



# COLORADO BUFFALOES

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Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



## Brooks: Buffs Final Shot At Home "W" Slips Away

Release: 11/23/2012 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

**BOULDER** - After seven consecutive blowout losses, the Colorado Buffaloes found themselves competing in the fourth quarter Friday at Folsom Field. It was a strange, unfamiliar situation, but the Buffs appeared ready to handle it.

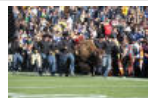
Like their 2012 season, it slipped away.

CU and Utah swapped 100-yard kickoff returns in the fourth quarter, but the Utes' runback came in response and proved to be the difference in their 42-35 Pac-12 Conference win.

The gut-wrenching loss ended CU's season at 1-11 overall, 1-8 in conference, and made this Buffs team 0-6 at Folsom. The last time a CU team didn't win a home game was 1920, and the school's most recent one-win season was 1984 (1-10).

Utah (5-7, 3-6) won for the first time on the road this season. CU's only 2012 win came on the road - 35-34 at Washington State on Sept. 22.

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Colorado Gameday



Sidebar: Seniors Left Mark



Statistics

"Tough game, tough loss," said an emotional Jon Embree, whose two-year record at his alma mater is 4-21. "I just want to thank the seniors for what they did for us." CU said goodbye to eight seniors and three fourth-year juniors who are graduating.

→ Notes  
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 Final Book: Utah 42, Colorado 35

"I'd like for it to have been better," senior tight end Nick Kasa said of his career and final season. "But it was good to be in a game until the last play. I think we all know there are better things coming for this program."

Senior linebacker Jon Major characterized his CU career as "super frustrating . . . life ain't fair, and that's just the way it is."

Making his third career start - the second this season - CU sophomore quarterback Nick Hirschman completed 30 of 51 passes for 306 yards and a touchdown. But four interceptions, the last ending the Buffs' final chance in the final half minute, cast a long shadow. Three of the picks led to 21 Utah points.

Embree said Hirschman "gave us everything he had . . . he rallied, he gutted it out. He got banged around a little bit, but he didn't stop fighting."

Redshirt freshman Nelson Spruce caught 10 passes for 98 yards and an 8-yard touchdown, while freshman tailback Donta Abron rushed 14 times for 84 yards and a TD. The Buffs outgained the Utes 418-336 in total offense, led 25-18 in first downs and held the visitors without a third-down conversion until the middle of the fourth quarter.

As the season's grind intensified, Major said CU's locker room stayed tight: "We got closer. We knew, the guys in the locker room knew who would fight and have each other's backs. That was a priority around here."

Utah led 17-14 at halftime, but the way the game opened it appeared the Utes might make this a first-half blowout - something the Buffs had experienced in their previous seven games.

Opening series, second CU play: Hirschman's first pass is picked by defensive end Trevor Reilly and returned 13 yards to the CU 16.

First Utah play: Travis Wilson hits Dres Anderson for a 16-yard touchdown and the Utes are up 7-0 less than a minute into the first quarter.

Fortunately for the Buffs on the ensuing possession, a roughing-the-kicker penalty salvaged a stalled drive and provided a first down at the Utes' 23-yard line. Four plays later, Hirschman found Spruce in the end zone for an 8-yard score and Will Oliver's extra point tied the game at 7-7.

CU's defense provided a rare - in this season anyway - goal line stand, stopping Utah on three plays from the one and forcing a 21-yard Coleman Peterson field goal that put the Utes ahead 10-7 with 13 seconds left in the first quarter.

That Utah possession followed CU's second turnover - a fumble by Abron, who started in place of former high school teammate Christian Powell (concussion).

The Buffs botched an opportunity to tie the score after snapper Ryan Iverson recovered returner Charles Henderson's fumble at the Utes' 15. After a Hirschman sack and an illegal substitution penalty, CU wound up trying a 43-yard field goal by Oliver. But Utah defensive end Joe Kruger, a 6-7, 280-pounder lined up inside, swatted it down.

The Utes capitalized on their second interception of Hirschman - this one by free safety Eric Rowe - and marched 47 yards in six plays to go ahead 17-7. Backup tailback Kelvin York scored the TD on a 4-yard run.

The Buffs had 3:35 before intermission to respond, and they used all but 16 seconds of it on an 11-play, 78-yard drive. After Hirschman went four-of-four for 46 yards on the march, he scored on a 1-yard sneak to bring the Buffs to 17-14.

Utah padded its lead (20-14) on a 37-yard field goal by Peterson on the second half's opening possession, but CU offered an immediate response and took its first lead of the afternoon. Tony Jones' 3-yard run capped an 11-play, 80-yard drive and tied the score, then Oliver's PAT pushed the Buffs in front 21-20 with 8:46 left in the third quarter.

