



By: Joel Broida

Cornerback Greg Henderson (20) says dual secondary coaches has greatly benefitted the Buffs.

Brooks: Buffs Like New Secondary Coaching Concept

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By: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

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(Fifth in a series of position-by-position previews of the 2013 Buffs to be posted on CUBuffs.com during preseason camp. Today: Secondary)

[Defensive Backs Preview](#)

BOULDER – New Colorado secondary coaches Charles Clark and Andy LaRussa haven't forgotten the Buffs' recent past, but that's mainly because they haven't reviewed it. They don't put much stock in the premise that those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it.

They are pretty sure that's not going to happen. Oh, Clark and LaRussa know how badly CU's secondary struggled in 2012, but neither was interested in critiquing any of the returning Buffs on last season's weekly beat-downs.

When they arrived in Boulder shortly after Mike MacIntyre was named CU's head coach last December, Clark and LaRussa shared the same thought in how best to move forward – and it didn't involve looking back.

"We were thinking the same thing," said LaRussa, who coaches CU's cornerbacks. "We had seen some of what Colorado had done in common opponent (film) breakdown. We knew their schemes weren't as similar to what we were doing. So there was no sense in evaluating that; we wanted to see them do what we do in our scheme."

Clark, who coaches the safeties and nickel backs, said he and LaRussa preferred to base any player evaluations on what they saw during 15 spring practices and thus far in August camp. A major scrimmage set for Saturday in Folsom Field (8:35-11:30 a.m.) will be a huge barometer for both coaches in setting starters, backups and determining overall depth.

Having two secondary coaches is a new concept for CU's players, but MacIntyre believed it worked well enough at San Jose State to import it. The safeties and corners often run drills separately but are in position meetings together. The approach has been well-received.

"I hadn't seen that before," senior safety Parker Orms said. "But that's definitely helped us out a lot having a safety-minded guy and a corners coach. We can split up and do safety drills and corner drills."

Added junior cornerback Greg Henderson: "It's been a great benefit. They can help us one-on-one and you can go to either one and ask questions. Last year with one coach, both positions took up a lot of his time. They explain everything to us. They just don't put us out there. They'll explain, show us, then put us out there. Then you have to react and show what you learned. It helps a lot."

Splitting the secondary coaching, said Clark, offers players more individual attention, more information and, in the end, additional reps. "(Players) just learn more," he said. "When you do it the other way and get to the meeting room, those guys sometimes never see themselves on film. They kind of lose focus."

Everybody's getting reps and seeing themselves and learning in the classroom. They're getting more information; they're more alert when these days get long."

Many times during the course of a practice, MacIntyre will wind up as a third secondary coach. He played there (free safety) and has coached DBs in both college and the NFL. Henderson said MacIntyre "is always in the DB meeting room," and LaRussa added, "His heart's in the secondary."

But it's MacIntyre's eyes and mind, contended LaRussa, that are of most benefit: "Having more eyes is a critical part in today's game because of all the spread teams we'll see. We're all on the same page. He's seen so much football his knowledge of the game is invaluable. We learn from him every day; he's an invaluable resource to us in the secondary."

Aside from wanting to evaluate their players in the system they coach, Clark and LaRussa felt it was important to offer each a clean slate. Said LaRussa: "I think that was the most important thing for those players, to know they have a fresh start with us. You can write your own ticket here. What you do from this point on is what matters. I think that helped a lot of guys get confidence back."

And it wasn't difficult, LaRussa noted, to notice that confidence in the back end was far short of bubbling over: "Yeah, I saw that . . . but I think at that position you have to have a certain swagger. You have to compete every day. Don't panic when the ball's caught. Compete all the time. The confidence will come. The combination of having a clean slate and practicing what we preach helps confidence. There were no preconceived notions. Don't worry about last year, you can't change it. You learn from it and move on."

