



Former Buff Creighton returning to CU football program

Former Buff tight end to serve as graduate assistant on defense

By Kyle Ringo
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BOULDER, Colo. — There are plenty of opinions floating around coffee shops, newsrooms and the Internet these days regarding the state of the Colorado football program and just where coach Dan Hawkins and his assistants have taken the team in three years.

Few of those opinions are as informed and insightful as Paul Creighton's.

The former standout at Niwot High School joined the program in 2003 under former coach Gary Barnett. His career at CU coincided with the most tumultuous period in the program's history.

He watched Barnett fend off scandalous accusations and fight for his job for two years before finally being fired at the end of Creighton's junior season in 2005.

Creighton's senior year was one of three 10-loss campaigns in the history of the program. The Buffs finished 2-10 in 2006 in Hawkins' first season.

Creighton earned a graduate assistant position in the strength and conditioning program at Auburn University in Alabama shortly after his senior season, in part, due to help from Hawkins and CU strength and conditioning coach Jeff Pitman, who once served as a graduate assistant under Auburn strength coach Kevin Yoxall.

Creighton is back at CU as one of two new graduate assistants under Hawkins, and he's amazed at the changes from upgrades to the Dal Ward Center, such as a new locker room and new varsity room, to the practice bubble.

Creighton played at CU when every practice was outside. Sometimes that meant fighting the wind on spring days and other times it meant 10-degree practices in the snow before the Nebraska game.

But the biggest difference Creighton sees in the program is the players.

"I'm really happy to be back here," Creighton said. "The difference between when I left and coming back here -- don't get me wrong. I love Barnett to death, but that whole scandal just cut him off at the legs in terms of recruiting -- it's exciting to see the kind of athletes we got here.

"Being at Auburn, I was telling these guys, we're bigger on the o-line than we were down there. We don't have anything here that can really stop us from competing in terms of physically. So that's exciting

to be back and see that."

Creighton hopes to make a career of coaching football at the college level, and he's willing to put in the work to make it happen.

When he completes his two years as a graduate assistant for the Buffs, he will have spent eight years in college and will have two master's degrees to show for it.

Creighton earned his master's degree from Auburn in higher education administration and sports management. At CU, he will study education curriculum and instruction in pursuit of a second master's degree and, ultimately, a teaching certificate.

The biggest challenge for Creighton might actually be on the football field for the next two years. He played tight end during his career at CU, but he will be assisting defensive line coach Romeo Bandison, helping him develop a strong group of young pass rushers and run stoppers.

"There is a ton of learning," he said. "I haven't even scratched the surface. I've just started getting to the terminology of it.

"Just getting to the whole mind set of when I'm watching film, I'm so used to watching the defense for how to scheme against it instead of trying to scheme as a defensive guy. Just in terms of my overall football knowledge, I think it will help a lot."

Former Arizona State wide receiver Skyler Fulton will serve as the offensive graduate assistant. Fulton spent time in the National Football League with three franchises.

Creighton said he also hopes to help special teams coach Kent Riddle in any way he can. He said it is unrealistic to think he will earn an assistant coaching job at CU in the near future, but he hopes to coach at his alma mater one day.

He said he also wants to get out see more of the college football world, experience other traditions and big games. For now, he is happy to have achieved one goal in a list of many.

"That was my goal from the start but to get a graduate assistant job at a good program right out of college is pretty hard," Creighton said. "So I just went down there. Honestly, I don't think I could have come here and been a grad assistant without going down there and doing the weight room work because I just got a feel for the hours and things like that."



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