

## **Pac-12 notes: Football assistants not getting fair deal**

*By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

*Posted:*

Buffzone.com

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I'm not one who believes our elected officials at the statehouse in Denver should be spending much time concerned with college athletics, but they sure fumbled away an opportunity to help athletic programs at Colorado colleges and universities this year.

You might have heard the legislature passed a law in its last session - House Bill 1144 - allowing institutions of higher learning to award multi-year contracts of up to three years to non-tenure-track faculty members who teach at least 50 percent toward what is considered full time.

Don't get me wrong. I think it's a great move that should help area schools attract and retain great professors and that's good news for students now and in the future.

The law does not change anything when it comes to the restrictions on state colleges offering no more than six multi-year contracts to all other employees of the institution.

Athletic departments at area colleges and universities such as Colorado and Colorado State have been fighting for years with one hand tied behind their backs to attract the best assistant coaches in the nation. They aren't able to offer more than at-will employment to most assistant coaches because the six multi-year deals are generally dedicated to head coaches, athletic directors, chancellors and presidents.

CU offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy is the only assistant coach at the school on a multi-year deal.

Don't think it's a problem?

Ask Bill McCartney, Rick Neuheisel, Gary Barnett, Dan Hawkins or Jon Embree. Just look at Colorado's long history of turnover among assistant coaches in football in particular. This past offseason was only the second time since the late 1980s the entire football coaching staff at CU returned from the previous season.

Offering multi-year deals to assistants in football is standard practice around the country at least at the BCS level. Not being able to do so is a competitive disadvantage.

You should have seen Embree's face light up earlier this year when I told him about the change to the law, and then seen his face change when I told him it didn't apply to coaches.

Poor guy.

Now I know the look officials get from Embree when they call back a CU touchdown with a holding penalty.

CU officials are happy to have won some middle ground that helps them hire and retain better educator. Good for them on that score.

But if they didn't lobby for the ability to give the same deals to assistant coaches or if they simply didn't think it was important enough to try, I think most CU fans would react to that news this way.

Booooooooooooooooo.

A name to consider

I'm assuming Embree is going to make some changes to his coaching staff after the season and considering how things have gone defensively during his first two seasons at the helm, it's probably a safe bet CU will be in the market for a new defensive coordinator.

Count me as a big fan of current defensive coordinator Greg Brown. He's a straight shooter, a stand-up guy and a good man. But the results on the field speak for themselves at this point.

So who might Embree turn to as his next defensive coordinator?

My guess is Embree will at least put in a call to Chuck Heater, the current defensive coordinator at Temple.

Heater is well-traveled including a five-year stay in Boulder when he worked alongside Embree under McCartney and Neuheisel during the 1990s when CU was an elite program. Heater has three national championship rings and more than 35 years coaching experience. He most recently won national titles working at Florida under Urban Meyer 2005-2010.

Not so happy anniversary

Remember when the Colorado football program used to be a fixture in the national polls. Yeah, it's getting way back there in the rearview mirror at this point.

The Buffs were in and out of the national polls periodically under former coach Gary Barnett and this week is the seven-year anniversary of the last time CU was ranked in any college football poll.

The Buffs were No. 22 in the Associated Press poll heading to Iowa State with a 7-2 record this week in 2005. They lost three straight, including the epic 70-3 beat down in the Big 12 Championship game and Barnett was fired.

## Injuries, losing seasons define senior linebacker's career

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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Jon Major came to Colorado with so much hope and promise.

Considered the top prep player in the state in the class of 2008, Major was part of a stellar recruiting class for the Buffs.

"We wanted to start a dynasty," Major said of that class, which ranked among the nation's best at the time.

Now a senior linebacker, Major has just two games left in a career -- and a senior season -- marked by disappointment. He and the Buffaloes (1-9, 1-6 Pac-12) will host Washington (6-4, 4-3) on Saturday, still searching for their first win at Folsom Field.

"You just have to see the positive, if there is one," said Major. "You have to put your pride on the backseat a little bit and look to the young guys and to the future and what you can do now as an individual. That's all you can do is try to bring up the new guys and do everything you can to finish on a good note."

