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Nowhere to go but up for coach, Colorado

By Tim Griffin, Staff writer

Updated 11:54 pm, Friday, March 8, 2013

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2330 x 2469~~\$~~Colorado head coach Mike MacIntyre talks about his first recruiting class on signing day during an NCAA college football news conference, Wednesday, Feb. 6, 2013, in Boulder, Colo. (AP Photo/The Daily Camera, Cliff Grassmick) NO SALES; MAGS OUT; TV OUT Photo: Cliff Grassmick, AP



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BOULDER, Colo. — As he gazes across the Flatirons every morning, Colorado coach Mike MacIntyre is inspired by the immense beauty of his new surroundings.

MacIntyre hasn't had much time to really explore the area. He's been busy trying to turn around the struggling Buffaloes' program. The stately mountains that rise outside the city are symbolic of the big challenge the new coach faces in attempting to return Colorado to national football relevance.

Before coming to Boulder, MacIntyre helped orchestrate dramatic improvement at San Jose State last season, with the Spartans cracking the Top 25 for

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the first time in 37 years. Before that, he helped turn Duke's defense into one of the nation's best and was a defensive assistant on [Bill Parcells'](#) staff with the [Dallas Cowboys](#) for four seasons.

There are some parallels between San Jose State and what he's inherited at Colorado. But the Buffaloes also possess the identity of being one of the 30 winningest programs in college football history.

"I felt like when I went to San Jose State, the athletic director, the president and everybody wanted to be successful again," MacIntyre said. "I definitely feel the same way here. Our president, our chancellor, (AD) [Mike Bohn](#), they all want to be successful again. They are all united. And that's critical to have a good football program."

Even with that strong support, MacIntyre will be facing a huge test of trying to change Colorado's recent losing culture with the start of his first spring practice earlier this week.

The Buffaloes are coming off a 1-11 record that was the worst in the 123-season history of the program. CU notched no home victories in 2012, a season in which the Buffs ranked in the bottom six nationally in nine of the 17 statistical categories tracked by the [NCAA](#). It bottomed out in a 48-0 homecoming loss to Stanford that saw the team booed off the field at halftime by its own crowd.

Those struggles gave Bohn little choice but to fire coach [Jon Embree](#) after only two seasons — encompassing all of the Buffaloes' short time in the Pac-12 Conference.

"We all wanted it to work for Jon," Bohn said. "He's a Buff and had a lot of great Buffs on his staff. But it was a decision that was based clearly on performance. And if I had not made the recommendation and not gained the support with all of the (school's) senior leaders, it would have been a challenge to show people we are committed."

It was only eight years ago Colorado lost 70-3 to UT for the Big 12 title. Since that season, the Buffaloes have made only one bowl appearance and tumbled to a 25-61 mark.

Despite those struggles, Colorado has one of the nation's richest football traditions. They won a national championship as recently as 1990 and were in a BCS bowl game in 2002. And the charge of the half-ton buffalo mascot Ralphie onto the field ranks among the most iconic images in the sport.

In a way, MacIntyre believes that history has been a detriment to some of the players in the program during the recent struggles.

"I feel like they feel the pressure of walking by a national championship trophy every day on the way to their locker room," MacIntyre said. "The Heisman Trophy (won by Rashaan Salaam) and all the great history here. And being in a small town where the football program is very important and the weight of being successful."

To change that, MacIntyre wants them to relax with a fresh start with his program. He will inherit a young group that will return 17 starters and lost only eight seniors from last season's team.

"They aren't carrying the whole program on their backs," MacIntyre said. "They just need to do their own individual part and trust and believe in each other. When we start getting that, they'll start freeing themselves up a little bit, and we'll end up winning football games."

