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## College Football

# New Coach Reset: Colorado's Mike MacIntyre

By Chris **Huston** | College Football Writer

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Mike MacIntyre hopes to turn Colorado around. (University of Colorado Athletics)

Over the next several weeks, we will be catching up with the coaches preparing for their first season in a new location and/or role. From recruiting to staff moves and personnel decisions, we will take a look at how the first months have gone and preview the 2013 season ahead. Today's subject: [Colorado coach Mike MacIntyre](#).

## The Hire

**Coaching experience:** The 48-year-old Miami native got his coaching start as a graduate assistant at Georgia in 1990, then moved on to Davidson as defensive coordinator in 1992. He spent most of the rest of that decade coaching defenses at Tennessee-Martin (1993-96) and Temple (1997-98) before landing at Ole Miss as its receivers coach (1999-2002). The NFL beckoned and he coached defensive backs for the Dallas Cowboys (2003-2006) and the New York Jets (2007) but returned to college as Duke's defensive coordinator in 2008. The Blue Devils immediately saw a major improvement on that side of the ball upon his arrival, giving up 10 fewer points and about 70 fewer yards per game than the previous season. He was named the FBS Assistant Coach of the Year by the American Football Coaches Association in 2009. His performance was impressive enough to make waves on the opposite coast and cause [San Jose State](#) to give him his first head coaching opportunity in 2010. It proved to be a great hire, as MacIntyre took a program that was in shambles and

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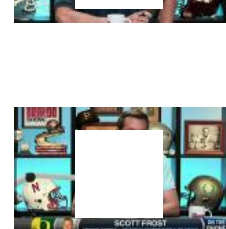
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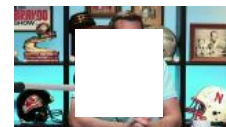
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guided it to an 11-2 mark by 2012 -- its first 11-win season since 1940. That was enough evidence for Colorado, which plucked MacIntyre away in December to make him its 27th head coach.

**Reason for the change:** Jon Embree went just 4-21 in his two years as the Buffaloes coach and was fired after last season's disastrous 1-11 campaign. While some claim he wasn't given enough time to turn things around, there appeared to be no signs of improvement in a program that has notched just 25 wins since 2006. An early home loss to Sacramento State followed by an embarrassing 69-14 shellacking at the hands of Fresno State probably sealed Embree's fate. Colorado needed a coach who was a proven turnaround artist, and MacIntyre fit that bill perfectly after his incredible success at San Jose State.

## The First Months

**2013 Recruiting Class Ranking (according to 247 Sports composite rankings):** No. 69 nationally, 12th in the Pac-12.

**Notable Prospects:** MacIntyre has a good eye for talent and, despite the ranking of his first class, he was able to find some players that will help immediately. At the head of that list is four-star dual-threat quarterback [Sefo Liufau](#) out of Tacoma, Wash. He has a chance to play quite a bit or even start as a freshman. Diamond-in-the-rough [Addison Gillam](#) was in for spring and seems to have already locked down the starting job at middle linebacker. Keep an eye on speedy three-stars Phillip Lindsay and Bryce Bobo, who should contribute right away at running back and receiver, respectively.

**Off-field:** MacIntyre appears to have stabilized the program in the early going and looks to be instilling a good work ethic for his team. He did receive a bit of a shock when Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn, who hired MacIntyre, was himself fired by the school last week. As a coach, you never want the person who championed you to get the ax, so he'll have to lay a new foundation with whomever Colorado hires to replace Bohn.

**Fan reaction:** The long-suffering Buffalo faithful are cautiously optimistic about MacIntyre after seven straight losing seasons. He's done his best to boost their hopes, taking a tour of the state in an effort to drum up excitement. He [pumped up a crowd of 800](#) in Denver in February, so that's a good sign.

## Looking Ahead

**Advantages:** The Buffs went 1-11 last season, so Colorado has nowhere to go but up. Expectations are low and MacIntyre will be given time to revive a once-proud program. Unlike at San Jose State, MacIntyre will not be limited by poor facilities or resources and he's in a state with a decent talent base. What's more, the school's academics and its beautiful Boulder campus are a draw for recruits. This program might not be a sleeping giant, but there's no reason it shouldn't be a perennial top 25 team.

**Toughest challenge:** The Buffs are still finding their footing in the Pac-12 after Embree's awful tenure. Colorado's position in the league's South Division means annual games with USC and UCLA, two programs with far superior talent at this time. When the Buffaloes were a national power, they routinely attracted good talent from the Southern California area. They'll need to make the most of their annual trip to Los Angeles to raise their profile in the recruit-rich region.

