



COLORADO BUFFALOES

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CU defensive line coach Jim Jeffcoat played 15 years in the NFL with the Dallas Cowboys and Buffalo Bills.

Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



Jeffcoat's Experience Benefits Colorado D-Line

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Traditionally, spring brings a certain sense of optimism and reprisal and perhaps no place in college football needed it more than Colorado.

After a 1-11 record in 2012 the Buffaloes made a change in coaching staff. Looking for a fresh start, Colorado hired Mike MacIntyre from San Jose State as head coach. A one-win season usually signifies that all facets of a team were misfiring but among the most glaring needs was fixing a defense that in certain areas was statistically the worst in school history in 2012.

As a result, the program focused on making key changes on that side of the ball. One of MacIntyre's first moves was to bring in 15-year NFL defensive end Jim Jeffcoat to coach a defensive line that was at or near the bottom of the Pac-12 Conference in rush defense and quarterback sacks last season, two statistical categories Jeffcoat believes can be directly attributed to the defensive line.

"We have a lot of work to do," Jeffcoat said. "We have to improve against the run first. That will make teams one dimensional and then we can get better at rushing the quarterback. It won't happen overnight but they're working hard and taking notes and trying to get better."

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Jeffcoat's task to improve a unit that gave up 5.9 yards per carry last season, the program's worst on record, and had just 19 sacks may seem like a monumental one but he is no stranger to drastic turnarounds.

While playing at Arizona State, Jeffcoat was an integral part of a defense that went from 67th nationally in scoring defense in 1980 to second in scoring defense and first in total defense just two years later.

Prior to his arrival in Boulder, Jeffcoat also served as MacIntyre's defensive line coach at San Jose State where he oversaw a unit that went from just 16 sacks in 2011 to 42 in 2012, fifth best in the country.

"(At San Jose State) we first had to work on playing much better run defense then we could work on other things," Jeffcoat said. "I just tried to teach them to be relentless and keep at it and good things will happen. We are trying to do the same things here."

This fall, Jeffcoat will lead a group of 15 defensive lineman, only five of which are upperclassmen, and with the graduation of tackle Will Pericak, an already relatively inexperienced unit will have to improve without the exploits of its most experienced player and last season's leading tackler among all defensive lineman. His exit means a group of underclassmen will be asked to step up and fill a void up the middle.

"I like this group," said Jeffcoat. "It's not to be expected that we'll fix things overnight but as long as we keep at it we'll be ok. (Tackles) Nate Bonsu, Tyler Henington, and Samson Kafovalu are aggressive, tough guys who we think will step up and play well."

While the tackle position will see an infusion of raw youth and minimal experience, the end position will welcome a little more continuity and stability. The projected starters at defensive end, Chidera Uzo-Diribe and Kirk Poston, both saw significant time last year and although they finished the season 1-2 on the team in sacks, Jeffcoat is most excited about the leaps both players could potentially take next season.

"They're relentless," said Jeffcoat. "They are working on understanding better how to rush the passer and that you have to play the run first before you can go after the quarterback. In baseball, you're a great hitter if you hit .350 but how many times did you fail? You won't always get there but you just have to be relentless and keep at it and that's what makes a good defensive end."

Uzo-Diribe's seven sacks last season are among the most of any returning Pac-12 player and as he attempts to improve on those numbers, he will have a teacher who brings a pedigree that is unmatched in college football. No assistant in the football bowl subdivision has more NFL experience than Jeffcoat. As a member of both the Dallas Cowboys and Buffalo Bills from 1983-97, Jeffcoat recorded 102.5 sacks, enough to place him alongside the top pass rushers in NFL history.

"(Uzo-Diribe) plays at a high level," said Jeffcoat. "As he gets better at stopping the run he will become even better. I know from experience that (becoming great) doesn't happen overnight."

Jeffcoat's career in football now spans roughly four decades including 12 years as an assistant at both the professional and college level. Even though he has accomplished a lot during that time he doesn't ever feel like he has achieved all he set out to in a game he has spent most of his life learning, playing or teaching.

"(Being an assistant) is rewarding and but you always aspire to becoming a head coach one day," said Jeffcoat. "I love working with these kids and helping them become better."

As his coaching career makes yet another stop and a new era begins for both himself and an illustrious football program, Jeffcoat has brought new found excitement and intrigue to a team in desperate need of it. If the Buffaloes are to improve upon a defense that saw record lows last season adding a celebrated football great is a step in the right direction.

SHOW MENU

3:58 PM, Mar 11, 2013

BOULDER- Linebacker Derrick Webb doesn't look anything like wide receiver Jabari Carr. The latter is a twin and scored a touchdown in each of the last three games. The former isn't his long lost sibling and he led the team in tackles.

Yet, new Colorado football coach Mike MacIntyre almost mistook one from the other.

"I'm out here making sure I remember everybody's name," MacIntyre said half jokingly after the Buffs first day of spring practice. Both student athletes wear the No. 1 and the new coach joked about the possible confusion between the two. Carr will be a senior for San Jose State, Webb is returning to the Colorado program as a leader of their defense.

There is a lot to take in for the new coach, including putting the faces to the names of the entire program, but it's something he should have foreseen coming. It's a menial task, like a teacher proctoring roll on the first day of class, and one MacIntyre, who has all the names pretty much down by now, doesn't mind doing.

"It's been a blast. The kids are great," the head coach said.

