



Celestine wants second chance

Ex-Buff WR has re-enrolled at CU, wants to walk on

By Kyle Ringo
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BOULDER, Colo. — Correction: The original version of this story said Kendrick Celestine became academically ineligible prior to last season. He actually became ineligible after the season. He played in two games last year before deciding to transfer.

Former Colorado wide receiver Kendrick Celestine is hoping to make a comeback with the Buffs after quitting the team last fall and leaving the school academically ineligible.

Whether he is allowed to do so is a question only coach Dan Hawkins can answer, and it's a matter that probably won't be resolved quickly.

Celestine played in 11 games as a true freshman in 2007 after joining the program from Mamou, La. He caught 11 passes that year and was used sparingly in the offense, in part because he struggled to learn the system and understand his responsibilities on many plays.

He also struggled in the classroom and became academically ineligible prior to last season. He decided to transfer during the season, citing family problems back home, but he also learned last fall he was going to become a father for the first time. His girlfriend, also a former CU student, left school to return home to Puerto Rico, where she had more affordable access to health care, Celestine said.

He said the new responsibilities, combined with his academic problems, "became overwhelming emotionally."

Celestine went home and got a job and talked with his girlfriend as often as he could. He also stayed in touch with former teammates and his former position coach, newly appointed offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau.

He received a call last month summoning him to Puerto Rico for the birth of his son, Dylan. He spent two weeks there before returning home to Louisiana with his heart set on bringing his son and girlfriend back to Boulder for a fresh start.

Celestine said the most important part of his life is now taking care of his son. He said he vowed to himself long ago that if he ever became a father, he would tackle the job with everything he has. He is hoping they join him in August.

"It has been a real life-changing experience," he said. "Kind of a whirlwind. ..That's one thing I said. I didn't care what I have to give up. I'm always going to be there to try to take care of my son. I'm going to be there to take care of my kids. It don't matter what I have to do."

Celestine has re-enrolled for four summer classes beginning next week and hopes to rejoin the team at some point in the future, a possibility that is far from certain. He said Kiesau had asked him to stop by his office next week, and he is willing to walk on if he has to. He is paying for summer classes with student loans and grants.

Asked via e-mail this week about the possibility of Celestine rejoining the program, Hawkins said he hadn't even heard from his former wideout recently.

There is no hope of Celestine playing this fall because he has so much ground to make up academically. He said he hopes to treat the next year as a redshirt year because he hasn't done much in the weight room either since quitting the team.

If he is allowed back into the program, something coaches don't often do with players who previously quit, Celestine would have to complete two years worth of schoolwork in one to regain his eligibility, considering he was already behind academically before he left.

The one thing in his favor is the fact CU is so thin at the wide receiver position. The team went through spring ball with only three wide receivers on scholarship. However, four more are slated to join the program this summer.

"I realized once I got everything situated with my family and everything that Boulder played a big part of my life," Celestine said. "I kind of felt guilty about up and leaving on my teammates and my coaches and everybody. I want to try to find a way to fix that just like I found a way to fix my family situation."

Coaching search

Hawkins said he continues to search for an assistant coach to round out his staff in the wake of former offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich bolting for Oregon after spring practices and Kiesau being promoted from wide receivers coach.

Hawkins said he is considering coaching wide receivers with help from graduate assistant Skyler Fulton and defensive technical intern Ashley Ambrose, who was temporarily promoted to assistant coach during the spring evaluation period to help in off-campus recruiting.

It is unclear what responsibilities the new assistant coach would have if Hawkins takes over wide receivers.

Katoa transferring

For months, Hawkins has been vague about the future of linebacker Lynn Katoa, one of the most highly rated recruits of the ballyhooed 2008 class in Boulder. Hawkins confirmed Katoa is no longer on the team and will transfer to a destination that has not been finalized.

Katoa, rated a five-star recruit by Scout.com, came to CU in January 2008 as an early enrollee after graduating high school in December. He was involved in an off-campus incident within six weeks of his arrival and charged with felony assault.

He pled guilty to a reduced charge in a plea deal in Boulder County Court last summer but was academically ineligible because the school had suspended him from campus for the 2008 spring and summer terms over the incident. He was forced to sit out last season and never got back on track. He

never played a down in black and gold.



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