Still, holding onto some of the sour memories has been beneficial. "We never want to have that feeling ever again," Henderson said. "We're going to do whatever it takes to not have a losing record . . . whatever coach Mac tells us we're going to do. We've got to fly around, we've got to create more turnovers (three interceptions, 12 recovered fumbles) than we did last year."

For a secondary that was slapped around as much as the Buffs were last fall, a psyche rebuild was critical. As unpleasant and disturbing as 2012 was, said sophomore corner Kenneth Crawley, "We matured from it. Absolutely. It makes us more hungry. We know what to expect, we know the mistakes we made in the past. It makes us want to get after it."

Clark and LaRussa believe they have enough talent, athleticism and now experience at their respective positions to allow a climb back to respectability. "Every one of our guys is fast and long and athletic," LaRussa said. "As they continue to grow up that's going to take it to another level. I'm pleased with how everybody runs."

A starter since his freshman season, Henderson wants his biggest improvement to come in man-to-man coverage and tackling. "As a corner, those are the two main things I'll be doing out there," he said. "And I need to be disciplined with my eyes – that's a big thing."

Crawley's 58 tackles (46 solo) last season were the most by a corner and second to safety Terrel Smith (70, 48 solo) among the defensive backs. Jered Bell, who has moved from corner to safety, and safety Marques Mosley had the secondary's only two interceptions (the other was by graduated linebacker Jon Major).

Crawley said he was "way more comfortable" in his second camp than his first last summer and that he is more knowledgeable in alignments, technique and anticipation. "I think I'm better breaking on the ball," he said. "And to me, there seems to be more help over the top in this defense. I think all the corners are more comfortable; we know what to expect from different spread teams in our conference."

For Orms, while getting to the opener (Sept. 1 vs. Colorado State) unscathed is a goal, it's not something to dwell on daily. After an injury-free high school career at Wheat Ridge, his college career has taken several opposite turns.

"You can't think 'how's my knee going to hold up?' You have to go out and play as if nothing's wrong," he said. "I've probably missed more (practices) than anybody on this team . . . I'm definitely the old man out here, but I'm doing good. My knee is holding up through the practices and team stuff. I'm just happy to be out there; sitting on the sidelines and watching is tough. Just running around out there with your teammates is an awesome feeling."

THE INSIDE LOOK AT . . .

Defensive backs

Coaches: Charles Clark, safeties; Andy LaRussa, corners; first seasons on CU staff

Returning starters: CB Kenneth Crawley, So.; CB Greg Henderson, Jr.; CB Yuri Wright, So.; S

Parker Orms, Sr.; S Terrel Smith, Sr.; S Marques Mosley, So.

Returnees: CB John Walker, Fr.-RS; CB Brandon Brisco, So.; S Jered Bell, Jr.; S Isaac Archuleta, So.; S Richard Yates, So.; CB Jeffery Hall, So.; CB Harrison Hunter, Jr.

Newcomers: CB/NB Chidobe Awuzie, Fr.; DB Tedric Thompson, Fr.

Key losses: S Ray Polk; DB Josh Moten, Jr. (injured)

Stat line: The Buffs were No. 120 out of 120 FBS teams last season in pass efficiency defense, allowing 39 TD passes and opposing QBs a 67.6 completion percentage.

Bottom line: CU figures to be better in the back end, but then skeptics will retort, “How can it be any worse?” Point (and yards) well taken. If there’s a silver lining in such a dark season as 2012 was for the secondary, it’s this: young players grow up and as they do they remember. Last season’s sound whippings were the result of inexperience and frequent misalignments – not because of a lack of talent. Crawley, Wright, Mosley, Henderson and the rest learned the hard way. Orms and Smith are senior safeties and should help steady the back half. CU signed just two DBs – Awuzie and Thompson – but Awuzie has had an outstanding camp and will fit somewhere.