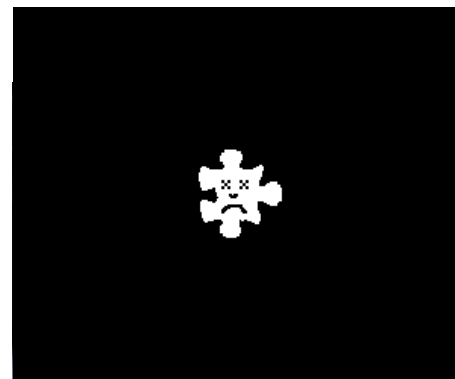
Colorado defensive tackle [Nate Bonsu](#) said the program's previous success helped attract him to the school.

"It's pressure, but it's kind of something we can look up to and embrace," said Bonsu, an Allen native who started four games as a freshman last season. "All of that stuff before was great, but now, it's our time. We have to make our own legacy, and [Coach MacIntyre](#) will help us get there."

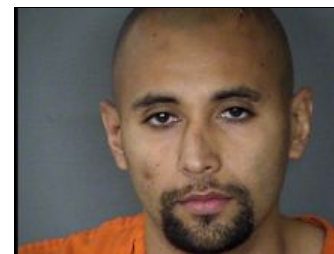
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Football: CU Buffs' John Schrock understands issues Mono poses to athletes

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Colorado basketball coach Tad Boyle and fans of his program are hoping to get forward Andre Roberson back soon from a "viral illness."

A source told the Camera on Thursday that the 6-7 junior forward has Mononucleosis.

The optimism for Roberson's quick return is understandable considering the huge impact he has on his team, but it's probably unlikely to actually happen. Take it from a fellow Buff who has been there, done that.

CU backup quarterback John Schrock began feeling tired and run down in early August last year right around the start of fall camp. By the end of camp he had been diagnosed with Mononucleosis and it caused him to miss most of the season.

"For me, it meant I lost 15 pounds and I wasn't eating very much and I was sleeping a lot and just exhausted," Schrock said. "In football terms, I couldn't lift anything. I couldn't throw a football. A lot of it is your spleen gets enlarged and you have to be worried about that with contact. It just completely sidelined me."

From the time he was diagnosed until the time he was cleared to return to the field, 7 1/2 weeks passed. Schrock eventually recovered enough that coaches felt comfortable giving him a chance to play late in a blowout loss to Washington in the next-to-last game of the season in November.

In the months since, Schrock has regained the weight that he lost and once again feels like his old self. Like everyone else at CU, Schrock hopes Roberson has an easier time with the condition, but he also knows it can be a long road.

"It takes a toll," Schrock said. "The weight you lose, it took me a long time to put that back on. It's really hard to come back from. It's really hard during the season. So it will be hard for him. But having the winter off, I'm fine now."

Behind the music

Anyone who has attended CU football practices in recent years under former coach Jon Embree and now under coach Mike MacIntyre is familiar with the loud music -- generally rock or rap -- that serves as a soundtrack to each session.

Some might mistakenly believe the music is a perk for players. It's actually a coaching tool coaches use to help players improve their focus. MacIntyre said he used music at practices while coaching at San Jose State the past three seasons and brought it with him from his time in the NFL.

"It's to keep them concentrating and keep them focused and make sure they signal and make sure they listen," MacIntyre said. "It makes everybody tune everything out. It's amazing how you can just tune everything out, the roar of the stadium."

"Also, when good music comes and practice is kind of dragging, they start popping around. So there is a combination of it."

So you're saying there's a chance

When spring practices began on Thursday, the program revealed redshirt freshman running back Davien Payne was suspended indefinitely for breaking team rules. MacIntyre was asked Friday if Payne has the opportunity to work his way back.

"If he does all the things that he's asked to do, he's got a chance to, but right now he's got a lot of things to do in that case," MacIntyre said.

First rule of fight club

The Buffs have been practicing in shorts and shells with minimal contact the first two days as mandated by NCAA rules, but as spring ball progresses pads and tackling will be added and inevitably tempers will flare.

