won when he was coaching with the Washington Redskins). Then it was off to several stations for one-on-ones for the next three hours.



Last year, senior quarterback **Tyler Hansen** was our player rep; this year, we took two players, tackle **David Bakhtiari** on offense and safety **Ray Polk** on defense. Bakhtiari, whose last name was pronounced correctly by Pac-12 PR man **David Hirsch**, said his last name gets butchered all the time, the worst being pronounced, "bacteria." He said the weirdest question he got all day was from ESPN Game Day, "What does football smell like?" He answered, "Sweat and body odor." He also got asked about the shooting tragedy in Aurora, to compare the Pac-12 against the Big 12, but said he got asked more about the rivalry with Utah than anything else. The weirdest question Polk was asked came from the Pac-12 Network, "Who is the worst dressed person on the team?" He answered that, "Nobody is, I'm not going to throw anyone under the bus." But Ray told me that he could have said Al

Wood. His most constant questions also included the rivalry with Utah and what he was looking to expect in CU's second year in the Pac-12 Conference." Ray was not asked about the Aurora tragedy, and neither player was asked anything regarding Penn State.

As for coach **Jon Embree**, it's down the assembly line from station-to-station. But all the coaches get help up during the process by others lingering around, the beat writers, sometimes the other coaches, or some of more visible television personalities, which here included **Erin Andrews** (who hugged me-jealous?-okay, we go way back and are longtime friends), coach-turned-media guy **Rick Neuheisel**, **Eddie George**, **Craig Bollerjack** and our own **Joel Klatt**. Embree shared his safari experiences with Andrews, who relayed that another of our own, **Chris Fowler**, has been on several including where they sit high in the trees to observe things (guess no one is worried about a leopard climbing up in those instances-or maybe I watch too much *Big Cat Diary* on Animal Planet). Embree, by the way, got to within seven or eight yards of a rhinoceros as one of the highlights of the trip.



Read all about the day by ESPN's expert Pac-12 bloggers, Ted Miller and Kevin Gemmell, here <http://espn.go.com/blog/pac12>.

Conference TV Update



At our annual conference SID meeting, we were updated on the Pac-12 Network, which is set for debut in less than four weeks. Pac-12 officials speak with representatives from the satellite companies almost daily, and are confident that come August 15, when the seven networks (one national, six regional) debut, they will have deals in place. For some reason, almost always these come down to the last minute. The plan is still in place, between ESPN/ABC, FOX, and the Pac-12 Networks, for 850 live conference events to be televised. This includes 79 football games, 22 of which will air on ESPN/ABC, 22 of on FOX/FX and 35 on the P12N.

The conference has taken over all coaches shows, combining into one hour-long blockbuster program that will air at 8 p.m. MT every Tuesday; when airing on the P12N regional outlet (Mountain for Colorado and Utah viewers) several more minutes of the show will feature the two schools covered by that outlet. In short, there will a lot of editing taking place Monday and Tuesday every week to get it finished by Tuesday night. The Pac-12 Network will also take over all the rights of every school's spring game and televise all 12 live.

The Pac-12 Network will debut with an overall hour preview show at 7 p.m. MDT August 15, followed by a football preview special at 8 p.m. Live streaming will debut on Sept. 10 (Beta) and Oct. 24 (1.0).

Media Day One-Liners

The players arrived midday Monday and were treated to passes at University Studios park ... Dinner for the players that evening was at Jillian's Universal City Walk, where those with the South Division schools were pitted against those from the North Division one in bowling. Ray Polk, who had not bowled since he was about 4 feet tall, opened with a 152 that featured three straight strikes at one point; David Bakhtiari trailed him most of the way but caught him late, finishing with 157 (he last bowled at a team unity function last August). Bakhtiari had a 117 in the second game, Polk a 97, thus the CU duo racked up 523 points, the most by any team in the South ... Neuheisel taped a great promo



