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Brooks: On D-Line, Buffs Hope Less (Weight) Is More

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By: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

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

BOULDER – When Josh Tupou stepped on the scales last spring, the digital figures did a steady tick upward until they stopped at 325. Juda Parker sent the digits climbing to 270. Scroll through the names on Colorado's defensive line and the story was much the same; weights were significantly higher than the new coaching staff wanted.

From a poundage standpoint, coach Mike MacIntyre wanted to see less of his D-line. In a conference that puts a premium on pursuit, packing 15 to 20 extra pounds can turn a sprint to the ball into a waddle -- and waddles don't bring down many Pac-12 running backs or receivers.

Mandates – the bulk of them pointed at the D-line – were issued for lighter August reporting weights. From January through August, there have been bi-weekly (Monday and Friday) weigh-ins. Post-practice work on stationary bikes throughout August camp has been the norm. As a result, most goals have been met or will be when game week arrives.

"We're going to have some surprises at the end of this," defensive line coach Jim Jeffcoat said. "Guys will have changed their bodies, but still have a couple of more pounds to go. It's really good."

Take Tupou, who started five games last season as a 325-pound true freshman for a staff that obviously believed bigger was better. The 6-3 Tupou has shed 11 pounds and vows he'll reach 305, maybe 300, by the Sept. 1 opener against Colorado State.

He's already reduced his body fat and says he's gained speed without sacrificing strength. "Coaches are still pushing us and trying to get us in better shape," he said. "I'm watching what I eat and doing extra stuff for Steve (Englehart) and Kerry (Johnson, sports performance assistants) after practice. I'm weighing in weekly, trying to reach that goal."

Take Parker, a talented junior who suffered a torn labrum in his right shoulder last season in week seven (USC) and missed the rest of the season as well as spring practice. He's lost 20 pounds, settling at 250, and could start at the end opposite senior Chidera Uzo-Diribe.

"Coach told people he wanted them down to a good weight," Parker said. "We run around a lot now; it's different from last year. I wanted to get myself in shape to help this team. I feel fast and light."

But he's playing fast and strong. The 6-2 Parker falls in the category of up-and-comers who despised life

on the injured list and promised to do something about it in August. Thus far, he's made good on it.

"Camp's gone really good for me," he said. "After the first few days you figure out what you need to work on. Everyday I'm focusing on one thing to get better at, and I feel like I'm accomplishing those goals. I have to get back to the basics . . . getting in my stance, keying my blocks. After I got those basic fundamentals down I just focused on getting myself in condition and running to the ball."

In the Buffs' new four-man front, Tupou and senior Nate Bonsu – another returnee charged with changing his body – have been lining up on the first defensive unit's interior, with Uzo-Diribe and Parker on the outside. But at least until the opener is in the books, everything personnel-related is fluid for defensive coordinator Kent Baer and Jeffcoat, who wants eight or 10 tackles and ends primed to play every week.

"I like to keep them fresh so they can keep attacking," Jeffcoat said. "I don't like to play them a lot of plays." Identifying 10 players for a regular rotation might be a stretch, but depending on special teams needs, Jeffcoat added, "I know I'll have eight."

Among the front four penciled in with the No. 1 defense, Uzo-Diribe was the only player who didn't spend late spring and early summer on a weight-loss mission. He finished 2012 as a solid 250-pounder and has maintained that weight through an off-season conditioning program he called "one of the hardest I've ever had. There's a big, big emphasis on being in shape now."

Uzo-Diribe submitted some of the rare defensive highlights during last season's 1-11 debacle. He finished with a team-high seven quarterback sacks, putting him at 15 (No. 12 at CU) for his career. He ranked No. 10 in the Pac-12, No. 50 in the NCAA.

It was a productive personal season, but neither he nor his coach wants to repeat it. Jeffcoat said Uzo-Diribe has "played pretty well" in August camp but "still has things to work on . . . we've got to get him to a different level. For us to be successful, he has to be at a different level. He understands that and is working toward it."

Jeffcoat's two-plus decades as a defensive lineman and coach in the NFL give him instant credibility among his players. Said Tupou: "He's a real good coach, a very intense guy . . . it's a good experience learning from him because of his background and the things he's done. I've learned a lot more just in this camp and in spring ball than I did last year."

