



# COLORADO BUFFALOES

OFFICIAL ATHLETIC WEBSITE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO



*Former CU coach Rick Neuheisel shares a moment with former Buffs quarterback John Hessler in 2006.*

*Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com*



## Brooks: Neuheisel Can See Better Days Under Mac II

Release: 07/27/2013 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

**CULVER CITY, Calif.** – No one lands on his feet better than Rick Neuheisel – and critics liberally sprinkled from the Rockies to points up and down the West Coast will grin slyly and say that’s because no one has had more opportunities.

In mid-November of 2011 before Colorado traveled to play what would be Neuheisel’s final UCLA team, then-Buffs coach Jon Embree characterized his former coaching colleague/boss as “a survivor, he always has been. Plus, he’s a competitor.

“Rick Neuheisel wants to beat Jon Embree’s behind in anything we do. It goes all the way back to noon hoops when he was here (at CU) as an assistant. I’m not worried about all of that stuff.”

“All of that stuff” was this: Neuheisel was said to be entering his final days as the Bruins head coach – which proved to be true. Nine days after Neuheisel’s team flogged Embree’s (45-6), UCLA pulled the plug. UCLA fired Neuheisel on Nov. 28, 2011 but allowed him to coach in the Pac-12 Conference championship game against Oregon.

A 49-31 loss ended Neuheisel’s tenure in Westwood at 21-29 (13-23 in the Pac-10/12). His four-season stop at UCLA was his only losing layover as a college head coach; four years at CU (1995-98) produced a 33-14 record,

the subsequent four years at Washington (1999-2002) produced a 33-16 mark.

No need to fully revisit the circumstances of Neuheisel's arrival or departure from either Boulder or Seattle. Yes, he did find well-stocked rosters at both places. Yes, his exits from both places (particularly U-Dub) were complex and fairly controversial.

Nonetheless, in his hopscotch through a volatile profession and even now, Neuheisel remains exactly as Embree characterized him – a survivor. Always glib and engaging, Neuheisel remained out of work less than a month after UCLA cut him loose. In December 2011, CBS Sports Network brought him on as a guest analysis for its *Inside College Football* show, and that led to Pac-12 Network hiring him in May 2012 as a studio and game-day analyst.

No surprise, but he was back on his feet.

On Friday he was bouncing between venues and interviews at Pac-12 Football Media Day at the Sony Studios. Neuheisel has an undeniable flair for whatever he does in front of the camera and a passion for college football. He has kept track of the Buffs and their seven-year struggle to regain their footing.

As Bill McCartney's quarterbacks coach in 1994 and McCartney's successor, Neuheisel witnessed how successful football could be at CU. A couple of his quotes from those seasons stuck with me, and I don't know whether he regrets saying them. Probably not, because they were true at the time and still are.

Neuheisel said CU "has everything that money can't buy," and after accepting the UW job he spoke of the "haves and have-nots" in college football – a line he resurrected at UCLA. CU still is struggling to reposition itself among the "haves," but without a winning season since 2005, some Buffs fans might be wondering if it can ever happen again.

Neuheisel believes it can under new coach Mike MacIntyre – if MacIntyre is given enough time. In our conversation Friday, Neuheisel called MacIntyre "a guy who's proven he has the patience to go into a place that is down – at least by a win-loss record standpoint – and create a culture where there's incremental improvement and people continue to believe . . . they don't have to wonder if it's going to happen, it has happened in his career (at San Jose State)."

But in Neuheisel's view, CU football is crying out for continuity and stability.

"I think what's pivotal in my mind is that (new athletic director Rick George) be that voice of not necessarily patience, but perseverance," he said. "There's going to be some tough times; it's not necessarily going to happen overnight. But they'll get there and they'll get there with the help and patience and perseverance of the fan base as well. To me that's what's critical."

Neuheisel called MacIntyre's predecessor – Embree – "a dear friend of mine. I'm upset for him that it didn't turn out well. But there was no voice that was preaching that patience and perseverance. It's very difficult for the head coach to get out there and say, 'We're not very good right now, we need time.'"

"Everybody wants to know why you aren't very good; you brought the players in. But he wasn't there long enough (two seasons) to bring the players in. Mike needs time. He needs people to believe and to want it to happen just as much as he does."

Neuheisel hopes George can "articulate that and get boosters to believe in it . . . I've been there when Folsom Field is rocking. It can happen. There are enough players in the country that want to go to Colorado. Colorado still has that mystique about being one of the romantic destinations in the country."

CU's overall administration and its athletic hierarchy have flipped a couple of times since Neuheisel left Boulder, but I asked him anyway if he has sensed that things have turned for the better.

"I think there is certainly the desire for things to turn," he said. "Whether that meant heads needed to roll, I have no idea. But I do know that the leadership has shown by virtue of their actions that they want change, they want to build a plan that people can believe in and see incremental improvement and enjoy for a long-term fix, not just something quickly."

