

## Howell: Time will tell if Mike Bohn was right man at CU

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BROOMFIELD -- Flash forward to the spring of 2015.

Colorado head football coach Mike MacIntyre has just completed his third spring game. He and his Buffs are fresh off a winning season and an appearance in a bowl game. A top-25 recruiting class is set to arrive in a few months.

CU head men's basketball coach Tad Boyle is all smiles after his team has completed another great season, complete with a fourth consecutive trip to the NCAA Tournament. This time, the Buffs got to the Sweet 16 before bowing out. Next year's team looks to be even better.

Head women's basketball coach Linda Lappe is already looking ahead to next season after her squad made it to the NCAA Tournament for a third consecutive season. They matched the men's team by getting to the Sweet 16.

And Mike Bohn? He watched it all, along with seven of his closest friends, from his free seats at Folsom Field and the Coors Events Center.

Meanwhile, Danny Sanchez has the women's soccer team knocking on the door of Pac-12 title contention, Liz Kritza has the volleyball team on the verge of the top 25 rankings, and the cross country, track and field and ski teams continue to produce nationally-ranked athletes and teams.

It's hypothetical, of course, but not all that far-fetched that Colorado's athletic department will be as healthy as ever on the field in a couple of years.

If so, who gets the credit?

Bohn, who was forced out this week after eight years as CU's athletic director, took some heat -- and rightfully so -- during his tenure. He also did a lot of good things for the CU athletic department.

Bohn hired Boyle and Lappe, who have turned around the basketball programs. He hired Sanchez, who made great strides in his first year, and he hired Kritza, who appears to finally have the volleyball team ready to do big things.

Bohn engineered the move to the Pac-12 Conference and he spearheaded the efforts to get a new practice facility at Coors Events Center for the basketball and volleyball programs.

Chancellor Phil DiStefano has indicated he wants more out of his athletic director in terms of fundraising. That's fair, but by all accounts, Bohn has been the most successful AD in Colorado history when it comes to fundraising efforts.

Bohn's biggest failure came on the football field.

Only once in eight years -- Bohn's first year in 2005 -- did the football team produce a winning record.

During his time, Bohn has fired three head football coaches, causing the school to shell out more than \$7 million in buyout costs. He has also hired three coaches.

Few can blame him for hiring Dan Hawkins in 2005. Hawkins was widely regarded as one of the top young coaches in the country. Had CU not hired him, another big-name school would have.

Hawkins' tenure ultimately failed, however, and BuffNation wanted one of their own. So, Bohn listened and hired Jon Embree. That proved to be a disaster, as Embree went 4-21 over the past two years.

Last year, the football program hit rock bottom, going 1-11 and routinely getting blown out. Ticket sales came up \$2.6 million short of projections. When the season was over, Bohn made the decision to fire Embree, who had three years left on his contract.

When DiStefano and CU president Bruce Benson allowed Bohn to then make the next hire, they should have then given him an opportunity to see it through.

What happens if MacIntyre leads CU to the same type of resurgence that he led at San Jose State? He may very well be the man that finally gets the Buffaloes rolling in the field.

It's not difficult to imagine a scenario in which MacIntyre gets the Buffs to start winning again. If he does, CU's next athletic director will have a much easier job in drumming up financial support, because fans love a winner. Just ask Boyle.

That new athletic director will then sit back and smile two years from now and talk about how the athletic department has made great strides.

Surely, the new AD will have played a key role in the success of the program. But, let's not forget that Bohn hired the team of coaches at CU.

DiStefano didn't give Bohn an opportunity to finally get things right on the football field. But, time may prove that Bohn finally did get it right.

That's why, along with his \$918,000 buyout and lifetime season tickets, Bohn deserves the benefit of the doubt.

Time just might prove that he was the right man for the job, after all.

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