Tupou, Parker and Uzo-Diribe described Jeffcoat as a demanding technician, particularly in run defense. He's looking for across-the-board improvement in "fundamental things . . . using their hands in the techniques we use when we teach our defense. They're working hard on that and improving their footwork. They've tried to improve each day and that's all I ask of them. They're making some positive strides and they've got to continue to do that."

From defensive front to front, Jeffcoat said footwork can be different: "It's not standard. You have different fronts . . . 4-3, 3-4, under fronts, over fronts. Everybody teaches it a little bit different. In a 3-4 you might be a two-gapper. Some guys teach placing the hand and running up field. We don't teach that; we control gaps, we make sure we're in our gaps and controlling the nose."

An added instructional bonus for Parker is playing the same position as Uzo-Diribe and being able to compare notes. Parker's biggest takeaway from Uzo-Diribe: "He's been able to teach me to be consistent. Through the years that's what he's been – consistent. He's always been a hard worker, gone to the ball and given a lot of effort. That's something I learned from him."

Uzo-Diribe has shown he can be disruptive for an offense, and Jeffcoat believes he's got a handful of other players who have the same capabilities. "They're all working at that, not just the first four," he said. "I've got a couple of other guys after that (first four) who could be disruptive. They could rotate in and I expect them to make plays."

The Buffs 'D' wasn't the stuff of nightmares for any Pac-12 offensive coordinators last season. CU finished No. 117 out of 120 teams in total defense (488.5 yards a game) and No. 120 in scoring defense (46 points).

From the outside, not much improvement is expected for 2013; CU is projected to finish last in the Pac-12 South. From the inside, there's a much different view.

"I believe we're better than that," Tupou said. "I do think we'll surprise some people in the nation . . . but we've still got to go out and play."

Added Parker: "Reading the papers and seeing what everybody is saying about us . . . we didn't get the results we wanted (in 2012) so that always puts in a motivating factor for the new season. If everyone is

sleeping on us, get ready.”

THE INSIDE LOOK AT . . .

Defensive line

Coach: Jim Jeffcoat, first season on CU staff

Returning starters: DE Chidera Uzo-Diribe, Sr.; DT Josh Tupou, So.

Returnees: DT Nate Bonsu, Sr.; DE Juda Parker, Jr.; DE/T Samson Kafovalu, So.; DE Kirk Poston, Jr.; DE De’Jon Wilson, Fr-RS; DT Tyler Hennington, So.; DT Justin Solis, So.; DT John Tusó, So.; DE Andre Nichols, Jr.

Newcomers: DE Derek McCartney, Fr.; DL Timothy Coleman, Jr., Fr.; DE Jimmie Gilbert, Fr.; DE Marquis Reed, Fr.

Key losses: DE Will Pericak

Stat line: While not a total indictment of the D-line, the Buffs were last in the Pac-12 last season in rushing defense and No. 115 in the FBS, allowing 226.0 yards a game.

Bottom line: The new coaching staff’s goal for the D-line is to be lighter and quicker, ostensibly playing faster and more effectively in the Pac-12. Several players were mandated to lose up to 20 pounds each before the opener, and midway through training camp they were well on way to reaching their goals. Uzo-Diribe led the team in sacks last season (7-66 yards) and should be among the Pac-12’s premier pass rushers this season. He’ll draw double-teams this season, so help from his teammates up front will be critical. Parker has had a good camp at the end opposite Uzo-Diribe, and Jeffcoat is counting on Tupou and Bonsu – both carrying less weight – being effecting inside in the new 4-3 scheme. Jeffcoat is a fan of frequent rotation and keeping players fresh up front; he hopes to have eight to 10 guys ready every week. He’ll have a capable group to choose from in Solis, Poston, Henington, Kafovalu, Tusó and Gilbert and Reed – the only true freshmen in the group.

Next: Special teams

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Colorado Buffaloes Football

Show Menu



Mike MacIntyre comes to Colorado Buffaloes with a side of success

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

Posted:

DenverPost.com

It's lunchtime at McDonald's on Colfax Avenue and the man behind the counter is asking the young cashier how to work the cash register.

Let's see, you push this, then hit that number, then push that?