Having an advantage felt so good CU had to expand on it. After again shutting down Utah on third down - the Utes finished the third quarter 0-for-8 - and forcing a punt, Hirschman drove the Buffs 71 yards for another score. Abron got it on a 4-yard run.

Of the drive's eight plays, three were Hirschman passes that covered 60 yards - the big play a third-down screen to fullback Alex Wood that covered 34 yards. After Abron's TD, Oliver kicked CU ahead 28-20 and the third quarter ended that way.

Less than 5 minutes into the final quarter, the game was tied. Those third-down conversions Utah was having problems with? No problem on a 75-yard drive that saw the Utes convert two and ultimately score on an 11-yard run by tailback John White (20 carries, 168 yards, 1 TD).

A two-point conversion would tie the score and that's what Utah opted to do. After lining up in a spread PAT formation, Jake Murphy took a direct shotgun snap, took a couple steps toward the end zone then pulled up and lobbed a pass to David Rolff.

Utah 28, CU 28.

The tie held until Hirschman's third interception set up the Utes at the Buffs' 30. Wilson ran 9 yards around right end for the TD that broke the tie - 35-28.

Then came the exchange of 100-yard kickoff returns by CU's Marques Mosley and Utah's Reggie Dunn. Mosley's jaunt - he started left, reversed his field and finally outran the kicker - tied the score at 35-35. Dunn's answer - he started near the right hash mark, cut up the right sideline and was untouched until his teammates mobbed him in the end zone. The Utes went up 42-35 with 8:12 to play.

The Buffs chance to answer stalled when the decision was made to go for a fourth-and-three at the CU 45. A Hirschman pass for Gerald Thomas was batted away, but the Utes were forced to punt on their next series.

CU took over on its 7-yard line with 2:55 showing. Last chance for a miracle, but the Buffs couldn't find one. They moved as far as the Utes 46, where on fourth-and-eight Hirschman's fourth pick - this one by strong safety Brian Blechen - ended the afternoon and CU's one-win season.

Despite the record and the string of blowout losses, Embree said there are positives although "it may not be crystal clear. We've got a lot of young talent that's grown up. We get some guys back who were hurt, we've got some good grayshirts coming in. There's a lot to be excited about and feel good about."

**BUFF BITS:** Senior defensive end Will Pericak received the Buffalo Heart Award, presented by a group of long-time fans seated behind the CU bench . . . Saturday's actual attendance was 39,400, with 46,052 tickets distributed.

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SHOW MENU



## Dunn, Utah seal Colorado's fate with 100-yard KO

Dennis Georgatos - Associated Press (AP)

Friday, November 23, 2012

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — Colorado's hopes for averting its worst season in more than a century were buoyed by Marques Mosley's game-tying 100-yard kickoff return — for all of 13 seconds.

That's how long it took Reggie Dunn to return the ensuing kickoff 100 yards for the decisive touchdown as Utah, helped by five takeaways, kept Colorado winless at home this season with a 42-35 victory on Friday.

The Utes (5-7, 3-6 Pac-12) intercepted Colorado QB Nick Hirschman four times. Dunn showed his explosiveness once again the only time that he touched the ball during the game, extending his NCAA record with his fifth career 100-yard kickoff return — and fourth this season.

The Buffaloes (1-11, 1-8 Pac-12) finished with their worst record since the school's inaugural 0-4 campaign in 1890. They also failed to win a game at home in six tries for the first time since 1920, when they were 0-1-2. It was their first winless campaign ever at Folsom Field, where the Buffaloes have played their home games since 1924.

"This game kind of summarizes this year; close, but still got a ways to go," said Jon Embree, who fell to 4-21 in his two seasons as Colorado's coach.

Embree added that a couple of injuries contributed to the breakdown on the kick coverage unit in the immediate aftermath of Mosley's kick return for a touchdown for Colorado.

"We talked about covering the kick when it was our turn," Embree said. "We had some guys that were hurt, so we had to put some other guys in there. They got hurt, like, two plays before, so there was a little bit of chaos, but obviously they were able to answer back."

Tight end John Kasa, one of eight seniors playing their final game for Colorado, said he wouldn't let the Buffaloes' dismal season define him.

"What defines me is we fought our butts off to win this game, and I'm going to keep that going in my life," Kasa said. "The main thing that (we) learned is that hard work will eventually lead to success, and unfortunately, it didn't here. But I'm not stopping."

Neither are any of us."

The Utes, who hadn't won on the road all season, outscored Colorado 22-7 down the stretch after third-quarter TD runs of 3 yards by Tony Jones and 5 yards by Donta Abron gave the Buffaloes a 28-20 lead heading into the fourth quarter.

The teams combined for 21 points in a stunning 29-second span:

—Utah quarterback Travis Wilson scored on a 9-yard keeper to break a 28-28 tie with 8:41 remaining.

—Mosley returned the kickoff 100 yards to tie it back up at 35. It was Colorado's first kickoff return for a score in three years.

