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Embree out as head coach of Colorado Buffaloes

By ARNIE STAPLETON (AP Sports Writer) | The Associated Press – Sun, Nov 25, 2012 9:28 PM EST



DENVER (AP) -- Jon Embree is out as head football coach at the University of Colorado after just two seasons and four wins in 25 games.

Embree told The Associated Press he was heading into a meeting with his players Sunday night and didn't want to comment on his firing other than to confirm he'd been let go by athletic director Mike Bohn earlier in the day.

Embree, who had three years left on his contract, said he would talk at a news conference Monday.

Even coming off the worst season in the program's 123-year history, Embree's quick hook took his players by surprise.

"It (stinks)," quarterback Jordan Webb said after Embree met with the players at the football facilities Sunday night. "We all really liked Coach Embree a lot. And he loved us, also. Sad to see him go. We all respect him the utmost. He's a great man."

Bohn declined comment, but in a joint statement from school President Bruce Benson, Chancellor Philip P. DiStefano, and him, Bohn said: "We firmly believe a change in the leadership in our football program is in the best interests of the University of Colorado, particularly given our goal to compete at the highest levels of the Pac-12 Conference.

It was a difficult decision, given Jon Embree's history with CU, and one we arrived at after considerable deliberation. We

appreciate his passion and dedication and wish him the best."

Bohn will form a search committee to find the next head coach.

Embree's firing after just two years points to an administration that wants a quick turnaround.

"We strive for excellence in all we do, and the university leadership is committed to doing everything we can to ensure success for our football program, for which we are accountable," the joint statement said. "We thank you, the entire university community, for your support during this challenging season and call upon you to join us in our efforts for a successful transition and future for the CU football program."

Embree had three years remaining on the five-year contract he signed on Dec. 6, 2010, when he replaced Dan Hawkins, whose poor recruiting classes and a string of losing seasons led to his dismissal.

Embree went 4-21 in two seasons in Boulder, including 1-11 this season, the worst in the 123-year history of the program. The Buffaloes were 1-8 in the Pac-12.

The Buffaloes had just eight seniors this season and lost star receiver Paul Richardson to a leg injury before the season began. Their only win was a 35-34 last-second comeback at Washington State on Sept. 22, which came two weeks after an embarrassing loss to lower-tier Sacramento State at Folsom Field.

This year's team was the first since 1920 to go winless at home.

Embree had no head coaching experience when he was hired at his alma mater, where he was a standout tight end during the mid-1980s. He did bring 18 years of coaching experience to the program, however, including a decade as an assistant with the Buffaloes under three head coaches, Bill McCartney, Rich Neuheisel and Gary Barnett.

He returned to Boulder from the Washington Redskins, where he was completing his first season as tight ends coach.

Embree's first team went 3-10, including a 17-14 win at Utah that snapped the Buffaloes' 24-game out-of-state losing skid. But they struggled on both sides of the ball, rotating through several quarterbacks and enduring an injury epidemic on defense for the second straight season.

AP freelancer Monica Costello contributed from Boulder, Colo.

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Thorburn: Time for CU Buffs brass to decide if they're committed

By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Emotions were running high at the Coors Events Center on Sunday night.

Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

DailyCamera.com

Emotions were running high at the Coors Events Center on Sunday night.

And not just because No. 23 Colorado delivered another impressive win -- this time 89-74 over a dangerous and previously unbeaten Air Force team.

As a highly entertaining Front Range basketball game was unfolding, many in the crowd of 10,607 started murmuring as word of Jon Embree's firing made its way through the arena.

A number of fans approached me at the press table to verify that CU is in fact looking for yet another head coach to lead the football program out of the abyss.

The reactions varied and included:

"It's awful."

"Mike Bohn's only claim to fame is right here. Without Tad Boyle and this basketball team, he'd be gone."

"It wasn't going to get better next year. They had to do it."

I asked Boyle, who used to play pick-up games with Embree in Boulder long before either was a head coach, for his thoughts on the news.

"I just found out. All I can say is I'm sad," Boyle said. "I'm sad for everybody involved, and certainly for coach Embree and his staff. It's a sad day ... I feel awful."

Two years to rebuild a program?