Next: Offensive line

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Colorado Buffaloes Football

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Football: CU Buffs' Nate Bonsu excited for senior year

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

BrushNewsTribune.com

During his CU career, which began in 2009, Nate Bonsu has been through a lot. The defensive tackle from Allen, Tex., has dealt with various injuries, four losing seasons and is now on his third head coach, so it's been quite the bumpy ride.

Bonsu, however, is excited as he heads into this season.

"I feel blessed," he said. "All the things I've been through health-wise and dealing with changes, I'm glad I'm still here. I'm glad my character showed and I worked through all those things."

During training camp, Bonsu, who had a solid 2012 season, has been working as a starter at defensive tackle. At 285 pounds, he's about 30 points lighter than he was during the spring of 2012.

"I can feel a big difference in my conditioning and I feel like the rest of the defense can too, so it's definitely helping," he said.

Bonsu would love to have a great year on a personal level, but said his main goal is to get CU to a bowl game.

"It would mean so much to the seniors on this team after all we've been through," he said.

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Football: Mike MacIntyre talks CU Buffs' autograph policy

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

DailyCamera.com

Colorado doesn't have any Johnny Manziel-type stars on the team, but the Buffs are doing what they can to avoid the type of controversy the Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback from Texas A&M is caught up in this summer.

Manziel is being investigated for possibly being paid to sign autographs for dealers. NCAA rules prohibit players from profiting off of their signatures. Several schools around the country have responded to the situation by preventing their players from signing autographs, or only signing in certain settings.

MacIntyre doesn't prevent players from signing autographs, but said the Buffs do have a policy in place.

"We personalize autographs," he said. "So, if you ask one of our players for an autograph, he'd write your name and personalize it. That way, all of that gets covered, unless there's 10 million Mikes or Johns or Bobs out there, I guess."

MacIntyre said that has always been his policy -- even when he signs his own name -- but that the Manziel situation led to him reinforcing the point to the Buffs.

"We've gone over it a million times," he said. "They know they can't take money for anything like that."

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Football: CU Buffs' Will Oliver ready to be relied on

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

BrushNewsTribune.com

After two seasons as the starting place kicker at Colorado, Will Oliver is entrenched in that spot going into his junior season.

He certainly doesn't act like a guy on easy street, though.

"The competition is there," he said. "I'm not looking at it as though I have the job. Obviously it could all change. I'm just trying to keep working every day."

Although the Buffs do have three other kickers in camp, CU head coach Mike MacIntyre said Oliver is the starter. CU's only kicker since the start of the 2011 season, Oliver is 17-for-24 on field goal attempts during his career and 57-for-59 on extra points. He has made 30 consecutive extra points dating back to his freshman year.

"Will has been very accurate, he's been very competitive and very professional in the way he works at it," MacIntyre said. "I've been pleased with him."

Although his job appears to be safe, Oliver has worked harder than ever before, for both team and personal reasons.

He wants the team to be able to depend on him, and he's put in the work to make sure they can do that.

"You've got to be golden from 40-45 (yards) and in and then you want to be guaranteed points for your team," said Oliver, who is 5-for-7 from 40-plus during his career, with a long of 52 yards. "I'm trying to provide consistency; we get into a certain range and, boom, it's automatic three."

Oliver said he feels confident in his consistency from 55 yards and in and would feel good with any attempt from 60 yards and in. He may not get many chances from those distances, though. During MacIntyre's three years as the San Jose State head coach, his kickers booted 71 field goals, just three of those from beyond 46 yards (going 0-for-3).

On a personal level, Oliver is already looking at his post-college future.

"Obviously I want to play in the NFL at some point, so I'm not just competing against kids here or kids in my league, I'm competing against players in the NFL," he said.

To increase his chances at an NFL career, Oliver has been working hard on his kickoffs. Last year, Justin Castor handled those duties. Currently, the two are battling for the job.

"I think (the coaches) are going to decide in the coming week or two," Oliver said. "I'm much more comfortable with kickoffs this year than I was last year. I'm fighting for it and competing for it. I'm doing everything I can and working on it."