"So how long have you been working here, Miss?" the man says while he asks a customer which salad dressing she'd like. "Where did you go to school?"

The cashier answers quietly, unaware that her inquisitor has a lot more questions to answer himself in the future. But on this day, new Colorado football coach Mike MacIntyre seems more interested in the life of a McDonald's clerk than how he will rebuild the Buffaloes.

MacIntyre is on the CU coaches caravan. Many college coaches view these like news conferences gone ugly. The coaches take a bus across the state, shake hands, smile for the camera and patiently listen to questions from fans that can't possibly be answered in summertime. They chat with well- to-do boosters while wantingly gazing at a golf course outside the country club window.

MacIntyre, however, saw the caravan as a road into people's souls. As an opportunity to get to know CU fans, not just shake another hand. However many questions the fans had for him, he had just as many for them.

Last winter, CU fans welcomed MacIntyre's hiring with tired arms. A school-record seven consecutive losing seasons, a 1-11 record and a third head coach in four years tend to sap the strength of fans who can easily blow off Saturdays for a hike or a ski slope. But, eight months into the job, the state has warmed if not fallen for the man who has been asked to do the improbable: turn around both the San Jose State and Colorado programs in one lifetime.

One way to become one of the people is working a shift at a McDonald's.

"With Mike, there's no strangers, just friends he hasn't met," said John Poch, San Jose State's deputy athletic director and one of the coach's best friends.

Or, with Mike, there's no joke he can't laugh at.

While handing out Big Macs and fries to customers, a reporter asks, "Hey, Mike, looking into jobs in case you don't go to a bowl game the next five years?"

MacIntyre howls.

Later, he sits down with his lunch and relays the chat he just had with the McDonald's owner. MacIntyre's honey-dipped Tennessee accent drips with admiration.

"He came here from Ethiopia when he was 18 years old," MacIntyre said. "Now he has eight McDonald's. Seven are paid off. Each one makes \$2.6 million to \$3 million a year. And he put both of his kids through Colorado."

During the caravan, MacIntyre stops at tables for so long, boosters barely have time to eat their cheese squares. He asks about their backgrounds, their jobs, their interests. If he had a trench coat and a fedora, he would be a reporter for The Tennessean.

"Everybody has a story," MacIntyre says later, in the quiet corner of a banquet room.

"Everybody is special and I truly believe that. I like to hear their stories. I like to get inspiration from them and let them know that they're special. Life is not what you take.

"It's what you give."

Praise from Bear Bryant

For what it's worth, MacIntyre, 48, is building believers. His debut with Colorado is still seven days away, but one can sense Buffs Nation turning, though still shaking off the sting of the ill-fated hirings of predecessors Jon Embree and Dan Hawkins.

"They all sound good to start, but I think he sounds as good if not better," said Bob Gardner, a fan who attended the Colorado Springs caravan stop. "The last time Hawkins was down here for a golf tournament, he wouldn't even get out of the friggin' golf cart and have his picture taken with us."

MacIntyre's Southern charm works on a big stage. If he coaches like he tells stories, the Buffaloes' future is set. He talks about his four Fs: Foundation. Family. Future. Football.

His favorite subject is his father, his hero, the man who molded him.

In 1979, George MacIntyre took over a downtrodden Vanderbilt program (sound familiar?) that hadn't won a Southeastern Conference game in six years. He didn't win a league game until this third season, but in his fourth season he led the Commodores to their first bowl game since 1974.

In 1982, Vanderbilt is playing at Alabama's Bryant-Denny Stadium in its conference opener, having gone 1-17 in SEC games under MacIntyre to that point.

"You know they're playing a pretty good team when the guy who's coaching has his name on the stadium," Mike tells the laughing crowd. The game was Alabama's homecoming. "Vanderbilt played a lot of homecomings in those days," he says.

Alabama wins 24-21. At midfield, Crimson Tide coach Bear Bryant asks MacIntyre for permission to talk to his Vanderbilt team. Mike tells the CU crowd: "Bear says, 'You outplayed an Alabama team and you shouldn't lose another game the rest of the year.'"

Vanderbilt won seven of its next eight games to get to 8-3 before losing to Air Force in the Hall of Fame Bowl. MacIntyre won the Bobby Dodd national coach of the year award.

