



# Kiesau to run with Buffs

## New offensive coordinator plans to emphasize rushing attack

By Ryan Thorburn  
Friday, May 1, 2009

Eric Kiesau says being named the offensive coordinator at Colorado is something he has been preparing for since childhood.

"Some guys dream of being doctors when they're kids, some guys dream of being first-round NFL draft picks," Kiesau said before enjoying a celebratory ice cream with his family in Boulder on Thursday night. "My dream has always been to be an offensive coordinator at a BCS school."

CU head coach Dan Hawkins promoted Kiesau, the passing game coordinator and wide receivers coach for the past three seasons, after offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich decided to leave the program to take the same position at Oregon.

Kiesau, who was an assistant at Cal under Jeff Tedford before coming to CU, said the offense will be run differently in 2009.

"There will be some changes. My style of football and offense is more along the lines of Jeff Tedford's. I have a lot of respect for him," Kiesau said. "So there will be a shade of him in my offense. There will be a shade of Chris Petersen of Boise State, another coach I really respect. There will be some things I picked up from Mark. And then there will be some of my own style."

With a potentially imposing offensive line and a stable of talented running backs, the Buffs -- who ranked last in the Big 12 in scoring offense (16.9 points per game) and total offense (307.5 yards per game) in 2008 -- will almost certainly be featuring a more consistent run game next season.

"That's a misconception that because I was in charge of the passing game and was the receivers coach that we're not going to run the ball," Kiesau said. "The running game is going to be a very strong emphasis. We're not going to be Mike Leach at Texas Tech throwing the football."

But the balance-seeking Buffs will need someone to pass the ball consistently well to make some noise in the Big 12.

Kiesau is looking forward to a more hands-on approach with the quarterback candidates, Cody Hawkins and Tyler Hansen, when they resume the competition for the starting spot in August.

"We have two smart quarterbacks and I'm excited to work with them on their timing and mechanics," Kiesau said. "We'll go through fall camp and make a good decision."

Kiesau, who was always on the sideline as the receivers coach, will be moving up to press box on game

days to see the defenses from a bird's eye view. He will be handling the play-calling duties for Dan Hawkins.

"Eric is a highly regarded coach around the country," Dan Hawkins said in a release. "He has been pursued by other programs several times while he has been with us. Eric is a smart and organized coach who has the respect of our players. We are excited with the growth of the offense, and I am confident he will do an outstanding job leading the Buffs."

Kiesau, 36, is the second youngest offensive coordinator in Buff history, replacing the man who was younger by 13 months. Helfrich, 35, graduated from Southern Oregon and was a graduate assistant at Oregon.

"It's a great day," Kiesau said. "I'm very happy and excited about the direction of our offense. And Mark will do a great job at Oregon."



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## Helfrich leaving CU; Hawkins names Kiesau offensive coordinator

Camera staff  
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BOULDER, Colo. — The University of Colorado offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Mark Helfrich is leaving CU and will be replaced by assistant head coach Eric Kiesau, coach Dan Hawkins announced Thursday.

Helfrich had been scheduled to interview for the offensive coordinator job at the University of Oregon earlier this week. No announcement about that job has been made.

Hawkins said in the statement he could not disclose where Helfrich was heading at the request of that university pending completion of its hiring process. However, the statement did say Helfrich was taking the same job as he held at CU.

Kiesau, who previously was receivers coach and passing game coordinator for the Buffs, will serve as offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach, Hawkins said.

Hawkins called Kiesau a “smart and organized coach who has the respect of our players.”

“We are excited with the growth of the offense, and I am confident he will do an outstanding job leading the Buffs,” he said in a statement

Kiesau, 36, is a 1996 graduate of Portland State University and is the second youngest offensive coordinator in Buff history.

“I am very excited, this is something I’ve been preparing for my entire life,” Kiesau said in a news release. “When I got the call when all this was shaking down, it’s a natural progression to move in that direction, especially with what we’re doing offensively”

Hawkins said he plans to name a new receivers coach replacing Kiesau as soon as possible. Helfrich, 35, was an original member of Hawkins’ staff at CU, joining the Buffs from Arizona.

“Mark is a great friend and a great coach,” Hawkins said. “We thank him for his hard work in helping build CU football. There are circumstances that make this a great opportunity for him and we wish him and his family well.”



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## Broncos hire ex-Buff Russell

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ENGLEWOOD — The Denver Broncos hired Matt Russell as their college scouting director on Thursday.

