



COLORADO BUFFALOES

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Wide Receivers coach Troy Walters (right) feels he has a good group to work with including Paul Richardson (left).

Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



Walters No Stranger In Getting The Most Out Of WRs

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An ideal coach would be one who has done it before and succeeded at it; a coach who knows what it takes to become a champion because he himself has reached the pinnacle of success.

After nearly two decades of honing his craft as both a player and an instructor, new Colorado wide receivers coach, Troy Walters has proven that he is that coach.

During his remarkable four year career as a wide receiver at Stanford, Walters' resume included a litany of accolades and honors. After an eight-year NFL career, Walters returned to the college ranks as an assistant coach and with two decades worth of expertise in tow, has overseen the maturation of a number of receivers who saw tremendous signs of improvement under his tutelage.

"You have to be willing to work to become great," said Walters. "You have to outwork your opponent. We weren't all blessed with great ability so you have to do the little things well."

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As the receivers coach at Texas A&M from 2010-11, Walters took a young and inexperienced group of receivers and molded them into a group that included record setters and all conference performers.

Then, after one season at North Carolina State Walters' top three receivers went from a combined 60 catches and seven touchdowns in 2011 to 149 catches and 18 touchdowns in 2012.

In January, he agreed to join the coaching staff of newly-hired head coach Mike MacIntyre, inheriting a receiving corps in which only three players recorded a reception last season. Despite a plethora of inexperience, Walters believes this unit has a chance to be just as good as his previous groups.

"I think we can (be as good)," said Walters. "They have the potential. They come in and work hard every day. This is a good group."

Although there are plenty of reasons to be optimistic, Walters' confidence could hinge mostly on a junior who, despite being a firmly entrenched in the program for the past three seasons, could be considered the biggest off-season addition of any team in the Pac-12.

Receiver Paul Richardson, who had as many touchdown catches in 2011 as all the team's receivers combined for last year, returns to a lineup in desperate need of his game breaking abilities after tearing an ACL in spring camp last year. Despite the setback, Walters believes Richardson isn't showing any signs of the injury one year later.

"If you look at him now you couldn't tell he ever got hurt," said Walters. "He has his speed back and he's ready to go."

After a year away from the gridiron, the talented Richardson brings his 14.6 yards per reception and 4.4 speed to a passing offense which ranked second worst statistically in the Pac-12 last year and with insight from one of the conference's all-time greatest receivers at his disposal on a daily basis, there's no telling how good Richardson's 2012 campaign may turn out to be.

"He has all the talent," said Walters. "I just try to stay on him and help him to never become complacent. I want him to be the best."

Richardson heads a corps which includes last year's leading receiver in sophomore Nelson Spruce, speedy 5-11 sophomore Gerald Thomas and the lengthy, 6-5, 210-pound junior Tyler McCulloch, all of whom have made camp intriguing as they battle for positioning on the depth chart.

"Competition has been intense," said Walters. "It's exciting. You have to have that work ethic (to succeed)."

At 5-7, Walters had to find a niche in order to thrive on the field. Although he was never as big and strong as the players he competed against, he never allowed any physical disparities keep him from outworking his opponent. Walters believes height or physical ability shouldn't hinder any player and with four receivers on the Colorado roster under 6-0 he has at least a few pupils to whom he can preach those beliefs.

"Every guy has to use his size to his advantage. The bigger guys can jump higher and get the ball, the smaller guys have a lower center of gravity so they can run better routes and have better balance. Everyone has to just play within themselves."

Walters' own coaching philosophies are the predominate reason why he decided to make Boulder the latest stop in his coaching journey. After North Carolina State head coach Tom O'Brien was in November, Walters found himself looking for a new job. His search eventually led him to MacIntyre whose beliefs on how to both mold young men and build a successful program fit nicely with the kind of opportunity Walters was looking for.

"I really like (coach MacIntyre's) vision," said Walters. "He wants to help develop these men off the field too and to realize the importance of academics. He has a good plan and it fits my own beliefs."

As coach Walters embarks on yet another reclamation project and brings his immense pedigree to Colorado, he stands out as yet another example that if a coaching staff is the foundation for the success of a program, the Buffaloes are well on their way to laying the building blocks for a winner that will stand for years to come.