"What that taught me is it's so much of a confidence and a mental game," Mike tells the crowd. "That if you believe in yourself, there are unbelievable things you can accomplish. And if you believe in the man next to you, miracles can happen."

Said Kevin Polansky, a Loveland resident and CU alum, after hearing him speak in Fort Collins: "MacIntyre brings something more than intangibles. I was a coach for more than 25 years. Swimming. I am really impressed with what he has brought to the kids. I see a difference in the kids from last year to this year."

"He mentioned unity. The kids are buying into it. I don't think they bought into what happened at the end of the year. They were walking dead."

If the Buffs believe in omens, they should note that MacIntyre is following the pattern he had at San Jose State. In his first head coaching job, moving to a region of the country where he'd never coached, MacIntyre took the Spartans from 2-10 in 2009 to 11-2 in 2012. When San Jose State hired him after the 2009 season, he went on a six-city California caravan from Sacramento to San Diego.

"What they liked about him, he's a father first and a football coach second," Poch said. "He's a father and you could tell he's more happy about graduation than touchdowns."

"The way I was raised"

MacIntyre's off-the-field secret is creating a family atmosphere.

At San Jose State, he took the players to boosters' homes for barbecues every spring and fall — within NCAA rules — and took them back to the team's practice facility. That's where they'd eat ice cream, served up by Mac-Intyre and his wife, Trisha.

At Colorado, he immediately formed family groups within the team. He frequently has one-on-one meetings with players.

"He's invested in us as people, not only as football players," said CU senior linebacker Derrick Webb. "You hear him talk a lot about life and how it carries over to football. He cares more about us as people than he does as football players."

"That's what makes you respect him so much."

Trusting football coaches isn't easy. College players have been told more lies than college coeds. Before CU has played one down, though, MacIntyre appears to be gaining trust from his team. If a player has a bad practice, Mac-Intyre is as likely to ask whether anything's wrong in his life as he is to chew him out.

"We choose to tell him certain things," said CU wide receiver Paul Richardson. "We get a genuine feel for each other. This is a business. They're coaches; we're players. But at the same time, to have a relationship on a personal level, it makes us more comfortable around the facility and the practice field."

Of course, trust doesn't always translate to touchdowns. Mac-Intyre's first San Jose State team went 1-12. But MacIntyre has a plan and is sticking to it.

He learned it from his hero, his father, now bedridden because of multiple sclerosis.

"It was the way I was raised," MacIntyre said. "My dad and mom, they're phenomenal people. Everybody I've ever met who met my dad loved my dad. I never heard anyone say anything bad about him. So, if I can be half the man he was, I'll be a success in life. He was real.

"His players absolutely loved and cared for him because they knew he cared for them more than if they could score touchdowns."

About Mike MacIntyre

Age: 48.

Coaching background: San Jose State head coach, 2010 to 2012; two seasons as the defensive coordinator at Duke; five seasons as an NFL defensive backs coach (Dallas Cowboys, New York Jets); 13 seasons as a college assistant coach (Mississippi, Temple, Tennessee-Martin, Davidson, Georgia).

Alma mater: Georgia Tech.

Family: Wife, Trisha; children, Jennifer, Jay Michael and Jonston.

In the genes: Before graduating from Georgia Tech in 1989, Mac-Intyre played two seasons at Vanderbilt for his father, George, who coached at the Southeastern Conference school from 1979-85.

Football: No fear of Folsom Field? CU Buffs must re-establish home-field advantage

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

During his final season as a Colorado Buffalo, in 1991, Darian Hagan and his teammates would work out in the brand new Dal Ward Center and look out the window at Folsom Field.

"Every day we trained, we were training to defend our turf," said Hagan, who quarterbacked the Buffs from 1988-91. "That's why we overlooked that field."

CU went 20-3-1 at Folsom Field during Hagan's four seasons, including a 15-game home win streak at one point.

"The one thing we always believed in was maintaining the guard around your stadium and your home," Hagan said.

In recent years, the Buffs might have had a desire to guard their home, but they've had a lot of rude visitors.

A year ago, CU went 0-6 at home -- the first time in the 89-season history of Folsom Field that it failed to win at least one home game.