—Dunn then extended his NCAA records for most 100-yard kickoff scores in a season (four) and career (five).

"Defense played well, it's a disappointment that it came down to one small play," said senior defensive lineman Will Pericak. "That's the story of our season. I'm happy to be a Buff and proud to be a Buff."

The Buffaloes got the ball a couple of times after Dunn's score ,but they turned the ball over on downs and Hirschman's fourth down pass in the waning seconds was intercepted at midfield by Brian Blechen.

John White ran 20 times for 168 yards and became the first Utah player with consecutive 1,000-yard seasons. His score from 11 yards out with 10:50 left pulled Utah to 28-26, and the Utes tied it when Jake Murphy took the direct snap and threw a 2-point jump pass to fellow tight end David Rolf.

Last year, the Buffaloes ended Utah's division title hopes with a 17-14 win at Salt Lake City.



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## Colorado goes winless at Folsom Field for first time

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

DailyCamera.com

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In the 15 minutes preceding the moment Colorado coach Jon Embree sat down in front of the microphone at his postgame press conference Friday, he confronted a pitiful fan shouting insults at one his freshmen, consoled his team after a hard-fought 42-35 loss to Utah and said goodbye to eight seniors.

He wiped away tears in the hallway outside the interview room, walked through the door and initially found it hard to put his thoughts into words.

After so many blowout losses this season and last, having a possible victory ripped away in the fourth quarter hurt worse than any previous loss the former CU tight end turned coach has dealt with in his two years on the job. After all, the Buffs haven't often given themselves a chance to win in the fourth quarter.

Meanwhile, 100 feet away outside the visiting locker room Utah coach Kyle Whittingham was openly questioning Embree's decision making.

"I can't for the life of me figure out why they kicked to Reggie Dunn, but we are glad they did," Whittingham said.

Just when it looked like the Buffaloes might have saved their most complete game for the season finale against the Utes for the second straight year, they found ways to lose -- again.

CU freshman Marques Mosley tied the game at 35-35 with a beautiful 100-yard kickoff return down the east sideline for a touchdown with 8 minutes, 25 seconds left in the game. Then the CU kickoff coverage team kicked the ball to Dunn, who came into the game already in possession of the NCAA record for career kickoff returns of 100 yards or more.

Dunn sprinted through a seam in the Buffs' 118th ranked kickoff coverage team and gave his team the lead again with a 100-yard return of his own, the fifth of his career.

"We talked about covering the kick when it was our turn," Embree said. "We had some guys that were hurt, so we had to put some other guys in there, I think two plays before. So there was a little bit of chaos obviously, and they were able to answer back."

Dunn's return ended up making all the difference because the Colorado offense led by quarterback Nick Hirschman couldn't move the ball into Utah territory on its final two possessions. The Buffs' last chance ended in Hirschman's fourth interception of the day.

Utah came into the game with four interceptions all season.

"Obviously, I turned the ball over a lot, and I put our defense in a real rough spot on three separate occasions," Hirschman said. "That's unacceptable and you can't win football games likes that. Our defense was playing amazing and I put them in a short field and I can't do that."

The loss left the Buffs at the end of the season with a 1-11 record. Many believe it's the worst season in the

history of the program because it is the first time the Buffs have ever lost 11 in one season and the only time they have failed to win a home game in one season.

Now the focus switches from the issues on the field to whether the school will retain Embree for a third season to continue his rebuilding project. Embree is 4-21 in two years as the head coach of his alma mater.

If Embree is retained, it is expected he will fire defensive coordinator Greg Brown and longtime linebackers coach Brian Cabral will also leave the program, possibly retiring. It's unclear if Embree will make changes to his offensive staff or take over the play calling responsibility from offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy.

CU administrators and Embree did not make any announcements Friday, but some news could come as soon as today.

Against Utah, the start was ugly for the Buffs. Hirschman threw an interception on the second play from scrimmage and Trevor Reilly returned it to the CU 16-yard line. On the Utes' first offensive play of the game, quarterback Travis Wilson passed to Dres Anderson for a 16-yard touchdown.

Less than a minute had expired and the Utes led 7-0 with little effort.

The Buffs responded on their next possession by driving 75 yards in 12 plays to tie the score with an 8-yard touchdown pass from Hirschman to wide receiver Nelson Spruce. It was the first CU touchdown at Folsom Field since the second quarter of the Arizona State game on Oct. 11.

The Buffs were shut out at home against Stanford and held to three points by Washington.

CU fell behind by 10 points at one point and fought back to take an eight-point lead early in the fourth quarter. Hirschman completed 30 of 51 passes for 306 yards, but threw only the one touchdown pass.

The Buffs played one of their better games on defense, though they still proved incapable of stopping the run. Utah senior John White ran 20 times for 168 yards and the Utes gained 208 yards on the ground as a team.