for the Pac-12 Network that only he could have pulled off with his brand of enthusiasm; it's geared at making those Pac-12 fans who don't have the network in their area yet to keep calling their providers ... **Lazy Media Person** **The Day:** Award goes to Greg Hansen of the *Arizona Star*, who took a shot at us for scheduling a three-game series with UMass; he wrote: "Rather than mess with Michigan and Iowa, the Colorado Buffaloes scheduled three games with that juggernaut of the east, UMass." Um, we are playing Michigan in 2016, smart guy. And it was in our notes here ... As always, visited with the legend and all-time voice of college football, **Keith Jackson**, here; his health back on the upswing and 83-year old KJ recently hit the links for the first time in a long while and shot an 81. I think I just heard several of you swear ... Former CU student assistant **Alex Kaufman** worked his first function as one of two new communication fellows for the Pac-12, good to see him hear along with another former student aide, **Daisy Wiberg**, who volunteers annually to work the event.

Penn State Thoughts

I for one was glad to see that Penn State was spared the death penalty, but for the following reasons very few brought up that I heard or read. First, State College is a small town; I imagine there are several businesses that make their annual revenue projections based on traffic for seven home games in the fall and the spring game which usually draws in excess of 50,000 there. And how about all the people that supplement their income working those game days, from stadium vendors to parking attendants, etc.? Second, PSU sponsors 28 other sports (14 men's/14 women's), and football likely pays the bills for all of them (I'm not familiar with the income from men's or women's basketball or volleyball), so it appears all of them can survive. And third, likely many assistant jobs in the department are now spared: how would you like to be an assistant trainer and your first full-time job, your dream job in many instances, is eliminated because of the actions of a no-good cretin some 10 years

or earlier? Obviously the penalty they received was not only harsh, but historic. It's just a sad situation.

This P-'Tudes Number: 400

Just around 400 media were credentialed for this year's Pac-12 Media Day; its largest attendance yet. Nowhere near the football-crazy SEC which around 1,500 media types attended this year, but solid nonetheless for a conference that covers more area than any other (well, excluding the Big East's reach west to Boise and San Diego).

And lastly ... Jon Embree will be on live Monday night (this July 30) on KCNC-TV (Channel 4 in Denver) from 6:30-7 p.m. on the station's **Xfinity Monday Live**. Gary Miller is the host.

SHOW MENU



Embree hopes fab frosh help CU Buffs' defense

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

UNIVERSAL CITY, Calif. -- Colorado football fans want to know who their quarterback will be this season and if the team will have enough offensive firepower to keep up in the prolific Pac-12.

A question of equal importance is whether coach Jon Embree's team will be able to slow anyone down this year.

The Buffs would like to be a road block to the end zone. Last season they were barely a speed bump.

The Buffs' defense was the worst in the Pac-12 in many statistical categories and among the worst in the nation last fall. At one point, CU allowed five straight Pac-12 opponents to score at least 40 points and rack up more than 500 yards of total offense in 2011.

A variety of issues led to those ugly numbers, including the roster Embree inherited lacking much depth. Then injuries and five defensive backs being suspended for off-the-field issues early in the season compounded things.

CU actually had two players who began the season on offense starting on defense against Oregon and USC.

Embree added what he believes are five quality defensive backs with this freshman class, along with eight defensive linemen, one of whom still hasn't qualified academically (Kisima Jagne).

Embree said many of those players will play this season and while they will be inexperienced, their speed and athleticism will be an overall upgrade.

"I expect to see improvement on that side of the football," Embree said.

Embree said he had to pat defensive coordinator Greg Brown on the back numerous times during the 2011 season and remind him he would have more to work with in the future. He said Brown's frustration peaked during home losses to Oregon and USC.

Senior safety Ray Polk did his best to help lead the defense through a difficult season when it would have been easy to sit and watch. Polk played two-thirds of 2011 with a fractured sternum and needed surgery to install three pins in his wrist at the end of the year.

Polk said he believes the Buffs have a chance to be much improved on the defensive side of the ball this season despite the fact that so many freshmen will be playing.

"It's not even about being better equipped," Polk said. "It's about having more discipline. We had great players last year, extremely talented, very athletic, but you look at where things went bad.