"It was painful," said linebacker Derrick Webb, a senior on this year's squad.

The previous winless home season came in 1920, but that team at least tied two of the three home contests that season. CU's first two teams -- in 1890 and 1891 -- were the only other teams to go winless at home, finishing a combined 0-4 during those years, with three of the losses to Colorado Mines.

Throughout CU's history, it has almost always enjoyed a home field advantage. The Buffs are 389-178-16 all-time at home, including 297-156-10 at Folsom Field.

Even before the Dal Ward Center was built, Hagan remembers head coach Bill McCartney emphasizing the importance of winning at home. The Buffs went 6-0 at Folsom Field in 1989 and again in 1990.

"We made sure that when guys came in here, we tried to intimidate them, first off, by meeting them at the 50-yard line," Hagan said. "Then, we just unleashed pure speed on them and then our crowd got into it and (Ralphie) played a lot into it."

Heading into the second game of Hagan's senior year, CU was riding a 15-game home winning streak. The 12th-ranked Buffs hosted No. 23 Baylor. The Bears booted a field goal at the end of the game to win 16-14 and end the Buffs' streak.

"That was probably one of the worst defeats I ever had as a college player," Hagan said. "At that point, we had won (15) games in a row at home in dominant fashion. To lose it like we lost it, it was crazy, it was bad. It was a horrible feeling. We vowed never to let that happen again and we

went on for a long time to not let that happen."

The next week, the Buffs began a new streak, going 10-0-2 in their next 12 at Folsom.

"This place was rocking when I was here," said Pac-12 Network analyst Rick Neuheisel, who was an assistant coach at CU in 1994 and head coach from 1995-98. The Buffs went 23-7 at home during those five years.

"My (second) game here was against Wisconsin. We blew their tails out of the stadium. I remember going, 'Wow, we've got a fast team.' But the crowd was into this deal and I enjoyed that for my whole time here. There were some bumps in the road, but we had great support. They loved their players. We had plenty of quality kids for them to enjoy. It was a special time."

Those days seem long ago, but first-year head coach Mike MacIntyre is determined to regain that special feeling -- especially at Folsom.

"That's a big deal for us, extremely big deal," MacIntyre said of re-establishing a home-field advantage. "We talk about it constantly. That's a very important key value in our program. Every home game, to me, you should have an advantage. We need to make sure we take care of that."

It starts on Sept. 1 when the Buffs play their season opener against Colorado State. That game is at Sports Authority Field at Mile High in Denver, but Webb said that's an important game leading into the home opener, Sept. 7 against Central Arkansas.

"People get their impressions off of how we go out there and play CSU," Webb said. "It's important for us to go ahead and establish ourselves in the first game and let everybody know, 'Hey the Buffs are back.'"

After that ugly 0-6 mark at home last year (and 1-11 overall), fans may be a little leery of believing the Buffs are back. But Hagan, who now works as CU's director of player development, believes that in time, fans will fill Folsom Field and opponents will once again fear the Buffs.

"It's been that way, it's going to get back that way and I have a good understanding that it will because I'm in the meetings everyday with coach (MacIntyre)," Hagan said. "The way he handles everything and his approach to it, it'll happen relatively fast."

"It's not going to happen overnight, but I think we can get back to what we had."

Contact staff writer Brian Howell at howellb@dailycamera.com or twitter.com/BrianHowell33.

Football: There's more than football success riding on CU Buffs' Mike MacIntyre's shoulders

Brian Howell, Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Mike MacIntyre seemingly has little pressure on his shoulders.

Colorado's first-year head coach is, after all, taking over a football program that was widely regarded as one of the worst in the country in 2012. The Buffs went 1-11 last season, losing eight times by at least 25 points. It can't get any worse than that, can it?

Well, perhaps, but MacIntyre can't afford to dig deeper, because he isn't simply charged with reviving the football program. He's got the entire athletic department depending on his success.

Since 2006, CU has paid roughly \$8.21 million in severance to three different football coaches -- Gary Barnett, Dan Hawkins and Jon Embree. Firing athletic director Mike Bohn in May will cost the school another \$918,000 in severance.