It's been an interesting ride for Major, who starred at Ponderosa High School in Parker.

Major came to CU with a class that included five-star running back Darrell Scott, who was arguably the nation's best back. That class also included Lynn Katoa and Shaun Mohler, who, like Major, were four-star linebackers. Scott quit the team midway through 2009. Legal trouble ended Katoa's time with the Buffs after just two years and Mohler, as a junior college transfer, was done after two years.

In all, there were eight four-star recruits (including Scott) and a host of other three-star players. Many of them exhausted their eligibility last season. Others just never panned out. Ironically, it was the less-heralded recruits that wound up being the best of the bunch, guys like Curtis Cunningham, Tyler Hansen, Will Pericak and Rodney Stewart.

Major would probably be considered the best player from that group of four-star recruits, but his career has been defined by injuries. He tore his ACL during fall camp as a true freshman and missed that entire season. Shoulder and knee trouble limited him in 2009 and another knee injury cut his season short in 2010. He finally played a full season in 2011 and has been on the field for most of this season, but he did miss a game with a hyper-extended elbow.

There have been other disappointments, too, including the fact that Major and the Buffs have never been to a bowl game during his five years. They have come close, though.

"When you really analyze it, you forget how close things are from either going here (good) or here (bad)," he said, gesturing with his hands. "My true freshman year, even though I didn't play, Nebraska makes a 50-something yard field goal and that's the game that would get us to a bowl game. He just had the kick of his life. It's crazy. Stuff like that happens all the time."

"Two years ago, we gave up that huge lead to Kansas. Well, that's our bowl game right there."

Had the Buffs won those games, Major would likely be talking about a couple of trips to bowl games, if not more.

Those losses, especially the 52-45 defeat at Kansas in 2010 -- a game in which CU led by 28 in the fourth quarter -- led to Dan Hawkins, the man who recruited Major, getting fired. Hawkins was dismissed just days after the loss to Kansas, with three games to play in that season.

Under the direction of Jon Embree the last two years, the Buffs have fallen on hard times. No season in Major's career has been as trying as this one.

Despite having just two games left in a lost season, though, Major and the Buffs aren't giving up.

"They have an opportunity these next two weeks and I appealed to their pride," Embree said. "We've talked about trying to create some momentum for them in the offseason and moving forward into 2013. I also talked to the older guys, the seniors, about how they wanted to finish.

"It would be big (to win a game or two)."

Major knows that the Buffs are criticized by many, but he also knows that the Buffs aren't struggling because they aren't trying.

"If anyone could be around us and see it, they'd understand all the hard work that goes into it, and sometimes hard work doesn't match results," said Major, third on the team with 54 tackles this season. "Your preparation doesn't show up all the time. You just have to keep coming and do more than we have. We have two weeks left and nothing to lose. We should prepare like that, we should play like that and see what happens."

To this point, it hasn't been anywhere near the career Major hoped it would be. He said he won't dwell too much on what could have been, though.

"It happens for a reason, and you've just got to maximize the present and move forward," he said. "I definitely still love the game. You've got to let that carry you and seek results from that. If you didn't have passion for it, you would have packed it in a long time ago."

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## Embree, Buffaloes have two more chances to snap home losing streak

By Brian Howell, Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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At this point, the Colorado football team can't do much about the 10 games they've played, but the Buffaloes are hoping to make the most out of the last two games.

CU (1-9, 1-6 Pac-12) hosts Washington (6-4, 4-3) on Saturday at Folsom Field. Still looking for their first win of the season at home, the Buffs are also hoping to gain some momentum for the offseason and send the seniors off on a high note.

"They have an opportunity these next two weeks and I appealed to their pride," Embree said Tuesday at his weekly press conference. "We've talked about trying to create some momentum for them in the offseason and moving forward into 2013. I also talked to the older guys, the seniors, about how they wanted to finish.

"It would be big (to win a game or two)."

The Buffaloes have not gone through a season without a home win since 1920. To get it this week, they'll have to upset a Washington team coming off an impressive performance against Utah last week.