"Twenty-plus pass plays and twenty-plus run plays and it's one person not doing their job. We have to get discipline as a whole with all the cogs working together so we can play more efficiently."

Polk said some might doubt whether the Buffs can be better defensively with a lot of young players contributing. He says he and other veterans have been meeting daily this summer with those freshmen to bring them up to speed before fall camp begins.

"We have to make them realize a sense of urgency for them to do their job," Polk said.

CU Buffs bring up Pac-12 rear

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

UNIVERSAL CITY, Calif. -- A poll of media members who cover the Pac-12 regularly picked the Buffs to finish last in the south division and gave the Buffs the fewest overall points of all 12 teams.

While coach Jon Embree, safety Ray Polk and tackle David Bakhtiari weren't pleased to see the poll Tuesday at Pac-12 media day, they understood why the media came to that conclusion.

The Buffs are coming off a 3-10 season and haven't produced a winning season since 2005.

"I don't really care to be honest," Bakhtiari said. "I don't really care what other people have to say. It's not us. I only care about what happens within our team, within the players. I'll let our performance speak for itself."

Bakhtiari said he has no doubt that the Buffs have the talent and potential to surprise people this fall and prove the poll wrong.

"I understand why people don't choose us," he said. "I've heard Embree say we haven't proved ourselves. So the rightful spot is down there. We'll just prove ourselves and that can uplift us and that poll will change."

Keeping doors shut

Embree said he hasn't had any second thoughts about his closed-door policy to August practices.

He won't open any practices to the public or the media in August because he doesn't want his young team, as a whole, and individual players feeling like their every move is being judged and dissected.

"I just want these kids to be able to focus and compete on their own," Embree said. "I don't want them to have to hear opinion on, 'This guy was better than that guy.' And get all that involved in it. Same with the freshmen. We have a unique class in that a lot of guys will have an opportunity to play. Some kids I want to protect a little bit from the media to a certain extent and just let them concentrate on ball."

Embree said he sees this year and this team as having a unique set of circumstances and he envisions media and fans having more access to practices in the future, though he didn't say when that might be.

"This, by no means, is a forever policy," he said.

Embree talks about Webb

Embree was finally able to discuss Kansas transfer Jordan Webb at length on Tuesday.

Webb joined the program earlier this month after graduating from Kansas where he spent the first three years of his career, the last two as the Jayhawks' starter. He is eligible to play right away for the Buffs this season because he earned his degree.

Embree said adding a third player to the competition for the starting job will make watching that competition that much more fun next month when practices begin.

"He brings experience," Embree said. "He's a guy who has been in competitions before and has won it because he's started 19 games. So he brings a different dimension because he can win with his feet also. That will give him an opportunity to do some things that we do in our keeper game that maybe the other guys don't do quite as good as him.

"I also think it will help, you know any time you're in a competition and you're around someone who has done what

you're trying to do or has a different skill set than what you have, it forces you to keep working and keep grinding. It doesn't allow you the opportunity to sit back and relax."

Embree said he would like to be able to include true freshman Shane Dillon in the competition but he acknowledged that Dillon probably won't be ready to throw as much during fall camp as he would need to in order to be a legitimate contender for the starting job this season.

Notable

Freshman wide receiver Peyton Williams continues to be listed as a member of the active roster. Embree said Williams will be in Boulder in early August and a determination will be made at that time about whether he will grayshirt or if he has recovered sufficiently from a torn ACL he suffered in December. ...

Embree hopes true freshman Shane Dillon is healthy enough to make it a four-man competition for the starting quarterback job. Dillon is coming off spring shoulder surgery. ...

Embree said the only member of the freshmen class who hasn't been cleared academically is defensive end Kisima Jagne. Embree said Jagne is waiting on a test score to determine his eligibility. He said if he is not cleared academically, Jagne could grayshirt this fall and join the program in January. He did not mention junior college as an option. ...

Cornerback Sherrard Harrington is listed as limited on the pre-camp injury report. He is recovering from a knee bruise suffered April 5. Dillon and defensive back Parker Orms are listed as day-to-day.