In 2010, CU paid the Big 12 Conference an exit fee of nearly \$6.9 million to leave and join the Pac-12 Conference. That move came with great promise, with the conference launching the Pac-12 Networks a year ago. Conference schools have yet to benefit financially from the networks, however.

CU's horrific 2012 season on the football field cost the athletic department even more. Ticket sales were way down and that contributed to the athletic department having a budget shortfall of about \$7.5 million in the last fiscal year.

Despite all of that, the Buffs are spending money like never before. Tad Boyle is now the highest-paid men's basketball coach in school history after receiving a raise this spring. Women's basketball coach Linda Lappe got a raise, too.

New athletic director Rick George, who replaced Bohn in August, received the highest administrative salary in CU history. He'll make \$700,000 a year -- more than doubling Bohn's salary.

In addition, MacIntyre's base salary of \$2 million per season is nearly triple the amount Embree made. In all, the school has committed more than \$5 million in annual salary for the football staff, and agreed to spend \$1 million to renovate the football coaching offices.

On top of all of that, earlier this year, the department unveiled a plan for \$170 million in upgrades to the athletic department facilities. George will try to raise \$50 million of that through private donations.

While the football program has struggled on the field for several years, the men's basketball program has become a consistent NCAA Tournament contender; the women's basketball program has turned into a winner again; and the skiing, cross country and track and field teams have continued to enjoy their usual success.

Until the football program starts winning again, however, the athletic department as a whole will suffer.

CU has now turned in seven consecutive losing seasons on the gridiron. The Buffs haven't been to a bowl game since 2007. They've rarely been competitive in a conference game since joining the Pac-12, going 3-15 with 13 of the losses coming by 25 points or more.

With the amount of money pouring out of the athletic department in recent and future years, CU needs to start getting some return on its investments. NCAA Tournament appearances in basketball help, but nothing brings in revenue like a good football program.

The Buffs don't need to work a miracle this season. Nobody expects CU to get to a bowl game this fall. If it does, MacIntyre had better get Pac-12 and national coach of the year honors.

So, there is a little leeway. What the Buffs can't afford is a repeat of 2012, or, heaven forbid, to discover that it really can get worse.

It will take time to revive this program, but this year's Buffs have to be better than they were a year ago. They have to give their fans a reason for hope, by winning more than once and showing some fight against their Pac-12 brethren.

If the Buffs can display some significant progress on the field this fall, MacIntyre's salary won't look so large, the athletic department budget might come closer to balancing, and George will have an easier time finding that \$50 million.

No pressure, Mac.

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Football: CU Buffs to mix it up, move on offense

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

One of the biggest mistakes Jon Embree made in his short tenure as head football coach at Colorado was choosing an offense ill-suited to the talent he had, the Pac-12 Conference and the modern college game.

Midway through the 2012 season, Embree had realized his mistake using a West Coast system and began formulating big changes. He never got the chance to get it right because he was fired after the Buffs went 1-11.

CU averaged just 4.4 yards per play in 2012 and a meager 18 points a game. The Buffs scored just 27 touchdowns all season, the fewest since finding the end zone just 20 times in Dan Hawkins' first season back in 2006.

Nine months after Embree was fired, the program is ready to begin its first season under coach Mike MacIntyre with a no-huddle, up-tempo, spread offensive system that many have advocated here for years. MacIntyre and his staff used the system to rack up 5,800 yards of total offense and 6.3 yards per play last year at San Jose State on the way to 11 victories.

The Buffs won't always play a no-huddle but more often than not, they will look to use their high-altitude location and training as an advantage.

"I would like to think it's pretty modern with a little tradition mixed in," CU offensive coordinator Brian Lindgren said. "It's a good mix."

Some have mistakenly referred to the Buffs offense as The Pistol. While it incorporates elements of The Pistol developed at Nevada by coach Chris Ault, and made famous by quarterback Colin Kaepernick, there is much more to it.

Regardless of what it's called and the fact that the program is late to the party, the Buffs are finally running a modern college offense.

"I've always kind of described it as a multiple no-huddle, meaning that we don't just stay in one personnel group," Lindgren said. "We'll move personnel groups but we're doing it from a no huddle. We'll mix some shifts and motions in and you can kind of see different blends and elements. Some pro-style elements, some spread elements to it. I like to be multiple because we can take advantage of what we've got personnel-wise."