Kasa could be next late-blooming NFL tight end

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BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — Nick Kasa? Oh yeah, he's the guy who ratted out NFL teams for improperly asking potential draft picks about their sexual orientation at the combine.

He's hoping to soon be known for more than just that, saying those comments in a recent radio interview were blown out of proportion and he regrets saying anything.

Kasa wants to become the next Antonio Gates or Jimmy Graham, big tight ends who blossomed only after reaching the pros.

The 6-foot-6, 269-pound Kasa converted from defensive end eight games into his junior season at the University of Colorado, then showed great promise during his senior season.

His size, skills, smarts and speed have caught the attention of NFL scouts who consider him one of the top tight end prospects in next month's draft.

Eighteen months ago, Kasa was a defensive end fighting for playing time. Seeing the end of his football career closing in on him, he went to then-Buffaloes coach Jon Embree and offered to play any position to get on the field more.

Embree converted him to tight end and he caught one pass for eight yards in the season finale against Utah. Then, he caught 25 passes for 391 yards and three TDs his senior season.

Kasa is a fast riser on many NFL draft boards despite playing the position just one full season in college and pulling a hamstring at the combine that prevented him from running routes or the 40-yard dash just weeks after shining at the Senior Bowl.

"Oh my God, if you would have asked me a year and a-half ago if I thought I was going to the NFL combine and the Senior Bowl and possibly getting drafted, I never ever would have thought," Kasa said after doing position drills at the Buffaloes' pro timing day this week for representatives of two dozen teams.

"When I was on the defensive line, I was like, 'Wow, football's about to be done and in a year, that's terrible. I was almost coming to grips with it and then it was just like a 180 the other way.'"

Former Buffaloes quarterback Tyler Hansen, who didn't make it out of Cincinnati's training camp last summer after pulling a hamstring, threw to Kasa at Colorado's pro timing day and was impressed with how much progress he'd made.

"I think he did good. I think he's still trying to get comfortable with playing tight end. You know, he's only played there a year but he's getting better and I think two years down the road he could be a stud in the league," Hansen said. "I think he just needs to get

comfortable."

Hansen said he saw Kasa's potential the first time he huddled up with him.

"He's obviously huge and he can run, but he needs to develop that skill set with his hands, a little more skills blocking, but I think he has all the tools to be a great tight end," Hansen said. "You could see he had the right makeup. He wants to be great and it wasn't happening at D-end for him, so it was his idea to come to the coaches and it paid off for him."

Turns out, it's the best move he ever made on the football field.

"It was really that fear that football might be over for me and I just wanted to show that I can play tight end and play some special teams," Kasa said. "I just wanted to show that I could keep playing football."

It was in the days after his mind and body were poked and prodded at the combine that Kasa really made a splash, and not one he particularly wanted to make, either.

Football: CU Buffs' Ray Polk finally healthy

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Ray Polk endured a frustrating senior season at Colorado last fall because of a badly injured ankle.

He had hoped to be the anchor of a defense short on experience in the secondary with a handful of true freshmen being thrown into the fire. Instead he was unable to play in five games and wasn't full-speed in several others in which he did participate.

Polk came to CU pro timing day Wednesday hoping to show assistant coaches and scouts from 23 NFL teams he is better than what they saw from him on his senior film. Now 100 percent healthy, Polk said he felt good about his performance in his workouts in the Dal Ward Center weight room and the practice bubble.

"It went well," Polk said. "You know, you can only hope for the best you can do on that day. There are a few things I wish I could have done a little bit better, but on the whole I'm happy about it. It's done and I'm on to the next step."

Polk said he felt the final game of his career, the 2012 season finale against Utah, was the best performance of his senior season. He said he hopes NFL teams will pay more attention to what he did as a junior, not that he was healthy during that season.

He played in 2011 despite a badly injured wrist and a fractured sternum.

"You put it bluntly," Polk said of how he explains his senior year to scouts and coaches. "I worked my butt off in the offseason. I was doing great things. I went to camps and a ton of film. I was learning and everything and life threw me a curveball. It was something that happened. I learned from it and now I'm over it."

Polk weighs 220 pounds and said some teams have expressed interest in him as an outside linebacker. He said he would love the opportunity to give the position a try.