Russell, a first-team All American and Butkis Award winner as the nation's best linebacker at the University of Colorado in 1996, spent the last three seasons as a scout for the Philadelphia Eagles following four seasons of scouting for the New England Patriots.

After a stellar career at Colorado from 1993-96, Russell was selected by the Detroit Lions in the fourth round of the 1997 draft. Knee injuries forced him to retire in 2000.

He spent the 2000 season as a graduate assistant coach at Colorado before beginning his scouting career.

Also Thursday, the Broncos' crowded backfield became a bit clearer with the release of third-year tailback Selvin Young.

They used the 12th overall pick in last weekend's draft to take Georgia running back Knowshon Moreno, and will have a half-dozen tailbacks competing for playing time.

The Broncos also have holdovers Peyton Hillis and Ryan Torian and free agents J.J. Arrington, Correll Buckhalter and LaMont Jordan.

Young played in 23 games, making 13 starts in two seasons in Denver. He ran 201 times for 1,032 yards and two touchdowns and caught 38 passes for 247 yards.

Young was beset by back and groin injuries last season and was one of seven Broncos tailbacks who ended up on injured reserve.



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## Kiesau takes over Buffaloes' offense

Former receivers coach assumes play-calling duties

*By Patrick Ridgell*  
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Eric Kiesau has landed his dream job.

Thursday morning's news regarding the departure of offensive coordinator and quarterback coach Mark Helfrich from Colorado's football program prompted questions about the offense's future. Kiesau, the program's passing game coordinator the past three years and Helfrich's successor in both roles, offered some answers Thursday night.

As for how the promotion made Kiesau feel, his answer was unequivocal.

"A lot of people, when they're growing up, they dream of being a doctor or of being a first-round pick in the NFL Draft," he said. "My whole goal was to be an offensive coordinator in a big-time conference. That's been my aspiration, and I was always grooming myself for that.

"Now that it's happened ... I want to do the best job I can and make sure our players are reaching their potential and we're winning football games."

Kiesau, 36, has been CU's receivers coach the past three seasons. He is one of CU's top recruiters as he enters his fourth season on head coach Dan Hawkins' staff. He was promoted to assistant head coach in February. CU is searching for a new receivers coach.

"Eric is a highly regarded coach around the country," Hawkins said in a release.

Kiesau lettered as a quarterback at Portland State. Prior to that, he was an All-American junior college quarterback at Glendale (Calif.) Community College.

For most of his 10 seasons in the business, Kiesau has coached wide receivers. He said he has always tried to make receivers understand the passing game from the quarterback's point of view.

"The transition to quarterback coach is going to be a no-brainer," he said. "I've always been teaching from that perspective."

Helfrich, who did not return a text message Thursday seeking comment, interviewed for Oregon's offensive coordinator vacancy this week. Oregon announced his hiring as offensive coordinator and quarterback coach Thursday afternoon. He grew up in Oregon.

Helfrich called the bulk of the plays the past three seasons with help from Kiesau. Kiesau will primarily handle those responsibilities in 2009.



Former receivers coach Eric Kiesau expressed excitement and enthusiasm over being named Colorado's new offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach on Thursday. Kiesau is replacing Mark Helfrich, who is headed to the University of Oregon. **Courtesy University of Colorado**

Kiesau said that during his four seasons (2002-2005) coaching receivers at Cal, he studied how head coach Jeff Tedford called games. His quarterback coach at Portland State was Boise State coach Chris Petersen, who succeeded Hawkins. Kiesau said he plans to combine his ideas with what he's learned from Tedford, Petersen, Helfrich and others in calling games.

The transition from one offensive coordinator to another at this time of the year should be smooth, Kiesau said.

"A lot of the things we unveiled this spring were ideas Mark and I talked about and that I felt strong about, especially in the run game," Kiesau said. "But if I had to characterize my feel for what we'll see on the field this year in Colorado football, I'd say a big chunk of it is what you see at Cal with Tedford and Boise State with Petersen and things I've learned over the years.

"I think it'll be a product the fan base and alumni can be very proud of."

Kiesau spent much of Thursday on the phone, calling, among others, current players and incoming recruits. Quarterback Josh Moten, who signed in February, said Thursday night he hadn't spoke with Kiesau yet, but he hoped to soon.

"Coach Helfrich is a good dude. I really liked him," said Moten, whom running back coach Darian Hagan recruited to CU. "I'm not too sure how to react (to Helfrich's departure).

"But I'm willing to adapt and adjust to anything and contribute to the team."

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