Every offensive coach on the CU staff has had some influence in shaping what the Buffs plan to do this season. MacIntyre, who is rooted mostly in defense, also has helped develop it over the past three years with most of the same assistants at San Jose State.

"I think he gets us to think a lot," offensive line coach Gary Bernardi said. "He has ideas that he sees that might hurt him. There are some things he mandates and there are some things he tells us to think about. So in that whole melting pot, it stays pretty good."

It didn't take long for players to embrace the new system because coaches made learning it relatively easy whereas last year's system could be overwhelming with its cumbersome terminology.

The reality is the Buffs have been beaten often in recent years by opponents using very similarly designed schemes. Why wouldn't they embrace the opportunity to make it work for themselves?

"I like it," left tackle Jack Harris said. "It's a lot of misdirection and quick passes and overload stuff. Then Pistol and empty. It's fun. It requires a bunch of different techniques and stuff but it's fun.

"We've gotten beat by it before. So hopefully we can beat some teams with it this year."

Lindgren credits former San Jose State offensive coordinator John DeFilippo, now the Oakland Raiders quarterbacks coach, for setting a lot of good things in place. When Lindgren replaced DeFilippo, he brought concepts he used at Northern Arizona to the scheme and running backs and tight ends coach Klayton Adams added elements from his background as an offensive lineman at Boise State.

"Everybody likes tempo and everybody likes no-huddle and go fast and fast and fast, but we didn't really want to give up some of the other things we like as well," Adams said. "We tried to find a happy medium in being able to use a lot of different personnel groupings."

Bernardi jokes that he brings the old school stuff to the room. Lindgren says the truth is much of that is integral to the system. And this season wide receivers coach Troy Walters has added some wrinkles from his days as an assistant at Texas A&M and North Carolina State as well as his playing days with Peyton Manning and the Indianapolis Colts.

"I think this staff, as an offense, we're close, we're tight, we understand that we all bring different things to the table and different experiences," Walters said. "The more we can buy in and accept everyone and use all the knowledge, the better we're going to be."

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Midway through the 2012 season, Embree had realized his mistake using a West Coast system and began formulating big changes. He never got the chance to get it right because he was fired after the Buffs went 1-11.

CU averaged just 4.4 yards per play in 2012 and a meager 18 points a game. The Buffs scored just 27 touchdowns all season, the fewest since finding the end zone just 20 times in Dan Hawkins' first season back in 2006.

Nine months after Embree was fired, the program is ready to begin its first season under coach Mike MacIntyre with a no-huddle, up-tempo, spread offensive system that many have advocated here for years. MacIntyre and his staff used the system to rack up 5,800 yards of total offense and 6.3 yards per play last year at San Jose State on the way to 11 victories.

The Buffs won't always play a no-huddle but more often than not, they will look to use their high-altitude location and training as an advantage.

"I would like to think it's pretty modern with a little tradition mixed in," CU offensive coordinator Brian Lindgren said. "It's a good mix."

Some have mistakenly referred to the Buffs offense as The Pistol. While it incorporates elements of The Pistol developed at Nevada by coach Chris Ault, and made famous by quarterback Colin Kaepernick, there is much more to it.

Regardless of what it's called and the fact that the program is late to the party, the Buffs are finally running a modern college offense.

"I've always kind of described it as a multiple no-huddle, meaning that we don't just stay in one personnel group," Lindgren said. "We'll move personnel groups but we're doing it from a no huddle. We'll mix some shifts and motions in and you can kind of see different blends and elements. Some pro-style elements, some spread elements to it. I like to be multiple because we can take advantage of what we've got personnel-wise."

Every offensive coach on the CU staff has had some influence in shaping what the Buffs plan to do this season. MacIntyre, who is rooted mostly in defense, also has helped develop it over the past three years with most of the same assistants at San Jose State.

"I think he gets us to think a lot," offensive line coach Gary Bernardi said. "He has ideas that he sees that might hurt him. There are some things he mandates and there are some things he tells us to think about. So in that whole melting pot, it stays pretty good."

It didn't take long for players to embrace the new system because coaches made learning it relatively easy whereas last year's system could be overwhelming with its cumbersome terminology.