Embree was asked to describe the Buffs' season.

"I think you saw it all in that game," he said.

Follow Kyle on Twitter: @KyleRingo

Utah 42, Colorado 35

Utah 10 7 3 22--42

Colorado 7 7 14 7--35

First Quarter

Utah -- D.Anderson 16 pass from Wilson (Petersen kick), 14:16.

Col -- Spruce 8 pass from Hirschman (Oliver kick), 8:55.

Utah -- FG Petersen 21, :13.

#### Second Quarter

Utah -- York 4 run (Petersen kick), 3:43.

Col -- Hirschman 1 run (Oliver kick), :20.

#### Third Quarter

Utah -- FG Petersen 37, 12:16.

Col -- T.Jones 3 run (Oliver kick), 8:46.

Col -- Abron 5 run (Oliver kick), 1:09.

#### Fourth Quarter

Utah -- J.White 11 run (Rolf pass from Murphy), 10:50.

Utah -- Wilson 9 run (Petersen kick), 8:41.

Col -- Mosley 100 kickoff return (Oliver kick), 8:25.

Utah -- Dunn 100 kickoff return (Petersen kick), 8:12.

A -- 46,052.

Utah Col

First downs 18 25

Rushes-yards 36-208 35-112

Passing 128 306

Comp-Att-Int 13-25-0 30-52-4

Return Yards 25 0

Punts-Avg. 7-33.9 4-42.5

Fumbles-Lost 2-1 2-1

Penalties-Yards 5-43 4-35

Time of Possession 28:27 31:33

#### INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING -- Utah, J.White 20-168, York 10-25, Wilson 3-17, Matthews 1-2, Team 2-(minus 4). Colorado, Abron 14-84, T.Jones 8-23, G.Thomas 2-12, Ford 2-5, Team 1-(minus 5), Hirschman 8-(minus 7).

PASSING -- Utah, Wilson 13-25-0-128. Colorado, Hirschman 30-51-4-306, T.Jones 0-1-0-0.

RECEIVING -- Utah, Scott 4-36, Matthews 3-34, Denham 1-20, D.Anderson 1-16, Tonga 1-11, Fitzgerald 1-9, Rolf 1-4, Murphy 1-(minus 2). Colorado, Spruce 10-98, McCulloch 6-88, Kasa 5-51, T.Jones 3-1, Slavin 2-19, G.Thomas 2-6, A.Wood 1-34, Thornton 1-9.

## Football: CU Buffs' Will Pericak wins Buffalo Heart Award

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

DailyCamera.com

Walking off the field with another loss wasn't the way Will Pericak wanted to end his football career at Colorado.

The senior defensive lineman, who grew up in Boulder, was able to smile a bit, though, as he carried the Buffalo Heart Award in his arms.

"It's something I'm going to treasure," he said after CU's 42-35 loss to Utah at Folsom Field.

Voted on by fans for the past 15 years, the Buffalo Heart Award is given to the player who best displays heart, determination, grit and desire. Although not only for seniors, all the winners have been seniors.

Pericak, a graduate of Boulder High School, started each of the Buffs' 49 games the past four seasons. He has the most starts and most consecutive starts in school history, and on Friday he broke the record for most games played by a defensive player.

Guard Joe Garten (1987-90) and center Bryan Stoltenberg (1992-95) are the only other players in CU history to start every game of their four-season careers.

"It definitely means a lot," Pericak said of the award. "I'm proud of my career. We didn't get enough wins, but I'm happy I'm a Buff, my college experience has been amazing. It sucks that it's coming to an end."

Pericak closed his career with 205 tackles (he got No. 200 on Friday), 7.5 sacks and 18 tackles for loss. This season, he had 60 tackles, two sacks and a career-high four forced fumbles.

Freshmen backs looking good

Perhaps a bright spot for the Buffs going forward is the potential at tailback.

True freshman Christian Powell missed Friday's finale with a concussion, taking away his opportunity to break CU's freshman rushing record (830 by Lamont Warren in 1991).

Still, Powell finished with an impressive 691 yards on 158 carries (4.37 average) and seven touchdowns in his debut season. He had three 100-yard games.

His high school teammate, true freshman Donta Abron, looks to have a bright future, too. Abron got the start Friday and finished with a season-high 84 yards on 14 carries and a touchdown.

"It was great," he said. "I took advantage of my opportunity and the O-line and receivers had great blocking and opened up some holes for me."

Abron finished with 256 yards on 51 carries (5.02 average) and two touchdowns this season. He topped the 80-yard mark in two of the last three games.

Dannewitz eyeing future

Senior offensive lineman Ryan Dannewitz spent his final game as a Buff with a large brace on his right knee. The 6-foot-6 San Jacinto, Calif., product had surgery to repair a torn knee ligament on Tuesday.