MacIntyre says he doesn't like to see his players fighting in practice, but he also realizes it's going to happen at times.

"We want everything to stay right here on the field," he said. "It's a heated game. It's a physical game and we want them to be teammates together, but they're also competing."

Notable

The Buffs will return to the practice fields on Tuesday afternoon and have the annual Pro Timing day scheduled for Wednesday. CU is expecting approximately 14 former players to workout for pro scouts this year, including quarterback Tyler Hansen, who graduated in 2011 and participated in the Cincinnati Bengals training camp last summer. One of Hansen's favorite targets at CU, former tight end Ryan Deehan is also expected to participate.

Follow Kyle on Twitter: @KyleRingo

Potential QBs have small window to impress new coaches

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

If Jon Embree was still leading the Colorado football program, quarterback Shane Dillon would probably simply need to maintain a pulse to win the starting job this year.

There were plenty of subtle and not-so-subtle indications from Embree and his staff last season that Dillon was the direction in which they were headed when it came to their long-term plans under center.

The reality is none of the CU quarterbacks who played in 2012 distinguished themselves during a 1-11 season, and it seemed appropriate that Embree would be looking to a younger option whom he recruited going into this season. But with new coaches in place and every quarterback on the roster learning a new offense at the same time this spring, Dillon starting is no longer a certainty.

That doesn't mean the 6-foot-5 product of El Cajon, Calif., can't win the job as a redshirt freshman. He has plenty of talent as a former Elite 11 quarterback. He is fully recovered from the shoulder surgery he underwent last year and after arriving in Boulder as a string bean in 2012, he has added about 25 pounds and now checks in at 208.

"I feel stronger than before it was hurt," Dillon said of the torn labrum he suffered in his throwing shoulder during his senior year of high school. "The doctors were telling me they think it was hurt before I really tore it just from all the throwing I've done in my life, just a little tear here and there. Now that it's repaired and fully healed it feels so much stronger than it was before. I feel like I can just throw the ball as hard as I can."

Coach Mike MacIntyre has no plans to name a starting quarterback this spring. The competition will extend into fall camp and will include 2013 signee Sefo Liufau when he arrives in the summer. But there is a sense of urgency among the six quarterbacks competing this spring because MacIntyre has promised to trim the list of candidates from six to three after the first eight practices. The three that are no longer candidates to start will see a reduced role for the remainder of spring practices.

That means Dillon has eight practices to make a big impression on his new coaches while competing against players such as Nick Hirschman, Jordan Webb and Connor Wood, all of whom have more experience and have at least tasted what it's like to be on a college field on a Saturday.

"There has been pressure all my life for me," Dillon said. "I came into high school at a program that was just like this where we didn't win many games at first. I was sort of thrown into the fire. So, pressure, I've been kind of dealing with that for a long time. Adversity is going to come wherever you go. You're just going to have to play. Whether you play through it or let it get to you, you've just got to play."

Every quarterback on the CU roster is excited to be in a new system being installed this spring. It's a system in which San Jose State, MacIntyre's former team, used to pass for more than 4,300 yards in 2012.

Colorado's quarterbacks combined to throw for 2,310 yards, 11 touchdown passes and 19 interceptions.

Dillon indicated that MacIntyre and his offensive coordinator Brian Lindgren have spent time talking with him about what he likes and doesn't like in an offense. So while it might not be foregone conclusion that Dillon

becomes CU's next starter, his coaches are clearly interested in what he feels comfortable doing on the field.

"I feel like they just want to use as much of my athleticism as they can," Dillon said. "Coach Mac and coach Lindgren have been with me a lot and just getting with me and doing as much as we can in the playbook. Seeing what I like and what I don't like and all that stuff, which is good. I feel like they really are asking me what I feel like we would be good at and wouldn't be good at. I feel like they are taking a lot of consideration of what the players want, which is awesome for us."

Follow Kyle on Twitter: @KyleRingo