At George's introductory press conference earlier this month, President Bruce Benson and Chancellor Phil DiStefano restated their intentions to see that CU football prospers under MacIntyre. While Neuheisel believes rejoining the "haves" is possible, he adds, "State institutions face some real financial situations because states have basically cut them off from the trickle down of monies . . . especially athletic departments that are basically operating on their own.

"What we've created is a group of pseudo owners – the private sector that comes in and supports dear old U and says we want to be a part of it. We see what happens when there's a large contributor."

Neuheisel mentioned T. Boone Pickens at Oklahoma State and Phil Knight at Oregon. "Those places almost went overnight to national prominence," he said. "I don't know that that person exists in the Buff family – but there doesn't have to be one. It can be combination of five, ten, fifteen people that get together and say, 'Hey, this is important to us. The (CU) program has traditionally been a strong one; we've got some great memories but let's create some new ones. Here's how we'll do it.'"

If CU expects to "compete at the highest level," said Neuheisel, "you have to finance those expectations. And that money's not coming from the state; it has to come privately. Those people have to get behind whoever the leaders are – coach MacIntyre, Rick George . . . if they can build it and be part of it, there's no more rewarding experience than that."

The two Ricks – Neuheisel and George – didn't cross paths in Boulder, but Neuheisel said he knew of George when he was returning to see former acquaintances at CU while Neuheisel was the Buffs' head coach.

"By all accounts (George) was a terrific hire," Neuheisel said. "I just hope he and 'Mac' lock arms and get the old 'Mac' (McCartney) to lock arms with them because no one can preach better than he can about the virtues of a strong football program at CU and see if they can get that thing going.

"I know in my time there it was an unbelievable experience to be part of that history . . . when Ralphie runs and the football program runs, there's nothing better in the Rockies."

Contact: [BG.Brooks@Colorado.EDU](mailto:BG.Brooks@Colorado.EDU)

SHOW MENU



## Football: CU Buffs must prove they can finish games

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

CULVER CITY, Calif. -- Colorado wide receiver Paul Richardson wondered what kind of reception he, Chidera Uzo-Diribe and coach Mike MacIntyre would receive at Pac-12 football media day on Friday.

Richardson figured the media wouldn't think much of the Buffs and the bulk of their questions would come with a negative tone because the program has been stuck in the Pac-12 cellar, but he was curious how his peers in the conference and other coaches would interact with the Buffs.

When Richardson was asked whether he believed other coaches and players in the conference respect the Colorado football program, he admitted it was a question he was interested to find an answer to on his trip.

All three members of the Colorado contingent came away feeling good about where they stand in the eyes of their peers, but they also admit they know there is work to do. Frankly, the Buffs are going to have to start winning some games in the Pac-12 and being more competitive across the board before the respect comes in full.

"I find it ironic that you ask me that because I thought being here that guys would look down on us or have a perception or an image of us," Richardson said. "I think with the two people they sent here to come represent our program, that they have respect for us. ... My goal is to have them respect the team that I am captain of."

Every year at this time it seems the new leaders in the program talk bravely about how they expect things to be different and how things have improved. Richardson, Uzo-Diribe and their fellow captains have been no different in that regard, but what is different is their willingness to talk frankly about what was wrong in the past.

"I think the difference will be we have guys back from injury," Richardson said. "We have better leaders. We have better captains. We have people that know how to lead now. We had people that could have potentially been good leaders, but they didn't really know how to lead.

"These coaches have been teaching us how to lead and we're prepared to."

There were games in each of the past two seasons in which the Buffs simply weren't competitive from start to finish, but more often than not, CU allowed opponents to get away from them, particularly in the second half.

Players say their new coaches have talked about finishing games, finishing in the classroom, finishing in weight room, finishing runs and finishing with other responsibilities since they were hired in December and January.

They figure eight months of having it pounded into their heads and hearts will help them win a few more of those games this fall.

"People don't understand," Richardson said. "A lot of those games that we played last year we were in at halftime. We can compete with these teams. It's just learning to finish.

"I feel like that is what we'll learn to do this fall camp is put a full game together. That's going to take focus."

But Jon Embree and his assistants and Dan Hawkins and his assistants also preached about finishing and playing complete games and doing the right things on and off the field.

Is there really anything different happening here?

"We've been taught how to finish and we've embraced the teaching of how to finish," Richardson said. "We had a lot of pro guys teaching us before and I think they just kind of expected us to do it. That's where we fell short. Now we have these guys who are taking the time to teach us how to do it and show us and that's going to make the difference."

CU fans will be eager to see that proven on the field when an opponent gets some second-half momentum this season. The Buffs' Pac-12 peers will be watching, too.

*Follow Kyle on Twitter: @KyleRingo*