**2013 Outlook:** Given the state of the program, expect a choppy first season for MacIntyre. However, we should see some marked improvement from the start. The Buffs are junking Embree's clunky pro-style offense for the "Pistol," which should better suit his offensive personnel and give his team a chance to compete. This isn't a team with a lot of talent, but 17 starters do return and they should be energized by their new direction. The schedule isn't murderous, with nonconference games with Central Arkansas and Fresno State joining the annual rivalry matchup with Colorado State. Oregon comes to Boulder, which beats the alternative. Two bye weeks will give the Buffs a chance to regroup in the season's first half. A bowl seems like a long shot, but MacIntyre has worked miracles before.

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## Mike MacIntyre faces ultimate rebuilding project at Colorado

By Ryan Hatch, SI.com

Coming off its worst season in school history, Colorado hopes this is the bottom. For the last decade, it seems, Buffs' fans have been promised progress -- if only in small, incremental steps -- each year. It's rarely happened. Now, following a 1-11 campaign and the addition of a first-year head coach, this fall seems poised to bring more of the same.

Colorado last finished above .500 eight years ago and hasn't won 10 games in a season since 2001. After coach Gary Barnett and his staff were forced out in December 2005, Dan Hawkins and Jon Embree took their respective cracks at the head-coaching gig. Neither one ever settled in as the man for the job. Hawkins was abrasive with the media, guilty of nepotism (his son, Cody, played in 45 games at quarterback, which alienated more than a few teammates) and responsible for causing some of his most talented players to transfer. He went 19-39 -- including an embarrassing 2-23 on the road -- and was fired in November of his fifth season at the helm. Embree was never fully given a chance to succeed, though it should be noted that his teams ranked among the least competitive in the 111-year history of the program. In late May, Colorado ousted AD Mike Bohn, who'd held his position since 2005.

So here we are. The Buffs must start over. *Again.*

New head coach Mike MacIntyre, the 48-year-old offensive virtuoso plucked from San Jose State last December, has a monumental task ahead of him: rescuing a once-proud program (Colorado finished the 1990 season ranked No. 1 in the AP Poll) from the deepest, darkest dwellings of college football. He appears well conditioned for the job. Before coming to Boulder, MacIntyre turned a Spartans team that went 1-11 in 2010 into an 11-2 Military Bowl winner in 2012. "The first thing you have to do is get the young men to understand the culture of what you want," MacIntyre said in May of revamping a downtrodden program. "You have to have an attitude change. ... I feel we've made some good progress in that area."

But this isn't the WAC, and since joining the Pac-12 in 2011, Colorado has gone 3-15 in league play. Last year, it was outscored by an average of 30.6 points per game. The Buffs had the 121st-ranked defense in the nation and surrendered an FBS-worst 39 passing touchdowns. The offense wasn't much better. Colorado allowed the third most sacks (50) in the country, scored the fewest points (17.8 points per game) in the conference and finished with a -19 turnover margin, 119th in Division I.

There are a few bright spots heading into the fall, headlined by wide receiver Paul Richardson, who is a year removed from knee surgery after tearing his ACL on April 9, 2012. Richardson showed glimpses of his potential while racking up 555 receiving yards and five touchdowns as a sophomore, but injured himself while trying to reverse directions on a kick return drill during last year's spring practice. "I tried not to overreact," Richardson said of his injury. "But about 45 minutes later I was having an MRI and about an hour after that I had my results."

Richardson says he feels close to 100 percent now and that his 40 time is even better than it was before he went down. In fact, coaches say it's hard to notice Richardson underwent major knee surgery less than 12 months ago.

"He's got a whole other gear on the field than [anyone] else I've coached," said new wide receivers coach Troy Walters, who won the Biletnikoff Award as a senior at Stanford in 1999. "He kind of reminds me of Marvin Harrison. He has good feet, good hips, good at getting in and out of his breaks, and if you want to sit on his routes, he's going to run by you."

Still, Richardson may be one of the few reasons for optimism. Junior Connor Wood is undisputed starter at quarterback following Nick Hirschman's transfer to Akron and Jordan Webb's ACL injury, but Wood will line up behind a painfully thin offensive line; center Gus Handler is the only returning starter. The defense brings back sophomore cornerbacks Kenneth Crowley and Greg Henderson, but many holes remain, and conditioning and poor tackling remain major issues. "We need to change our bodies," MacIntyre said. "There's some significant situations to take care of there. Especially on the defensive line ... we're not in very good shape right now."

The team's uphill battle -- both on and off the field -- cannot be overstated. Non-student ticket sales dropped by nearly 2,200 from 2011 to 2012, and, on more than one occasion, half of Folsom Field appeared empty at kickoff. Colorado's attendance declined by 10 percent last season, the second largest dip in the Pac-12. Clearly, MacIntyre has a lot of work to do.

He'll require a multi-year rebuilding project. He'll need to convince some talented prospects to help him along the way. In all likelihood, it's going to be a long and ugly ride. But if all goes according to plan, MacIntyre believes Colorado will be partying like it's 1990 again soon enough.

"I feel like the kids bought in every day," said MacIntyre this spring. "The overall attitude is very positive."

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