The reality is the Buffs have been beaten often in recent years by opponents using very similarly designed schemes. Why wouldn't they embrace the opportunity to make it work for themselves?

"I like it," left tackle Jack Harris said. "It's a lot of misdirection and quick passes and overload stuff. Then Pistol and empty. It's fun. It requires a bunch of different techniques and stuff but it's fun.

"We've gotten beat by it before. So hopefully we can beat some teams with it this year."

Lindgren credits former San Jose State offensive coordinator John DeFilippo, now the Oakland Raiders quarterbacks coach, for setting a lot of good things in place. When Lindgren replaced DeFilippo, he brought concepts he used at Northern Arizona to the scheme and running backs and tight ends coach Klayton Adams added elements from his background as an offensive lineman at Boise State.

"Everybody likes tempo and everybody likes no-huddle and go fast and fast and fast, but we didn't really want to give up some of the other things we like as well," Adams said. "We tried to find a happy medium in being able to use a lot of different personnel groupings."

Bernardi jokes that he brings the old school stuff to the room. Lindgren says the truth is much of that is integral to the system. And this season wide receivers coach Troy Walters has added some wrinkles from his days as an assistant at Texas A&M and North Carolina State as well as his playing days with Peyton Manning and the Indianapolis Colts.

"I think this staff, as an offense, we're close, we're tight, we understand that we all bring different things to the table and different experiences," Walters said. "The more we can buy in and accept everyone and use all the knowledge, the better we're going to be."

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Football: More than just ink for CU Buffs players

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It's impossible to watch a college football game or other sports in which parts of the athletes' bodies are visible and not wonder these days about all those tattoos.

Prior to Dennis Rodman in the mid-1990s, it was generally rare to see an athlete with a tattoo, let alone a star athlete covered in them.

In an average college football game there can be a dozen or more players on the field with some kind of body art on any given play. The Colorado Buffaloes are no different. Numerous members of the 2013 Buffs have at least one tattoo. No Buff has more than star wide receiver Paul Richardson, who estimates he has 30 on his arms, legs, chest, back and sides.

In many cases the tattoos are reminders of tough times gone by, a close friend or loved one or a spiritual message of particular significance. In other cases, they can be bad reminders of a rowdy night or just plain poor decision making.

"I don't have any stupid tattoos or tattoos to where it's like, 'Maybe I shouldn't have got that,'" said Richardson, who admits getting his first tattoo at 15 or 16 despite his parents telling him not to. "All my tattoos mean something to me. They don't have to mean something to the people that view them. I don't have any tattoos to where people would be like, 'I don't know if we can deal with that person because he has something really bad on him.'"

Richardson said the tattoo that means the most to him is on his upper-left arm. It is a pair of hands together in a praying pose with wings beneath them and the names of numerous women in his life who invested their time and love in him to help him get to this point in his life. Those women include his mother, grandmother, aunts and a friend's mother.

Richardson said he got the vast majority of his tattoos done in high school before ever coming to CU. The same is true for defensive back Kenneth Crawley, who says he has 20 tattoos but hasn't added any new ink since his senior year.

Crawley has the words "God's Gift" tattooed on one of his forearms as a reminder of how precious life is.

Fellow defensive back John Walker estimates he has 10 tattoos. He has both his forearms covered. One carries the word "dedication." The other has "motivation" on it. Both are done in a special script.

"That is just something I look at every day and strive to be better and dedicated and motivated to what I have coming for me and what I'm doing," Walker said.

Defensive end Samson Kafovalu joined the tattoo fraternity this summer when his parents gave him the OK to get a tattoo on his upper right arm as long as it honored his Tongan heritage or God.

Kafovalu chose to do a little of both by having part of the Tongan Seal tattooed on his arm.

"I will never forget my roots," he said. "My parents came from the island of Tonga and came to America for a better life."

Most players have their limits and wouldn't think of tattooing certain parts of their bodies such as the face or neck. Richardson said he has always kept his future professional life in mind when deciding what tattoos to get and where to have them on his body.

"I won't get one on my face. It doesn't send a good message. All my tattoos are very coverable with a shirt and tie and slacks on. That was my biggest thing. I never wanted to get one where I couldn't cover it and not look professional."

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