Although his playing career is done, Dannewitz said he's not done with the CU program. After graduating next month, he plans to join the coaching staff.

"I'll be either an intern or grad assistant, depending on if I get into grad school," said Dannewitz, a psychology and sociology major. "I'll further talk with the coaches after the season to discuss what my plans are.

"I think it'll be weird (coaching former teammates), but I think it will be good because I'm already comfortable with them. So, I think they'd trust me to be able to talk to them about technique and work on things."

#### Aguilars recognized

Franklin and Christina Aguilar were recognized on the field during the second quarter Friday.

Franklin is on active duty with the U.S. Army and is home celebrating Thanksgiving with his wife, who is a graduate of Longmont High School. Franklin has served two one-year tours in Iraq and one one-year tour in Afghanistan. He may be returning to Afghanistan for another tour.

Christina is also a U.S. Army veteran, having served one year in Afghanistan in a combat support hospital. The couple, which is expecting their first child soon, got a nice ovation from the Folsom Field crowd.

#### Notable

Defensive lineman Josh Tupou (ankle) and safety Terrell Smith (bruised knee) were injured Friday. ... Utah started the game 0-for-8 on third downs, but converted three of its last four opportunities. ... CU is 213-6 all-time when scoring 35 or more points. ... The Buffs failed to pick off a pass in the last eight games. Opposing QBs ended the year with 221 straight throws without an interception. ... Nelson Spruce had a career-high 10 catches (for 98 yards). He finished the year with 44 catches for 447 yards, becoming just the third freshman to ever lead CU in receiving.

Follow Brian on Twitter: @BrianHowell33.

## Football: CU Buffs' Nick Hirschman makes case for next year

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

DailyCamera.com

It's way too early to predict who will start at quarterback for Colorado in 2013, but Nick Hirschman feels a lot more confident about chances today than he did a few months ago.

"Definitely," he said. "I started two games here, one on the road and one at home and I played fairly well in both of them."

In Friday's 42-35 loss to Utah in the season finale, Hirschman had mixed results. He completed 30 of 51 throws for 306 yards -- just the second 300-yard game by a CU quarterback this season -- and a touchdown. He also ran for a score.

He also threw four interceptions.

"He threw some picks, but the thing I'm proud of about Nick, he found a way to overcome adversity," CU offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy said. "He played well enough to put us in position to have a chance to win that game at the end."

In CU's ongoing quest to find stability at quarterback, that's a good thing. CU wasn't in position to win many games this year, but Hirschman looked good at times in both of his starts.

On Nov. 10 at Arizona, he completed 12-of-13 passes for 123 yards and an interception.

Friday, Hirschman staked the Buffs to a 28-20 lead going into the fourth quarter. But, in the final quarter, his first pass was intercepted, setting up a Utah touchdown. His final pass, with CU desperately trying to rally, was picked off, too. Utah, which had just four interceptions all year, doubled that in less than 60 minutes.

"Obviously I turned the ball over a lot and I put our defense in a real rough spot on three separate occasions," he said. "That's unacceptable and you can't win football games likes that."

Still, Hirschman believes that he grew as a quarterback this season.

He was locked in a three-way battle for the starting job in August camp. Junior Jordan Webb won the job, while Connor Wood went into the year second string.

Webb lost his starting job after nine games. He completed just 54.3 percent of his passes this year for 1,434 yards, eight touchdowns and eight interceptions. Wood, who got one start, was 21-of-42 for 365, one touchdown and four interceptions.

Hirschman finished the year 55-for-93 (59.1 percent) for 589 yards, two touchdowns and seven interceptions. He believes he developed quite a bit mentally and physically this season.

"I matured as a person more, too, and I think that's a big part of being able to play college football," he said.

Redshirt freshman Shane Dillon will get into the mix for the starting job, too, and that will add more intrigue to the competition. Hirschman said he's heard nothing but good things about Dillon, who has run the scout team

all year, and he welcomes the competition.

"We're all very positive, we're a cohesive group and whoever is the guy who gets the job is going to be supported," Hirschman said.

Hirschman said he will graduate in June, so he could transfer to another school and play two years (like Webb did this year after transferring from Kansas), but said, "The thought hasn't even crossed my mind."

Bieniemy said that's good for CU, because Hirschman has developed into a solid option for the future.

"Nick has a lot of character and he just has a lot of competitive spirit about him," Bieniemy said. "Those are the attributes that you want. He kind of reminds me of Bobby Pesavento (who played at CU from 2000-01). He never was really pretty, but he found a way to get the job done."

Follow Brian on Twitter: @BrianHowell33.

## Football: CU Buffs' Jon Embree looking ahead to next year

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

DailyCamera.com

Everyone knows significant changes are coming in the Colorado football program in the days ahead now that the Buffs' season is over after their eighth consecutive loss Friday at Folsom Field.

But how extensive those changes might be remains to be seen.