"It's tough," Boyle said. "This year has been hard on everyone involved, the last two years have been hard on the football program. The last seven years have been hard for Buff nation. I'm sad."

It usually takes five years for a football coach to rebuild a program.

Bill McCartney was given an extension after a 1-10 finish his third season. He took CU to a bowl game in his fifth season before eventually winning a national championship.

Dan Hawkins (19-39) clearly didn't get the job done in five years and should have been fired after his fourth season.

Embree, whose résumé is now stained with a 4-21 record, was obviously not treated fairly compared to his predecessors.

But life in this impatient era of big-time college football is not fair.

Gene Chizik, who delivered a BCS championship to Auburn less than two years ago, was also handed a pink

slip on Sunday.

Turner Gill was sacked by Bohn's alma mater, Kansas, after two seasons and replaced by Charlie Weis (1-10 overall and 0-8 in the Big 12 with one game left in his first season with the Jayhawks).

CU president Bruce Benson, chancellor Phil DiStefano and Bohn were apparently shoulder to shoulder on this decision after being pressured by fans and ex-players into hiring a "Buff" two years ago.

"We strive for excellence in all we do, and the university leadership is committed to doing everything we can to ensure success for our football program, for which we are accountable," the trio said in a joint press release.

Bohn helped lead CU's move out of the Big 12 and hired Boyle. He also said Hawkins was a "home run" hire and Embree is a "great Buffalo ... and we're excited he's agreed to come back and lead us into the Pacific-12 Conference."

That's two errors when it comes to hiring football coaches if you're scoring at home.

CU's three not-so football wise men need to do one of two things in the aftermath of the 1-11 debacle in 2012 and seven consecutive losing seasons:

1. Hire the best available coach. No matter what his name is. No matter what it takes to pry him loose from his current job. No matter what the cost.
2. Or just admit that CU is not committed to competing at the highest level of college football like many of its peers in the Pac-12.

After Friday's loss to Utah, Embree took responsibility for two terrible seasons and promised better days were ahead. Unfortunately, it seems everyone was out of patience after seven years of bad Buffs football.

"It was sad to see him go," quarterback Jordan Webb said. "It sucks, but you've got to keep pressing forward."

Follow Ryan on Twitter: @RyanThorburn

Football: CU Buffs fire Jon Embree

By Kyle Ringo *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

Posted:

DailyCamera.com

The University of Colorado pulled the plug on football coach Jon Embree's rebuilding project Sunday afternoon when athletic director Mike Bohn fired Embree in his office at the Dal Ward Center.

The school has already started a search for Embree's replacement. It is the third time in seven years Bohn has fired a coach and apparently Bohn will be allowed to make a third hire as well.

Embree, Bohn and other CU officials will participate in a press conference today at the Dal Ward Center to discuss the Embree decision and the future of the program. Embree said he had not heard from chancellor Phil DiStefano or president Bruce Benson late Sunday evening.

Embree clearly felt like the rug was pulled out from underneath him after only two seasons and not quite two full calendar years in the job when he spoke about the decision Sunday evening. After Friday's season-ending loss to Utah, Embree said he had been assured by Bohn that his job was safe.

Embree was the school's first black head football coach and the only coach in the modern history of the program to be allowed fewer than three seasons in the job.

"Was it a winning program when I took it over?" Embree said when asked if he was given enough time. "So how much time does it take? I guess two years. So hopefully the next guy gets two years."

The last coach to occupy the job for fewer than three years was Bud Davis, who coached the Buffs in only the 1962 season. Firing a football coach after just two seasons doesn't happen often, but CU is not alone in doing so. Kansas fired Turner Gill last year after just two seasons.

Embree is also the founder of Buffs4Life, a charity organization dedicated to helping former CU student athletes in need.

School sources said officials were concerned about deterioration of the university's brand with so many bad losses playing out against prominent opponents drawing national attention. Former CU coach Gary Barnett, who was fired by CU in 2005, said he was surprised by the move. He said he thought Embree would receive a third year to show improvement.

However, Barnett said perception of the program might have been a motivating factor.

"CU's really taken a hit nationally," Barnett said. "People who know Jon and people who know Colorado, I think everybody sort of expected Jon would get another year. But if you get outside of that and you deal with people who don't know Jon and don't really know the workings at CU, I don't think anybody thought he would survive."