Major happy

Linebacker Jon Major is another former Buff coming off an injury. He played a portion of his senior season with an injured elbow. He said he was feeling good Wednesday and believes he did well.

"I think it was all personal bests," Major said. "So I'm happy I did the best I could."

Major is considered a likely undrafted free agent at this point, but he believes his film will help his cause. His goal at pro day was perform well and give scouts a reason to go back and take a second look at his film.

Hansen returns

Former CU quarterback Tyler Hansen returned to Boulder to throw to former teammates working out for NFL teams and to re-connect with some of the scouts and coaches who evaluated him a year ago.

Hansen has been working part time at a hotel in California and also started tutoring young quarterbacks as a side business while he keeps alive his dream of playing professionally.

Hansen was signed by Cincinnati as an undrafted free agent last season and believes he was doing well with the Bengals in training camp before a pulled hamstring derailed his attempt to earn a roster spot.

Hansen said he has had several workouts with different teams, including one a week ago in Canada with the Hamilton Tigercats. Hansen noted that playing in Hamilton would mean competing against former CU coach Dan Hawkins, who is now the head coach of the Montreal Alouettes.

Hansen said his experience with the Bengals left him thirsty for another NFL opportunity.

"I think I can play in that league," he said. "I think I have the right amount of arm strength. I can make plays, move around. I think I can make a living in that league. ... I think I'll get another shot"

Strong man

Eric Richter didn't log much playing time during his career. He played both offensive and defensive line at CU, but he will leave the program with a reputation for being one of the strongest players to ever pass through Boulder.

Richter benchpressed 225 pounds 48 times for scouts. That kind of strength might be enough to get Richter invited to a mini camp or training camp this summer. He is unlikely to be drafted based on his limited playing time.

To put Richter's accomplishment in perspective, consider that Will Pericak recorded the second-most 225-pound benchpresses Wednesday -- with 24.

Follow Kyle on Twitter: @KyleRingo

Junior lineman passing on senior season for chance at NFL

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

The Colorado football program has never had a player leave school early to enter the NFL draft and not be selected in that year's draft.

Offensive lineman David Bakhtiari doesn't see why he would be the first.

Not long after his junior season ended last fall, Bakhtiari made a trip to see his brother, Eric, play linebacker and special teams for the San Francisco 49ers against Bakhtiari's old teammate Nate Solder and the New England Patriots. He had planned to consult with the NFL's underclassmen advisory committee at the end of his junior season about where he might fit into the draft if he turned pro early and now that decision was staring him in the face.

It was during the trip to watch his brother play, that Bakhtiari decided he had more passion for turning pro than he did for returning to CU to endure his second coaching change in two years and play for his third head coach.

Bakhtiari said he talked to a lot of people about his options but he made the decision based on what he felt was right for him, and not so much on what others believed. He's comfortable with it as he enters the final stages of preparation for the April draft after taking part in select drills at Colorado's pro timing day Wednesday.

"People close to me, but at the end of the day it was myself," he said when asked who helped him make the choice to turn pro. "I relied on myself. I wanted to know what did I want to do. People could tell me to go back to CU or go for the draft, but at the end of the day, I sat down in a room and was like, 'David Bakhtiari, what do you want to do?' And that was the ultimate decision."

Bakhtiari had previously worked out for every franchise at the NFL Scouting Combine last month in Indianapolis. His former teammate, tight end Nick Kasa, also was there and also took part in only some of the tests and drills Wednesday at CU.

In all, nine former Buffs worked out for 27 scouts and assistant coaches from 23 different teams. The other players involved were defensive lineman Will Pericak, defensive back Ray Polk, linebackers Doug Rippey and Jon Major, offensive lineman Eric Richter and 2011 CU seniors Tyler Hansen and Ryan Deehan.

Bakhtiari is the seventh CU football player to leave school early to enter the NFL draft. All six of the previous players to do so were drafted. Two of the six -- running back Lamont Warren (1994) and defensive lineman Shannon Clavelle (1995) -- probably found themselves wondering if they had made a mistake when they weren't drafted until the sixth round of their respective drafts.