Will the university and athletic department administration decide to wipe the slate clean by firing coach Jon Embree and all of his assistants after a 1-11 season, admitting they made a mistake in allowing themselves to be pressured into hiring a former Buff two years ago? Or will they stick with Embree and allow him to remake his staff and take his offense and defense in new directions in the spring?

Embree seemed confident he will return for a third season when discussing the future during his postgame session with the media. He said his preparations for the 2013 season will begin at 6:30 Sunday night. He also plans to be on the road recruiting most of next week.

It's conceivable Embree could meet with assistant coaches Saturday to inform everyone of where they stand.

If he decides to part ways with coaches such as defensive coordinator Greg Brown or offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy, graduate assistant coaches could be used to help fill the gaps in recruiting until replacements are hired. And that might not be until early January after bowl season.

Brown and Bieniemy are assumed to be the most at risk of losing their jobs because they are most responsible for the Buffs ranking at or near the bottom nationally in numerous major statistical categories on both offense and defense.

Bieniemy was asked about his job security as the offensive coordinator after Friday's game.

"Whatever is going to happen is going to happen," he said. "You don't coach this game scared. Everybody is hired to be fired. I'm going to keep working my ass off and being who I am. If they decide to go in a different direction, that's what we do. I know who I am and I know what I'm about.

"You're always disappointed. This is a production-driven industry. You're measured by wins and losses and obviously if you're not winning, then hey, you've always got to take a look at self."

The Buffs were the youngest team in the nation at the outset this season and at times they were even younger than planned with several of the eight seniors on the roster missing major time with injuries. Embree says he is excited about being able to coach his freshmen and redshirt freshmen when they are sophomores, juniors and seniors.

"The one advantage of having all this youth is it all comes back and it comes back mature and obviously with tons of experience," Embree said.

Embree is also planning a move to spread offense that still emphasizes running the ball. He plans to fully implement that change in the spring and summer if he remains in charge. All indications from school officials

point toward him being retained.

Brian Howell contributed to this report.

## Thorburn: Jon Embree vows brighter future for CU Buffs

By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

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Time of death: 4:36 p.m. on Friday.

The suffering is finally over for the 2012 Colorado Buffaloes.

In a wild fourth-quarter finish that goes under the heading of "Things that can only happen to the Buffs," the pure joy of Marques Mosley's 100-yard kickoff return to tie the score 35-35 lasted 13 seconds.

Before the crowd of 39,400 had a chance to catch its collective breath, Utah's Reggie Dunn knocked the wind out of Colorado's most loyal followers with a 100-yard kickoff return of his own that proved to be the difference in the Buffs' 42-35 loss.

"This game kind of summarizes the year," Jon Embree said after this CU team became the first not to win a single game at Folsom Field and provided the Utes with their only road win of the season. "Our kids have always fought. They've never quit."

Three valiant seniors -- Nick Kasa, Jon Major and Doug Rippy -- wore blood and sweat to the somber postgame press conference in the bowels of the Dal Ward Center.

Embree shed the tear.

The second-year CU head coach, whose overall record is now 4-21, understands that fans demanding his firing comes with the territory.

But when a coward from the cheap seats called wide receiver Gerald Thomas, who dropped a pass on fourth-and-3 with 5:29 remaining, unspeakable things as the freshman walked off the field, it was too much for Embree to take.

"Those kids gave us everything they had all year," Embree said. "I'm just mad because when people say something to our kids, I've got a problem. ... It's an 18-year-old kid playing his heart out."

The kids are going to be all right. The wins are coming.

At least that's the message Embree is selling the base and his bosses entering a make-or-break offseason in Boulder.

Eventually, playing so many sophomores and freshmen will pay off on the scoreboard.

Won't it?

"We (seniors) have left them with a lot of motivation," the bruised, batter and blocked in the back (no call on a key Utah touchdown) Major said of his legacy. "Whether it was for our non-success or our work ethic ... they're going to recognize it's going to take everybody."

Coaching is a cruel business and not everyone on Embree's staff will survive in the aftermath of what was

arguably the worst season in the program's proud history.

Defensive coordinator Greg Brown, whose unit was last nationally in the most important statistic (scoring defense) and 118th in total defense entering the finale, should expect a pink slip.

Brian Cabral -- who was 2-1 as CU's interim head coach at the end of the 2010 season and worked for Bill McCartney, Rick Neuheisel, Gary Barnett and Dan Hawkins before Embree -- will probably be asked to retire.

Offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy could be demoted to running backs coach and have the play-calling duties taken away if he returns.

"I want to make sure we're doing the right thing and talking to the right people," Embree said when asked about a timeline for making staff decisions. "But I don't think it's a process we want to drag out."

Once the assistant coaches for 2013 are set and the recruiting class is signed, the focus will be on spring football.