Embree and Bohn met with the team Sunday evening at a previously scheduled team meeting. Sources told the Camera players gave Embree a standing ovation as he left the auditorium in the Dal Ward Center after addressing them. Many of the players were already aware Embree had been fired after the Daily Camera first reported the news Sunday.

A source told the Camera when Bohn addressed the team an unidentified person shouted that Bohn should fire himself. Players were not happy with the news of another coaching change.

"We all really liked coach Embree a lot," said quarterback Jordan Webb, who served as the Buffs' starter for most of this season. "He really loved us all. So it was sad to see him go."

A slew of current and former players took to Twitter expressing disappointment and outrage with the decision later in the evening. Several current players hinted that they might leave the program. Embree's agent, Boulder-based Jack Mills, said he believes the school made a poor decision in not being more patient and allowing Embree to build a more mature and complete roster.

"I don't think that two years was a fair test," Mills said. "I think a minimum of three years was necessary with the state of the program when he came in. I mean, this is not Rick Neuheisel taking over for (Bill) McCartney. This was a program that was pretty far down."

When Embree was hired two years ago, he took over a team that hadn't produced a winning record since 2005 and had been to just one bowl game under Hawkins. The roster was depleted at a variety of positions, most notably quarterback, defensive line and the secondary.

Embree said Bohn told him he had made the decision to fire him because he was concerned about the trajectory of the program.

"I said, 'Well, what was the trajectory of the program when you hired me?'" Embree said. "How many games had we won on the road when you hired me?"

Bohn did not take questions from reporters when he left the Dal Ward Center Sunday evening.

School officials confirmed last week that Embree's contract calls for a \$500,000 buyout for each of the three remaining years on his five-year deal for a total of \$1.5 million. Offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy is the only other member of the coaching staff with a multi-year deal. CU officials said Bieniemy is owed \$250,000 for each of the three remaining years on his deal for a total of \$750,000. In previous coaching changes, CU has offered assistant coaches severance packages, including several months salary.

Colorado is expected to have to pay significantly more than the \$750,000 it pays Embree annually in order to hire a new coach with name recognition and still more to be able to compete for quality assistant coaches. For instance, some Pac-12 programs are paying offensive and defensive coordinators more than Embree was making as the head coach at CU.

"I think it's going to be a hard sell for an experienced, name coach," Mills said. "There is plenty of guys that would take it that are on the upswing, but I don't see an experienced guy being real anxious to come here." Embree, a former CU tight end who played under McCartney in the 1980s and then coached under McCartney, Neuheisel and Barnett at CU, went 4-21 in his two seasons after inheriting a lackluster roster from his predecessor Dan Hawkins. The Buffs went 3-10 in Embree's first season in 2011. The highlight of that season was a road win in the final game of the year at Utah, ending a 24-game road losing streak most of which came under Hawkins.

The Buffs entered this season as the least experienced team in the nation with only eight seniors on the roster. They struggled from the outset suffering embarrassing losses in September against Sacramento State at home

and Fresno State on the road. Other than an inspired fourth-quarter comeback on the road at Washington State and hard-fought season finale at home against Utah, they were uncompetitive in Pac-12 play.

"I know I've walked the walk," Embree said. "I know what I've put out there on the field as a player and a coach. I know what it was like to walk up that hill, God knows how many times, helping kids. I know I've made a lot of people's lives better, players that I've coached, players that I've recruited. This moment is not going to define me."

Follow Kyle on Twitter: [@KyleRingo](#)

**ESPN.com:** College Football[\[Print without images\]](#)

Sunday, November 25, 2012

Updated: November 26, 9:46 AM ET

Jon Embree fired by Colorado

By Kevin Gemmell
ESPN.com

After just two seasons, [Colorado](#) is parting ways with head coach Jon Embree.

More From ESPN.com



Colorado fired coach Jon Embree on Sunday because patience is now a thing of the past in college football, Ted Miller writes. [Blog](#)

- **McKinney:** [Embree recruited well](#)

- [Pac-12 blog](#)

Embree, who signed a five-year contract in Dec. 2010, went just 4-21 in two seasons -- including a 1-11 campaign this year with the Buffaloes. The lone win came Sept. 22 against Washington State.