Neither side, the players nor this is new head coach is ready to gauge the ability of this team based during the course of this inaugural practice. They are feeling each other out, getting in as many repetitions on the field and off of it to learn each other's tendencies and their compatibility. MacIntyre has simplified it, for the first couple days at least.

"We're looking at them all closely, and that is not a coachism," admitted MacIntyre. The depth chart, at this point, is solely based off seniority, nothing more. "We're watching every position closely and letting them all compete. Everyone is getting a lot of reps and that helps them to be able to compete."

That's what the new coach, and his new program will rely on until they can fully start working in the system; competition and repetition. "We didn't have a lot in, of course, but they flew around. They were trying to play fast, working hard and communicating," MacIntyre said.

"It was pretty intense. I like how competitive we were today," said wide receiver Paul Richardson. The junior to be is not only learning to adjust to a new coach but also to the game of football again. He missed the entire season last year due to a torn knee ligament. "The coaches got us fired up and made sure we were hustling around."

MacIntyre and the Buffs will continue to practice, the spring game is scheduled for mid-April, as they become more comfortable with their surroundings, the new system and even each others names.

New Colorado coach rebuilds from the bottom up

Paul Myerberg, USA TODAY Sports

9:57a.m. EDT March 12, 2013



(Photo: Cliff Grassmick, AP)

Colorado wasn't the only team to lose 10 or more games in 2012, nor was Colorado the only program to do so from an automatic-qualifying conference.

There was Kansas. Boston College. Illinois. Southern Mississippi, Tulane, Army, Massachusetts, Akron, Eastern Michigan, UNLV, Kentucky, South Alabama, Idaho and New Mexico State.

SPRING CENTRAL: [One stop for all spring updates \(http://www.usatoday.com/topic/13842f43-997a-4d92-9d3a-81cf4f44c9da/2013-ncaa-spring-football/\)](http://www.usatoday.com/topic/13842f43-997a-4d92-9d3a-81cf4f44c9da/2013-ncaa-spring-football/)

So the Buffaloes weren't alone. And it's not like Colorado was the only team to lose 10 or more games in 2011, former coach Jon Embree's first season with the program.

Maryland did it. So did Kansas. As did Indiana, Tulane, Akron, UNLV, New Mexico, Mississippi, Idaho, Middle Tennessee State and Florida Atlantic.

Colorado was merely one of five FBS schools to lose 10 or more games in each of last two seasons, joining Kansas, Tulane, Akron and UNLV. Colorado is also one of 13 schools to win a national championship since 1989, according to the Associated Press poll.

Spring dates: Colorado retook the field on Mar. 7 and will hold its spring game on Apr. 13.

MISSISSIPPI: [For now, Rebels' depth chart is filled out in pencil \(http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/ncaaf/2013/03/11/2013-ncaa-spring-football-mississippi/1979701/\)](http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/ncaaf/2013/03/11/2013-ncaa-spring-football-mississippi/1979701/)

2012 record: 1-11 (1-8). The lone win came over Washington State on Sept. 22.

Returning starters: 17 (9 offense, 8 defense).

Five players to watch: QB Shane Dillon, OT Marc Mustoe, DE Chidera Uzo-Diribe, CB Parker Orms, P Darragh O'Neill.

Spring questions:

1. How bad is it? Last year's team finished outside the top 70 nationally – often well outside the top 100, in fact – in nearly every meaningful statistical category minus punting, which gives some idea as to what sort of renovation job awaits first-year coach Mike MacIntyre, formerly of San Jose State. As in his first year at SJSU, MacIntyre will need to rebuild the Buffaloes' personnel, remake the team's offensive and defensive schemes and reverse the negative mentality that gripped the program over the last two seasons. It won't be easy.

CLEMSON: [The Tigers plan on taking on the ACC and the SEC in 2013 \(http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/ncaaf/2013/03/11/2013-ncaa-spring-football-clemson/1978511/\)](http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/ncaaf/2013/03/11/2013-ncaa-spring-football-clemson/1978511/)

2. What's one piece of good news? I can give you two positive factors to consider as CU begins spring drills. One is the fact that MacIntyre is familiar with substantial rebuilding projects, whether with the Spartans, Duke or Mississippi. The second is that the key members of his SJSU staff came with him to Colorado, from coordinators Brian Lindgren and Kent Baer to line coaches Gary Bernardi and Jim Jeffcoat.

3. How open is the depth chart? The pre-spring depth chart is listed alphabetically. Rarely does a two-deep actually work that way. It's not surprising, but it does reinforce the idea that MacIntyre is opening nearly every position up to competition over the next 15 practices. (And again over the summer and in August, one would think.)

Position battles:

1. Quarterback. It's largely the same cast as a year ago, with one addition: CU adds Shane Dillon to the mix after a redshirt season. Dillon joins the trio of senior Jordan Webb and juniors Nick Hirschman and Connor Wood in the race to become MacIntyre's first starting quarterback. Who's it going to be? Wood has the edge in pure talent. Webb has the edge in experience. Hirschman might have played the best of the three in 2012, though that's not exactly a ringing endorsement. Dillon might have the most promise.

2. Left tackle. Former starter David Bakhtiari decided to forego his final season of eligibility and leap to the draft, robbing CU of its top offensive linemen heading into spring drills. One option at Colorado's disposal is simply promoting sophomore Marc Mustoe, last year's backup and, one would think, the future at the position. A second option is to move junior Alexander Lewis over from left guard, where he started all 12 games a season ago.