New CU Buffs QB Jordan Webb impresses teammates

Posted:

DenverPost.com

UNIVERSAL CITY, CALIF. — If first impressions mean anything, Colorado quarterback Jordan Webb is getting a thumbs-up from his new teammates.

Webb, 6-foot-1 and 205 pounds, transferred from Kansas last month and apparently has been impressive in summer workouts. Having graduated from KU, he is immediately eligible to play for the Buffaloes.

"My word for him is he can 'drip' the ball; he has a really nice touch on his passes," CU junior offensive tackle David Bakhtiari said Tuesday during Pac-12 media day activities at Universal Studios.

"He can put the ball in good places. He's a good athlete too. He's very mobile."

Webb, a junior with two years of remaining eligibility, played 19 games for the Jayhawks, mostly as a starter. He left Kansas after new KU coach Charlie Weis told him that he was not in the Jayhawks' future plans and promptly added Notre Dame transfer Dayne Crist for this season and Brigham Young transfer Jake Heaps for 2013.

"(Webb) creates competition, and you always want competition," CU senior safety Ray Polk said. "That will be good for the quarterbacks."

Webb is the only CU quarterback with much college experience. Among the other expected contenders, sophomore Nick Hirschman played sparingly last fall as a backup to departed starter Tyler Hansen, sophomore Connor Wood is a transfer from Texas who redshirted in his lone year in Austin, and Shane Dillon is an incoming freshman.

"We'll get a really good one out of that group," Polk said. "There's too much talent for that not to happen."

Any prospective Penn State transfers? Colorado coach Jon Embree said that, at this point, he has nobody in mind but "we are doing our due diligence" in working with the CU compliance office to determine the procedure in case there is interest from a Penn State player.

"We'll have to find out if any Penn State player considered us seriously during recruiting," Embree said.

Watch lists. Colorado players named to watch lists for preseason awards: punter Darragh O'Neill (Ray Guy Award), Bakhtiari (Lombardi Award and Outland Trophy), center Gus Handler (Rimington Trophy) and linebacker Douglas Rippy (Butkus Award).

"It's good to get recognition, especially for an offensive lineman," Bakhtiari said.

Pressure? What pressure? Oregon senior tailback Kenjon Barner, on replacing LaMichael James, the Ducks' all-time leading rusher: "Pressure is what you feel when you don't know what you're doing."

Tom Kensler, The Denver Post

CU coach Jon Embree optimist despite team's lowly expectation

By Tom Kensler *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*

Posted:

DenverPost.com

UNIVERSAL CITY, Calif. — There's no telling how many believed him, but Colorado coach Jon Embree insisted Tuesday during Pac-12 football media day interviews that he is confident the Buffaloes can manufacture enough offense to keep up with the high-powered attacks of this pass-happy conference.

Embree's optimism comes in the context of Colorado posting a 3-10 record in his first season and the offense needing to find new starters at quarterback, tailback, tight end, wide receiver and two offensive-line positions.

"We lost 28 players total; we lost a lot," Embree said. "But I feel good about what we have coming in, helping us continue to move forward. I feel good about the direction we're headed.

"It's going to be young talent. We've upgraded our athleticism and team speed. It's just a matter of getting it to go (where we want it to go). I like the kids that we've brought in. I like the leadership of the kids we have coming back."

Speaking in the impressive backdrop of the Gibson Amphitheater at Universal Studios, Embree fit right in. He sounded confident, excited and ready to get going — not as some may have expected from a coach whose team was picked to finish last (sixth) in the Pac-12 media poll, receiving the fewest points among all teams.

Some of Embree's optimism no doubt stems from star wide receiver Paul Richardson regaining a spring in his step. Richardson, a junior, is regarded as the fastest player on the Colorado roster and he may establish a record for quickest recovery from a torn ACL.

During a non-contact play, Richardson tore the ligament in his left knee on April 9, in the final week of spring drills and underwent reconstructive surgery. It was assumed that Richardson would have to redshirt the 2012 season. But the 6-foot-1, 170-pounder from greater Los Angeles began talking to teammates (and later to the media) about playing this season.