Embree met with his players Sunday night and said he would talk at a news conference Monday.

"I'm disappointed. I'd like to get more of an opportunity but life ain't fair," Embree told the Denver Post.

Embree told the newspaper that athletic director Mike Bohn "said he didn't feel the trajectory was going in the right direction. I said what direction was it going when I got hired?"

In the Denver Post article, Embree said he told Bohn that opportunities for African-American coaches are often taken away too quickly.

"I mentioned that to Mike," Embree said. "I said, 'You know we don't get opportunities. At the end of the day, you're fired and that's it. Right, wrong or indifferent. Tyrone Willingham was the only one who got fired and got hired again. We get bad jobs and no time to fix them.'"

Bohn declined comment, but in a joint statement from school president Bruce Benson, chancellor Philip P. DiStefano, and him, Bohn said: "We firmly believe a change in the leadership in our football program is in the best interests of the University of Colorado, particularly given our goal to compete at the highest levels of the Pac-12 Conference."

Colorado closed out the season with eight straight losses. Included in that skid was a 70-14 drubbing by

Oregon, a 48-0 loss to Stanford and a 38-3 setback to Washington.

Colorado allowed, on average, 46 points per game in 2012, worst among all FBS schools. Yet as recently as Saturday there were reports that Embree would return for a third year.

Embree, a standout tight end for Colorado in the mid-80s, was working with one of the youngest teams in college football as the Buffaloes graduate only eight seniors. Heading into Saturday's game against Utah (a 42-35 loss), Colorado was playing 13 true freshmen. They started with 16 on the season-opening depth chart -- most in Colorado history.

Much of Colorado's offensive inefficiency revolved around instability at the quarterback position. Three different quarterbacks played this year -- [Connor Wood](#), [Jordan Webb](#) and [Nick Hirschman](#). They also lost star receiver [Paul Richardson](#) in the preseason to a knee injury.

Even coming off the worst season in the program's 123-year history, Embree's quick hook took his players by surprise.

"It (stinks)," Webb said. "We all really liked Coach Embree a lot. And he loved us, also. Sad to see him go. We all respect him the utmost. He's a great man."

This was Embree's first head coaching position, though he did spend 10 seasons at Colorado as an assistant under three different head coaches.

Embree becomes the second Pac-12 coach fired recently. Last week California parted ways with Jeff Tedford after 11 seasons.

Information from The Associated Press was used in this report.



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Colorado Buffaloes fire head coach Jon Embree

Posted on: 6:25 pm, November 25, 2012, by [Brooke Way \(http://kdvr.com/author/kdvrbrookeway/\)](http://kdvr.com/author/kdvrbrookeway/),
updated on: 10:28am, November 26, 2012

BOULDER, Colo. — The Colorado Buffaloes have fired second-year head coach Jon Embree after a rough couple of seasons on the football field.

[The Daily Camera \(http://www.dailycamera.com/cu-college-sports/ci_22064395/football-cu-buffs-fire-jon-embree\)](http://www.dailycamera.com/cu-college-sports/ci_22064395/football-cu-buffs-fire-jon-embree) reported that University of Colorado Boulder athletic director Mike Bohn informed Embree that he was fired at the Dal Ward Center on Sunday afternoon.

CU plans to hold a news conference Monday at 11 a.m. to talk about what's next for the team. KDVR.com will livestream the news conference [here \(http://kdvr.com/on-air/live-streaming/\)](http://kdvr.com/on-air/live-streaming/).

Embree took over as the school's 24th full-time head coach in December 2010. He was the third alumni to do so.

The Colorado Buffaloes have gone 4-21 after two years, and the Buffs went 1-11 this season, while failing to win a home game at Folsom field for the first time in history, according to the paper.

University of Colorado President Bruce Benson, UCB Chancellor Philip P. DiStefano, and Bohn released the following joint statement:

"On Sunday night, we announced the departure of Coach Jon Embree. We firmly believe a change in the leadership in our football program is in the best interests of the University of Colorado, particularly given our goal to compete at the highest levels of the Pac-12 Conference. It was a difficult decision, given Jon Embree's history with CU, and one we arrived at after considerable deliberation. We appreciate his passion and dedication and wish him the best."

The paper reported that Embree is supposed to meet with his team tonight, and a press conference will