Embree said that when scouting the Huskies, he's been impressed with Austin Seferian-Jenkins, who is "probably the best tight end in the country." He also said he's been impressed with quarterback Keith Price, running back Bishop Sankey and a Washington defense that plays sound fundamentals.

As for his team, Embree is hoping his Buffaloes come out spirited and ready to finish strong. And, he said he's not worried about going winless at home.

"No, because I expect us to (get a win)," he said. "I don't think of it any other way."

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## Former CU Buffs great Chad Brown supports the staff but wants wins too

By John Henderson *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*  
Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — Jon Embree's booster luncheon Tuesday was barely half full, a bigger testament to the collective yawn toward Colorado football than the anger.

A little more than two dozen people bothered to show up at the Millennium Harvest House to hear Colorado's coach talk about the big quest for the first home win of the year.

Boosters aren't organizing a witch hunt in Embree's second season. A free fall that's two losses from the worst record in school history has turned Buff Nation into mass indifference.

One prominent alum, however, is not indifferent. Chad Brown has a vested interest as a CU linebacker from 1989-92. He has the objectivity of a sideline reporter for KOA radio. He also has the knowledge of a 15-year NFL veteran and three-time Pro Bowler.

Brown hears the boos at Folsom Field. He reads the critiques.

"They have a right to be upset," Brown said Tuesday. "It's one thing to lose and another thing to lose in the fashion that we've lost and the fashion that we've lost repeatedly."

The first two years Brown started, Colorado played for the 1989 national title and won it in 1990. They went 17-5-2 his next two seasons. Imagine how hard it is for Brown to comprehend a potential 1-11 season, with no home wins for the first time since 1920 and giving up the most points (47.2) and yards (505) per game in history.

The multitude of reasons is based on youth — from the roster to the coaching staff. Inexperienced coaches are coaching inexperienced players, and the combination has been disastrous so far.

In going 1-6 in the Pac-12, they've lost their six league games by an average score of 53-14.

"I was on a Seahawks team that was 4-12, and I was a professional and I was a Pro Bowler and I was an all-pro, and it was hard then," Brown said. "How do you allow a loss to motivate you but not beat you up? As a 26-, 27-year-old, that was hard for me. I can't imagine how these kids are adapting to that, and how do you make yourself mentally OK with that?"

Brown's biggest concern is the ugly circle it creates. He saw definite improvement earlier this year, but then a run of three straight ranked teams knocked the Buffs off the local radar.

The battered Buffs then watched Arizona's Ka'Deem Carey go Reggie Bush on them for a league-record 366 rushing yards Saturday.

"It seems the progress has slowed down a little bit," Brown said. "With a younger team, that's natural. The losing wears on you. Losing becomes a habit. The negatives that come with losing — the lack of effort, the lack of preparation, the lack of focus during the week — just becomes a bad cycle and ends

up another loss, and then they don't give the same effort the next week and it kind of snowballs on you."

Brown gives them somewhat of a pass, particularly the pan-roasted defense. In Oregon, Arizona, UCLA and Fresno State, Colorado has faced four of the top 19 offenses in the country. That doesn't count Southern California, which looked like USC circa Bush against the Buffs.

Trying to stop the flood, seemingly with kitchen sponges, is Embree's staff. Former players back Embree. However, some observers criticized the experiment of choosing a head coach with no coordinator experience.

Then Embree chose two coordinators who had never been sole coordinators. Brown, who will finish up two remaining classes this spring for his sociology degree, found that odd.

"Even the best coaches I've been with in the NFL, they had — using a Mafia movie term — a consigliere, an old sage who's been around and seen it before and done it before, who you can lean on," Brown said.

Optimism around Boulder is as rare as wins. Changes are expected on Embree's coaching staff, and he'll appear on every hot seat list in the country in 2013. A .500 record seems two years away.

After watching them up close all year, where does the fabled Buffs linebacker sit?

"I'm always optimistic about the Buffs," he said. "That'll never change. But there's got to be a bowl game in future. Otherwise the experiment will have failed."

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