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Coach puts retirement on hold once again for CU

By Patrick Ridgell
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Retirement must not suit Bob Foster.

If it did, and he wanted to spend his days golfing, relaxing, playing with his two grandkids, he wouldn't have so readily agreed to coach outside linebackers at Colorado in 2009. This is not the first time Foster, 68, has come out of retirement to coach again, and he wouldn't say if it'll be his last. What's clear is he feels a tight bond with CU head coach Dan Hawkins. That's why he's coming here.

"I love coaching, obviously, and I've done it forever," Foster said Monday night from his home in Oregon. "I've retired and gone back four or five times now. I just missed the players a lot. I missed the enthusiasm in their eyes. They make me feel younger than I am.

"But coach Hawkins is the biggest reason I decided to try to help him. He means so much to our profession ... He means so much more than the typical winning and losing deal. He means so much for what the kids can gain at the university with him and for their futures. That's the main reason I'm going to try to help him in any way I can."

Foster's coaching career spans more than 40 years, including 19 on the staff at UC-Davis. Foster was its head coach from 1989 to 1992, during which he went 30-1-1. Among his past pupils are Oregon athletic director and former coach Mike Bellotti, Boise State's Chris Peterson and Hawkins.

Foster said he was "destined to be a coach." His father was a coach who played at the College of the Pacific for one of college football's greatest names ever — Amos Alonzo Stagg. When Foster was born, Stagg sent a \$10 check with a note on which he wrote, "Bob, this will start you toward your college fund."

Foster attended some of CU's practices in April. He was even among those who caught the flu bug that hit so many coaches and players during spring drills. He said when former offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich left for Oregon after spring football, he had a feeling he might get a call from Hawkins to gauge his interest.

"He was like, 'OK, hey, how about coming back here for a season and helping us,'" Foster said.

Defensive coordinator Ron Collins, who coached CU's outside linebackers the past three seasons with former graduate assistant Andy Avalos, also called to discuss the possibility.

"I would not have thought of doing it if he and coach Hawkins hadn't gotten together and said we'd like to have you help us," Foster said.

Foster previously came out of retirement in 2002 and 2006 to coach linebackers at Cal, where he worked with defensive coordinator Bob Gregory. Foster also returned to coach linebackers in 1998 and 1999¹ at Oregon, and in 1995 as a defensive consultant at Willamette University in Salem, Ore., where Hawkins was the head coach.

Foster said it was clear Hawkins, a college fullback, could be a coach one day. It became more clear when Hawkins coaxed Foster to Willamette, Foster said. One time during two-a-days, Foster said Hawkins gathered the team for a

meeting and had assistants pass out pencils and paper, and instructed the players to write notes home to their parents to tell them how things were going.

Foster will come to Boulder June 18 for two weeks, then return for good in late July.

Asked what Hawkins needs him to do, Foster said, "I can't really say. I'm sure that'll come.

"I'm reading the playbook. They have a great staff. I'm just trying to add whatever I can and do whatever I can to help."

He said he saw a good attitude among the players during his visit in April. He wants to approach his coaching in a "positive manner" that's intended to boost confidence and self-esteem.

"There's a belief they can do something," Foster said. "Boy, you have to have that."

CU will name Ashley Ambrose its wide receivers coach in 2010 after he tutors for the job in 2009. If Foster is to return for another season in Boulder, there must be more changes to the current staff.

Foster, for now, did not rule out anything.

"I retired and un-retired four of five times," Foster said. "So I never say never or always. I can't do that. It's not realistic. I don't know what's going to happen."

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