Richardson's return rates more than just a longshot, Embree said Tuesday.

"I'm a lot more optimistic about it," Embree said. "I saw Paul about two days after surgery, and I thought he hadn't had the surgery. He was moving around that well. He's been progressing rapidly. We don't know when he'll be available this year. But it's something that I don't think is out of the question.

"One thing I learned about Paul — don't count him out about anything," Embree added. "Once he gets his mind set on something, he's pretty hard to stop. Obviously, there are some genetic things going on (his father played wide receiver at UCLA) that allow him to recover as quickly as he has."

Richardson tested out at 11 feet, four inches with a running vertical jump recently, the coach said.

"He's got explosion," Embree said. "To me, it's how does he do some football things — running, cutting, planting, all that. We'll see how that goes. But I'm not counting him out of anything. The way Paul is thinking, he wants to be out there Sept. 1 (for the season opener against Colorado State)."

Colorado's preseason drills begin Aug. 6, and Embree said he initially will hold out Richardson from contact work. Richardson said recently that he was targeting the conference schedule. That begins Sept. 22 at Washington State.

If Richardson returns for that game, he would get to play nine regular-season games. The next game, Sept. 29 in Boulder against UCLA, obviously has family significance.

"At some point it's going to be, when is it worth not wasting a year for?" Embree said. "It's not going to be an easy situation, because I know him, I know his competitiveness, I know his heart. I just want to make sure we do what's best for his career. You have to start thinking UCLA as to when we probably have to make that determination."

As for other critical positions on offense, Embree said he believes he will have quality players at all of them. He cited sophomore tailback Tony Jones, senior tight end Nick Kasa and incoming players at that position, and a healthy and heated competition at quarterback among returning sophomore Nick Hirschman, Texas transfer Connor Wood, Kansas transfer Jordan Webb and possibly freshman Shane Dillon.

The defense will be more experienced, with six returning starters.

"We're doing a good job," senior safety Ray Polk said of offseason workouts. "We're working harder than we worked before. And it's not just with the weight lifting and running. We're holding player-run meetings. We're getting everybody involved."

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Colorado football picked to finish last in Pac-12 South Division

The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

UNIVERSAL CITY, Calif. — Southern California has been picked to win the Pac-12 in the preseason poll of media members — way ahead of Colorado, which was picked to finish last in the South Division.

CU, entering its second season in the Pac-12, garnered only 164 points in the vote, the lowest total of any conference team in either division. There were 123 voters in the poll conducted in advance of the conference's media day.

The Buffs were also picked to finish last in their division before the 2011 season.

The preseason conference poll has correctly picked the champion 11 of the past 12 seasons, according to the Pac-12.

CU went 3-10 last season, including 2-7 in the Pac-12. The Buffs are returning only nine starters from that team, including three on offense.

The complete poll, with first-place votes in parentheses:

North Division

1. Oregon (117) 732
2. Stanford (5) 533
3. Washington 502
4. California (1) 382
5. Washington State 228
6. Oregon State 205

South Division

1. USC (117) 729
2. Utah (1) 514
3. UCLA (2) 435
4. Arizona 385
5. Arizona State (3) 353
6. Colorado 164

Pac-12 title game champion: USC (102 votes)

Others receiving votes: Oregon (18), Arizona State (3)

JULY 25, 2012, 12:12 PM

Colorado's Embree: Incoming freshman to help at several spots

By **TOM KENSLER** |  No Comments

UNIVERSAL CITY, CALIF. — During interviews Tuesday at the Pac-12 football media day at Universal Studios, Colorado coach Jon Embree was asked which incoming freshmen figure to provide the most competition during August camp.

Embree's response wasn't a short answer. After all, Colorado lost 13 starters off last year's team.

Embree began with defensive back, where the team has openings at free safety and a cornerback slot. Embree said CU signed "five very good players" for the secondary in February: cornerbacks Yuri Wright, Kenneth Crawley, John Walker, Jeffrey Hall and safety Marques Mosley.