In asking the NFL undergraduate advisory committee to evaluate him, Bakhtiari submitted tape from three games of his choosing. Six teams evaluate it and the league issues a grade based on those reports and provides the grade to the prospect.

Bakhtiari said he was comfortable turning pro based on that evaluation and the advice of people close to him

whom he trusts, such as his brother.

This draft is considered a deep one on both the offensive and defensive lines, which made some view Bakhtiari's decision to turn pro with a skeptical eye. NFLDraftScout.com rates him the ninth best tackle in the draft and projects him to be selected in the second or third rounds. Meanwhile, nationalfootballpost.com rates him the 22nd best tackle in the draft. If that rating proves more accurate, it creates uncertainty about when or if Bakhtiari would be drafted.

It wasn't a shock that Bakhtiari turned pro. He had been named second-team All-Pac-12 Conference two years in a row by the conference's coaches, despite playing on two historically bad CU teams in 2011 and 2012. A pro future was in the cards whether it happened now or a year from now and as long as he stayed healthy.

Bakhtiari was measured and weighed at 6-foot-4 and 303 pounds on Wednesday. Those stats generally describe a guard in the NFL, but Bakhtiari spent his college career playing both left and right tackle. He said he's heard a variety of opinions about where he fits in best as a pro.

"It depends on the team," Bakhtiari said. "I've had a variation on every position, but at the end of the day, it's whatever the one team that picks me up, whatever they want me to play, I'm going to play it. ... That's how I was here and that's how I will be at the next level as well."

Bakhtiari said he felt more comfortable working out at CU than he did at the combine, which isn't unusual to hear from players who have done both. He said the atmosphere on campus is more relaxed. He went through some position specific drills for scouts and talked with representatives of different teams one-on-one. He described the whole process from initially making his decision to the preparation, the combine and pro day as "entertaining" and one he would not change if given the chance.

Bakhtiari came to CU in 2009 after being recruited by former CU offensive coordinator and current Oregon head coach Mark Helfrich. He never played on a winning team at CU and never was able to participate in a bowl game.

He was asked Wednesday whether he believes he would have turned pro if he had played in a more successful program and had more to come back to than another rebuilding startup.

"I don't know. That's an 'if' question and 'if' questions are always very gray. It's a gray area," he said. "I was always going to turn in my NFL draft evaluation for juniors and I don't know if I was at a different school if I would have got the same grade back or not. So I don't know how to answer that, but no matter what I was going to sit down and view the option as a redshirt junior based on talking to my family and especially talking to my brother, and close friends."

He's not looking back and he has no regrets no matter what happens in April.

"It's been a good experience," he said. "It's been a good run. I was really happy. Someone asked me, 'David would you want to do it again?' and I said, 'Hell yeah I'd want to do it again.' Who doesn't want to train and get to go out and showcase what you've got to hundreds of thousands of people, which is definitely entertainment."

Follow Kyle on Twitter: @KyleRingo

Football: CU Buffs' Will Pericak performs for NFL scouts again

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Throughout his stellar career at Colorado, defensive tackle Will Pericak proved himself as a tough competitor with the ability to make plays at the line of scrimmage.

With the NFL draft just a few weeks away, the Boulder native is continuing to do all he can to show scouts he can succeed in their league, too.

On Wednesday, Pericak was one of several former Buffaloes to work out in front of scouts and coaches that represented 23 of the NFL's 32 teams.

"You do all this preparation for this one day," Pericak said after CU's pro timing day. "It felt good to get out there and perform well, do what you've been training to do these couple of months. It's a little bit over-hyped. It's really just five tests and you're done; it's position work and you're done. But, it's good to get out here, perform well and relax and just go do it."

A 6-foot-4, 285-pound defensive lineman, Pericak started in each of CU's 49 games the past four years. Last season, former CU head coach Jon Embree, who had previously coached in the NFL, spoke highly of Pericak's chances of being an NFL player.

In January, Pericak had an opportunity to practice in front of NFL scouts in preparation for the East-West Shrine Game. Wednesday was his second chance to get in front of scouts.

"From what I heard, I ran well and did well in the position drills," he said. "I've played 49 games and put a lot on tape. This is the next component which they look at and hopefully it looks good."