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**ESPN.com:** Pac-12[\[Print without images\]](#)

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Colorado Buffaloes season preview

By Kevin Gemmell

We continue our day-by-day snapshots of each Pac-12 team heading into the 2013 season in reverse alphabetical order with the [Colorado Buffaloes](#).

Colorado

Coach: Mike MacIntyre (16-21, 0-0 at Colorado)

2012 record: 1-11, 1-8 Pac-12 South

Key losses: OT [David Bakhtiari](#), TE [Nick Kasa](#), OLB Jon Major, DT [Will Pericak](#), FS [Ray Polk](#).

Key returnees: C [Gus Handler](#), TB [Christian Powell](#), WR [Tyler McCulloch](#), S [Marques Mosley](#), DE [Chidera Uzo-Diribe](#), P [Darragh O'Neill](#), WR [Paul Richardson](#), [Derrick Webb](#).

Newcomer to watch: It's too early to tell which one, but three freshmen wide receivers -- [Elijah Dunston](#), [Devin Ross](#) and [Bryce Bobo](#) (ironically numbered 1, 2 and 3) -- are all making a case to be in the rotation and two-deep.

Biggest games in 2013: The season opener against Colorado State (Sept. 1) is always a big one, and the rivalry with Utah (Nov. 30) is starting to take shape.



Mike MacIntyre is charged with turning around Colorado after making a winner out of San Jose State.

Biggest question mark: While no official word has come down on who will start at quarterback, it's looking more and more like [Connor Wood](#) will at least begin the season as the starter. So we can at least put a partial check mark there. The biggest question is really what sort of progress -- if any -- we'll see in Mike MacIntyre's first season as the new head coach. He comes in with solid credentials and was Mr. Fix-It at San Jose State. But with the new job comes a new set of challenges. Chief among them, the proverbial challenge of "changing the culture." MacIntyre made it clear that he wants to win and compete immediately, and he believes that his players have bought in. We'll see how much on Sept. 1.

Forecast: The media [doesn't have much faith](#) in the Buffs, picking the team that went 1-11 last season to finish last again in the Pac-12 South. This might be one of those situations in which the team shows improvement -- just not in the win department. Remember, San Jose State appeared to take a step back in MacIntyre's first season, going 1-12, but it was during that time that he was establishing his schemes and philosophies, and in Year 2 they

went 5-7. By the third season, the Spartans were 11-2 (10-2 under MacIntyre) and ranked in the top 25. No one is saying the Buffs will be ranked in three seasons, and most people probably aren't expecting it. The Pac-12 is a different animal than the now football-less WAC, but it's not wrong to hope for a postseason berth in the next 3-5 seasons.

And this season, the Buffs are loaded with young players who gained a ton of experience last season. They return 17 starters (eight offense, nine defense) including a young secondary that took its licks last season. Mosley, [Kenneth Crawley](#) and [Yuri Wright](#) all started last season, and [Greg Henderson](#) and [Parker Orms](#) are the veterans of the group. Up front defensively, Uzo-Diribe is a talented pass-rusher, and linebackers [Derrick Webb](#) and [Paul Vigo](#) should be the anchors on defense.

Offensively, they lose Bakhtiari to the NFL and Alex Lewis announced a transfer, which was followed by [some bizarre and unfortunate circumstances](#). But they get Richardson back after he missed all of 2012 with a knee injury. When he's healthy, he's one of the most explosive wide receivers in the country and should give the Buffs a stretch-the-field threat they were lacking.

Powell also quietly put together a strong second half last season, posting a pair of 100-yard games and four touchdowns over the final five. If they can plug the left side of the line (it's looking like veteran [Jack Harris](#) at left tackle and [Kaiwi Crabb](#) at left guard), he could inch closer to 1,000 yards on the ground after posting 691 and a 4.4 yards per carry average last season.

There is talent on Colorado's roster, but, as what's becoming a trend with Colorado, fans are going to have to be patient until the new staff figures out how best to use it.