Wright, from New Jersey powerhouse Don Bosco Prep, was regarded as a national top-100 player. Crawley, from CU's new Washington D.C. pipeline of H.D. Woodson High School, made national top-250 lists.

"They all will have a chance to compete," Embree said of the five DB signees.

Ranking next for freshman impact, Embree said, would be tight end, where converted defensive lineman Nick Kasa, a senior, ended spring drills with the first team. CU signed three tight ends in February: Vincent Hobbs (6-feet-3, 240 pounds) of Mesquite (Texas) Horn; Sean Irwin (6-4, 230) of Cypress (Texas) Fairbanks; and Austin Ray (6-6, 235) of Columbia (Mo.) Rock Bridge.

"A couple of young kids there (at tight end) have a chance to be good players for us," Embree said. "(In the defensive secondary and at tight end) they will be difference-makers early."

After those two areas, Embree said wide receiver and defensive line would be the next positions where a freshman could make an immediate impact.

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Tuesday, July 24, 2012

On stage ... Colorado

By Kevin Gemmell

UNIVERSAL CITY, Calif. -- A summary of Colorado coach Jon Embree and his players:

- Embree: "We finished with good momentum last year. Our goal is to find a way to get to a bowl game."
- Embree on [Paul Richardson](#): "I'm a lot more optimistic than I was before. He's been progressing very rapidly. As he does more football movements, we'll have a better feel for if and when he'll be available. I don't think it's something that's out of the question."
- Embree on culture change: "It takes time to change a culture. We're asking them to do a lot of things they weren't asked to do before ... you have to stick to your vision."
- Embree on the quarterback competition: "We have three kids we know for sure involved in the competition. Thought [Connor Wood](#) had a good spring. Wood, Jordan Webb and [Nick Hirschman](#) are the main three competing. Have to wait and see on Shane Dillon."
- [David Bakhtiari](#) on the importance of running the ball without Paul Richardson: "Running the football is an important part of the game. All offensive linemen love when we get a run play. Good line coming in."
- [Ray Polk](#) on budding Utah rivalry: "Utah is always going to be a good opponent. We're still pretty young in this conference and we're trying to figure out where we want to fit in. For me, you look at the best team and you want to make them your rival."
- Embree on filling all of the holes: "We lose 28 players total. A number of them were significant contributors. I feel good about what we have coming in and helping us continue to move forward."
- Bakhtiari on rivalries: "We're shooting for the top. Everyone wants to win the Pac-12. We're aiming for the top dogs and that's who we want as our rival. The Utah rivalry is a little media forced. They are a great team and we love playing them. But I see every team as a rival."
- Bakhtiari on differences between Pac-12 and Big 12: "Fortunate enough to play in both leagues. There are big strong guys in each division ... there are freaks in each league."
- Polk on differences between Pac-12 and Big 12: "There are so many threats in the Pac-12. You have so many good players in the conference. It's a different ballgame. In the Pac-12 you have two or three great receivers on a team."
- Polk on summer workouts: "We're working harder than we have before. We're holding player-only meetings on our own and we're getting everyone involved."



latimes.com/sports/sportsnow/la-sp-colorado-pac-12-20120724,0,2256941.story

latimes.com

Pac-12 media day: Colorado looks for boost from youth movement

By Andrew L. John

11:15 AM PDT, July 24, 2012

A year ago, Colorado was ranked last in the Pac-12 preseason rankings.

Its first year in the newly formed “power conference” under first-year head coach Jon Embree followed that script, with the Buffalos (3-10) finishing 12th.

With 28 seniors moving on, including six starters on offense and five on defense, Colorado will have its work cut out for itself. Nick Hirschman is the new starting quarterback and Paul Richardson returns as one of the leading receivers in the conference.

But the majority of the roster will be composed of second- and third-year players, primarily guys who have not played much. Offensive tackle David Bakhtiari and safety Ray Polk will anchor a group in desperate need of veteran leadership.

Embree will get a chance to use players he has recruited specifically for his pro-style offense.

“I feel good with what we have coming in and it should help us moving forward,” Embree said. “I feel good with what we have ... and the direction this program is heading.”

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