Pericak said that he likely isn't done trying to impress scouts.

"I talked to a few teams that might fly me out or come here and do a workout with me," he said.

As for his future, Pericak doesn't even want to speculate. He could get drafted. He might wind up being undrafted and signing as a rookie free agent.

"Anything is possible," he said. "I'm not going to try to predict anything. Draft day is always a crapshoot. You never know if a team is going to call you or not. I'm hoping for the best, make a team, get into camp and perform well."

Follow Brian on Twitter: @BrianHowell33.

David Bakhtiari and Nick Kasa the main attractions for representatives of 23 franchises

By Kyle Ringo, Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Nine former Colorado football players worked out in front of 27 scouts and coaches from 23 different NFL teams today at pro timing day.

The list of participants included offensive lineman David Bakhtiari and tight end Nick Kasa, both of whom were invited to the NFL Scouting Combine in Indianapolis last month and are considered CU's most likely draft picks.

Bakhtiari decided to leave school early following his junior season to enter the April draft. He became the seventh CU player to leave school early to turn pro. Each of the previous six were drafted.

Two other possible draft picks, defensive lineman Will Pericak and defensive back Ray Polk, also participated in a variety of tests and drills conducted at the Dal Ward Center and in the school's practice bubble.

Other former CU players trying to improve their stock included linebackers Jon Major and Doug Rippy, and offensive lineman Eric Richter.

All seven of those players completed their CU careers last season.

Former CU quarterback Tyler Hansen and tight end Ryan Deehan also returned to campus to work out for scouts in hopes of reviving their careers. Both finished their eligibility in 2011 and Hansen spent time in the Cincinnati Bengals training camp last summer before being cut.

Perhaps the most impressive moment of the day was provided by Richter, the player who logged the least playing time in his career. He bench-pressed 225 pounds 48 times.

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Former Buffs, Rams get the once over from NFL scouts

By Jeff Legwold *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*

Posted:

DenverPost.com

In preparation for the April 25-27 draft, many of the NFL's inquiring minds attended the Colorado and Colorado State pro-day workouts Wednesday.

At the morning session, 27 representatives from 23 teams were in Boulder to see the Buffaloes' draft prospects.

Tight end Nick Kasa has become a fast riser on draft boards despite playing his position for little more than one season. Kasa suffered a hamstring injury at the NFL scouting combine last month, so he only did position drills at CU.

"I was so mad I couldn't do everything at the combine," said the 6-foot-6, 269-pound Kasa. "I wanted to show I can catch the ball, do some things with it."

The teams didn't have Kasa run pass routes but did have him catch passes of varying lengths. Kasa said he expects to meet with several teams for individual workouts before the draft.

"If they do come to work me out, I can't wait, because I think my route running has gotten a lot better," Kasa said.

Offensive tackle David Bahktiari, who weighed 299 at the scouting combine in Indianapolis, was at 303 on Wednesday and did only position drills.

"A little victory there. They want to see that 300," Bahktiari said. "I couldn't believe I was 299 at the combine. I felt good (Wednesday), felt like I could show them some things."

Linebacker Jon Major went through a full workout that included a time of 4.82 seconds in the 40-yard dash. Defensive tackle Will Pericak (297 pounds) ran the 40 in 5.01 and 5.08, according to two teams, and did well in position work. Defensive back Ray Polk, offensive tackle Eric Richter (who lifted 225 pounds 48 times in the bench press) and linebacker Doug Rippey also worked out.

In the afternoon session at CSU, there were 20 representatives from 17 teams watching several former Rams and players from nearby college programs that CSU coaches allowed to attend the workouts.

CSU-Pueblo offensive tackle Ryan Jensen received plenty of attention. Miami Dolphins assistant offensive line coach Chris Mosley and Baltimore Ravens running game coordinator Juan Castillo did extensive position work with Jensen as well as with CSU offensive tackle Joe Caprioglio.

Linebacker James Skelton (a Chatfield graduate), cornerback Momo Thomas and wide receiver Marquise Law were among the CSU products who worked out for teams.

Fort Lewis quarterback Tim Jenkins (a ThunderRidge graduate) and Northern Colorado wide receiver Dominic Gunn (Rangeview) also worked out in Fort Collins.