Nick Hirschman, despite throwing four interceptions to a Utah defense that had four picks in the previous 11 games, may have played his way into consideration after completing 30 of 51 passes for 306 yards with a touchdown pass and a touchdown run against the Utes.

Jordan Webb and Connor Wood could still be factors in the never-ending competition, but both were underwhelming this season and still have a lot to prove.

If the Buffs are serious about a fresh start, freshman Shane Dillon should get the first opportunity to run the spread offense Embree plans to fully implement.

CU's entire offensive line, which started to play better down the stretch, returns to block for some promising running backs (Christian Powell, Donta Abnon, Tony Jones).

Paul Richardson will headline a much more dynamic group of wide receivers that is expected to include Gerald Thomas and Jeff Thomas. Tyler McCulloch and Nelson Spruce, who combined for 16 catches, 186 yards and a touchdown against Utah, might have trouble cracking a deeper and faster lineup.

Defensively, the Buffs return seven starters and 18 of 22 players on the two deep.

A number of freshmen, including Tyler Henington and Josh Tupou on the defensive line and Mosley and Kenneth Crawley in the secondary, appear to have bright careers ahead of them as soon as they blow out some more birthday candles.

The kicking game was a bright spot again this season, save for kickoffs obviously (how hard is it to find someone with a strong enough leg for touchbacks?) CU needs to make sure punter Darragh O'Neill is used less often and place-kicker Will Oliver is called on in more close games next fall.

But patience is wearing thin and potential is a four-letter word after seven consecutive losing seasons. The Buffs must show some more life in 2013 or this rebuilding project will be terminated.

"For next year, we start (preparing) Sunday night at 6:30," Embree said. "We have a lot to build on. It may not be crystal clear outside the program, but we have a lot of young talent and some kids coming in that are going to help us. ...

"There's a lot to be excited about and feel good about."

Only 281 days until the theory is put to the test against Colorado State.

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## CU Buffs insist better days are ahead on the football field

By Patrick Saunders The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — The Colorado Buffaloes laid their excruciating 2012 football season to rest Friday afternoon at Folsom Field with an exciting but ultimately empty 42-35 loss to Utah.

The Buffs' epitaph will read: 1-11 record with zero victories in front of the home crowd.

For CU seniors such as linebacker Jon Major, the past can't be undone. But sophomore quarterback Nick Hirschman, who flashed both talent and inexperience Friday against the Utes, insists the future holds promise.

"I have confidence that next year things are going to be a lot different," said Hirschman, who completed 30-of-51 passes for 306 yards and a touchdown Friday but also threw four interceptions. "We have a lot of players coming back; guys with speed on the outside that will give us some offense. I think we will have some playmakers."

That's brave talk for the quarterback of a team that set a school record for losses and was outscored 552-214. But Hirschman wasn't the only young Buff putting a positive spin on the future.

"I think all of the playing time that young guys like myself have received will (provide) big momentum for us for next season," said freshman running back Donta Abron, who rushed for a career-high 84 yards on 14 carries Friday. "We would have liked to get a win at home, but it's been a tough year. We just have to look forward."

Colorado lost in the most humbling ways possible this season, beginning with a 22-17 loss to archrival Colorado State and followed by a 30-28 defeat at the hands of Sacramento State, an FCS team. The blowouts that came later were humiliating: a 50-6 shellacking at Southern California; a 70-14 loss at Oregon, when the Buffs trailed 56-0 at halftime; and a 48-0 loss at home to Stanford.

Dissension, replete with finger pointing, would have seemed a likely theme of the Buffs' season. But a number of their players insisted Friday that didn't happen.

"I don't think there is any question we kept it together," Major said. "I think all of the guys in the locker room knew that we would fight for each other and have each other's backs, no matter what happened."

Asked if back-stabbing ever broke out inside the CU locker room, Hirschman said: "That doesn't happen here. We are brothers, we are a family. It was never just one person's fault. We never let one person get too down. We never let what was happening outside this building affect how we felt about each other."

An emotional CU coach Jon Embree, 4-21 after two seasons, tried his best to spot signs of hope.

"I know the score hasn't always reflected it, but our kids have always fought," Embree said. "They have never quit. ... We have a lot to build on. It may not be crystal clear to people outside the program, but we have a lot to build on."

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## CU Buffs lose to Utah, go winless at home for first time since 1920

By John Henderson *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — The 1980 team can rest a little easier. Bill McCartney can remove the 1984 footnote of shame from his résumé. This year's Colorado football team continued a free-fall Friday that mercifully ended its season but landed the Buffs in the school record book. It wasn't the 42-35 loss to Utah, branding them with the worst record in school history, that made the crash hurt so much.

It's how the final pileup occurred.

The Buffs were spurred by the biggest play of their season: Marques Mosley's 100-yard kickoff return that tied the score with 8:25 left. Then Utah senior Reggie Dunn responded with a 100-yard return of his own — his fourth kickoff return for a touchdown this season — for the game's final points.

