

Chancellor feels coaches, staff are worth money they are being paid

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In nearly 40 years of working at Colorado, Philip DiStefano has seen a lot of coaches and administrators come and go.

The chancellor couldn't be happier with the leadership currently in place in CU's athletic department.

"When I look at who is at the senior leadership, with Rick George, with Ceal Barry, with our coaches -- (Mike) MacIntyre and (Tad) Boyle and (Linda) Lappe and the others -- I think we have the best team we've had at that level in a long time," DiStefano said.

He'd better feel that way, since the Buffs are paying their leaders an unprecedented amount of money. MacIntyre, who was hired in December, is the highest-paid football coach in CU history. Boyle is the highest-paid men's basketball coach in CU history.

This week, George came aboard as the new director of athletics. He is not only the highest-paid AD in Colorado history, he is the highest-paid administrator ever in the CU system.

DiStefano believes the money is worth it to get the caliber of people the Buffs now have on board.

"I'm convinced we have the right head coaches now, especially in men's and women's basketball and football," he said. "And, I believe now we have the right AD in place."

George, of course, still has to prove himself. He's still a few weeks away from his first day on the job. That'll come on Aug. 12. But, he has made a good first impression on some of those he will lead.

"I thought it was really refreshing just to see and hear a new voice for the direction of the athletic department," said Deric Swanson, the executive director of BuffVision. "What we had in the past was excellent, but with the change, we needed to go in a new direction. It sounds like we got a guy that has a vision, has a plan and the new voice was really exciting for most of the people in the room."

Former AD Mike Bohn, who was forced out in May, was well-liked by many in the athletic department. He had his detractors, too. Regardless, CU staff members have run through some emotions during the change.

"After everybody got over the shock that Mike was gone, it was just really, 'OK, who is going to be our next leader?' " said David Plati, CU's sports information director.

Now that they have their new leader, Plati said, "People naturally are excited, yet nervous, by change."

George is the fifth athletic director during Plati's time at CU. He said in every case of a new hire, people on the staff get nervous about whether the new AD will make staff changes, and how his philosophy will differ from the previous AD.

Three of the four previous ADs Plati has worked for -- Eddie Crowder, Bill Marolt and Dick Tharp -- were already in the CU system when they were hired. Bohn came to CU after a long career in collegiate athletics that included two previous AD jobs.

George comes to CU with some previous experience in college athletics (including at CU from 1987-91), but it's been 15 years since he worked in this atmosphere. During the past 15 years, he has worked for the PGA Tour, the Fore!Kids Foundation and the Texas Rangers baseball team.

"In Rick's case, it's a very unique blend of background he's got that we've never had before," Plati said. "What's exciting is, what is he going to apply from outside of college athletics that nobody really has had here before?"

Those in the athletic department, including the athletes, are curious to find the answer to that question. There is confidence, however, that George can lead the Buffs forward.

"The bottom line is, everybody takes the job to try to move the ball forward and down the field -- to advance the mission of the university and the athletic department," associate athletic director Jim Senter said. "There's no question Mike took it to a certain distance. Now Rick's charge is, 'You take the ball and you carry it.'"

DiStefano was more than happy to hand the ball to George. Barry, the senior woman administrator and associate AD, is happy to see George carrying the ball, too.

"I think it's a great choice for the university," she said.

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