

Football: CU Buffs not fans of new targeting rule

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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Buffzone.com

Colorado coach Mike MacIntyre is already planning on members of his team being kicked out of games this season and he's not alone among coaches of major college football programs.

A new rules governing targeting and players leading with their helmets are being introduced and violating them carries stiff repercussions.

Players who are flagged for targeting or hitting defenseless players above the shoulders will be ejected in addition to the 15-yard penalty. Officials can review the play to make judgments about whether it was a defender's intent to target the opponent, but even if that defender is subsequently allowed to remain in the game, the penalty will remain.

Players must serve a full game if they are ejected. Those that are ejected in the second half must sit out the first half of the following game.

CU linebacker Derrick Webb might be the hardest hitter on the Buffs' defense this season. Webb said when MacIntyre and his staff first went over the new rules with the Buffs in the spring, it motivated him to go back and look at film of his career to assess how many times he might have been ejected from a game.

"I can't think of about three off the top of my head," Webb said.

During a recent edition of College Football Live on ESPN, analyst and former Florida quarterback Jesse Palmer predicted the rule will have major ramifications this season.

"This new rule change this year will definitely impact some games," Palmer said. "I believe there will be teams that potentially lose games because they lose a key player in the second half. They could lose the next week's game because they will lose that player in the first half of that game as well. I love the targeting rule. I'm all about protecting players. You've just got to be very careful when you determine what the intent was of that player who breaks the rule."

Officials visited every program around the nation during the spring to educate coaches and players on the new rules and how they will be enforced, but there is already controversy about interpretations and training camps haven't even opened.

Officials were quoted in the last week saying the infamous hit delivered by South Carolina defensive end Jadeveon Clowney on Michigan running back Vincent Smith in the Outback Bowl would have led to Clowney being ejected. Webb and other Buffs must shake their head at that idea.

The Pac-12 sent film to every team in the conference of numerous hits that likely would have led to player ejections in the 2012 season. The first hit in the collection was CU defensive back Parker Orms delivering a blow against Colorado State last year. Orms was flagged for the hit.

"Even some of the hits when they gave us examples of what to look for, I feel like there was a little inconsistency," Webb said. "Sometimes it would depend on the smallest thing or was he going for the ball? Was he targeting the head? Was he defenseless? There are so many determining factors. I just know they're going to have to go to the replay a bunch. It's probably going to be a mess this year."

CU cornerback Greg Henderson said players don't like the rule for numerous reasons but one of the primary concerns is it will lead to more serious knee and leg injuries with players focused on hitting ball carriers lower.

Henderson said MacIntyre and CU coaches emphasized aiming lower when tackling opponents during spring ball.

"Nobody likes the rule, especially the ones who really are out there hitting people all the time," Henderson said. "But it's to help us and help the game to be safer. We've just got to teach ourselves to go lower."

"If you hit somebody in their knees, they could blow their ACL out. That's one reason why people don't like it. And it's longer than a concussion. A concussion, you're out for like a week or two, but, I mean, we've just got to respect the rules and keep playing."

Webb and Henderson said they understand the need for greater emphasis on player safety in this day and age and they never want to see anyone hurt. But they also don't want to see players removed from the field for making football plays.

Webb said as a leader and team captain, he plans to emphasize throughout the season that backups need to be ready to play that much more with the new rules in place.

"This year I'm just thinking I'm going to try to lower my target and keep the same intensity and same violence, but just lower the target and see what happens. Obviously some hits you're not going to be able to react. Collisions may happen and if that happens, oh well, I guess that's just part of the game or what the game is changing into."

Notable

Former CU quarterback Shane Dillon, who announced his decision to transfer earlier this month, has chosen to attend the University of San Diego where he will play basketball.

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Football: CU Buffs' MacIntyre not worried about preseason predictions

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No one expects much from the Colorado football program and the coaches and players understand why.

The Buffs were one of the worst teams in the nation last season. So bad, in fact, that their former coach who had been on the job for just 23 months and one full recruiting cycle lost his job along with his entire staff. Then five months later, the athletic director who fired the coach, also lost his job, in large part, because of the state of the football program.

First-year coach Mike MacIntyre has spent the past two days being asked about what it's going to take to turn around the Buffs during the Pac-12 Conference's East Coast portion of football media days. MacIntyre will speak with media members who more regularly cover his program and the conference Friday at Sony Pictures Studios in Culver City, Calif. He will be joined by wide receiver Paul Richardson and defensive end Chidera Uzo-Diribe, two players who came to CU after successful careers at California high schools.

MacIntyre and his players won't be surprised if the conference's preseason media poll picks them to finish last in the south division with the fewest number of points in the polling once again.

"The funny thing about that is I think every magazine and every ESPN thing you watch picks us last now," MacIntyre said. "So it's nothing new to them. I think that all of us don't really take that to heart. We know what we have to do.

"They can pick you first and you can get a big head and get beat. So you've got to handle on both sides of it. We don't dwell on that, but it's also something that we understand our work ethic, our production, the type of people we are, our effort, our practice habits, all of those types of things are what is going to help us overcome."

MacIntyre obviously had nothing to do with CU's humbling 2012 season in which the Buffs went 1-11 and lost by 20 or more points eight times, including seven of their nine conference games. But there are plenty of returning players who understand it's not just the media in the conference with low expectations.

"The record speaks for itself," senior linebacker and captain Derrick Webb said after a recent player-run practice in Boulder. "We can't change the record. The record is what it is. If they pick us 11th or 12th, it's probably because we have the 12th best record.

"But that was last year and that's the beauty of it. It's a new year, a new season. We just need a new attitude."

Junior cornerback Greg Henderson has grown accustomed to low expectations from the outside during his time in silver, black and gold. He says he understands that it's up to the Buffs to change that perception and earn the respect they covet.

"You see all that stuff and you try not to mind it, but it does fuel you to work harder," Henderson said. "Everybody is doubting us. We've had two bad seasons in a row. We've just got to come out there and play fast and play strong."

While fans of the CU program would like to go into the 2013 season hoping their team can pull off a drastic turnaround and return to a bowl game for the first time since 2007, most are more realistic. The hope is the Buffs find a way to win 3-4 times but become much more competitive with every opponent under the tutelage of new coaching.

With more inexperience at some spots on the offensive line and a new starting quarterback along with the expectation that plenty of true freshman will once again see the field, MacIntyre has his work cut out in producing such a turnaround.

"I'm excited about the future," MacIntyre said. "You always are, but I do understand the different obstacles we need to overcome. We have a plan in place. We'll even dissect that further when we all get back in here and get going."

The Pac-12 preseason media poll is expected to be released early Friday morning. MacIntyre and his players will be on stage at noon (MDT) but will be doing interviews with various radio, TV and digital/print media for roughly four hours starting at 10 a.m. (MDT)

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