The Buffs got the worse end of the one-two exchange that left them 1-11 overall, 1-8 in the Pac-12, winless at home this season and second-year coach Jon Embree mulling the toughest loss he has had as a head coach.

"Yeah, it is," said Embree, fighting back tears, followed by a long pause. "Those kids gave us everything they had all year."

The loss put CU one loss worse than Chuck Fairbanks' 1-10 season in 1980 and McCartney's 1-10 clunker in 1984. (That doesn't count the winless inaugural season in 1890 — but that was only four games.)

One middle-aged fan made his feelings known. He yelled at wide receiver Gerald Thomas as the freshman walked off the field, castigating him for dropping a couple of key passes. It left Thomas in tears and Embree telling the fan what to do with his opinion.

"I'm just mad because when people say something to our kids, I've got a problem," Embree said. "I'll just leave it at that. That ain't right. I handled it."

The fan should have basked in the team's improved play. A Colorado team that stumbled lifeless through much of the season nearly pulled off a second consecutive season-ending upset against Utah (5-7, 3-6 Pac-12). Instead, eight seniors walk away from Folsom not only without a bowl ring but with the school's first winless home record since 1920. A boisterous crowd of 39,400 was as frustrated as the players.

"I just wanted to thank the seniors for what they did for us, and the effort they put in and their leadership," Embree said.

But it was the underclassmen, those who must someday save Embree's job, who shined the most. Sophomore quarterback Nick Hirschman showed he could move the team, leading four long scoring drives and hitting 30-of-51 passes for 306 yards and a touchdown.

True freshman Donta Abron, subbing for starter Christian Powell (concussion), rushed for 84 yards and a touchdown. A maligned defense held Utah to 336 yards, CU's best performance since holding Colorado State to 298 yards in the opener.

Another true freshman provided the season's biggest highlight when CU needed it most. Mosley answered consecutive Utah touchdowns when he took a kickoff, got stopped at the 10, reversed field and raced up the right sideline 100 yards to tie the score at 35-35.

"I was standing next to (center) Daniel Munyer, and I jumped on his back," Hirschman said. "He ran me down about halfway through the field trying to catch (Mosley). That was just a huge moment for us.

"Unfortunately a lot of momentum went away."

Yes, in a season where the coaching staff fell under increased scrutiny, it was the special teams' turn to get grilled Friday. CU avoided kicking to Dunn all game. He either snuck upfield to catch anticipated bloop kicks, or wasn't able to get to balls kicked away from him.

When it mattered most, though, CU kicked right to him. Dunn caught the ball, went upfield, found a hole, then cut to the right sideline and was never touched for the game's final points with 8:12 left.

"I can't for the life of me figure out why they kicked to Reggie Dunn," Utah coach Kyle Whittingham said, "but we are glad they did."

This time Hirschman couldn't bring the Buffs back. Four interceptions marred his day, and helped cost CU the game. Defensive end Trevor Reilly intercepted Hirschman's first pass of the game to set up Utah's first touchdown, then Hirschman drove the Buffs to their own 48 in the closing moments before safety Brian Blechen intercepted Hirschman's last pass of the game.

"I was somewhat happy with the performance," Hirschman said. "Obviously, I turned the ball over a lot. I put our defense in real rough spots on three separate occasions. That's unacceptable."

CU's program is also in a rough spot. Seven consecutive losing seasons, topped by the worst year in school history. Staff changes are expected.

Misery, for some, may just be beginning.

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Worst of the worst

A look at the five worst teams in Colorado history:

2012: 1-11, 1-8 Pac-12. Allowed 46 points and 488.5 yards per game, the worst defense, by far, in CU history.

1980: 1-10, 1-6 Big Eight. Gave up school-record 82 points to Oklahoma; lost 41-22 to Drake.

1984: 1-10, 1-6 Big Eight. Bill McCartney's third season. Defeated only Iowa State.

1964: 2-8, 1-6 Big Eight. Inept offense, with leading rusher Robert Lee gaining 310 yards.

2006: 2-10, 2-6 Big 12. Dan Hawkins' first team lost to FCS member Montana State in opener.

John Henderson, The Denver Post

Key stat

4: Colorado sophomore quarterback Nick Hirschman threw four interceptions Friday against the Utes, whose defense had only four interceptions coming into the game. Utah scored touchdowns off the first three picks, and the fourth ended the game.

#### Key play

100-yard dashes: After Colorado's Marques Mosley raced 100 yards and scored on a kickoff return in the fourth quarter to tie the score at 35-35, Utah's Reggie Dunn returned the favor on the ensuing kickoff with his own 100-yard return. It was Dunn's fourth kickoff return for a touchdown this season, and it gave the Utes a 42-35 lead with 8:12 remaining.