

Pac-12 Conference Football Media Days

Wednesday, July 26 2017

Mike MacIntyre Colorado Buffaloes

MIKE MacINTYRE: All right. We're excited about being here today. We are excited about our year coming up. We're starting practice Saturday. So it's here.

I brought two excellent young men that kind of epitomize our program at the University of Colorado. We have Derek McCartney, who is our starting outside linebacker. Fifth-year player who has played well for us. His grandfather is the original Coach Mack, and so it's really special having him.

We have our Tasmanian devil, I call him, Phillip Lindsay, who led our league in touchdowns last year. Hopefully he finishes out his career excellent, and he should be the all-purpose leader in the history of Colorado.

Both of those young men are from Colorado. Both of them have been there the same five years I've been there, and they've been the backbone of our program as players and as characters.

So I'm excited about having them here, and I'll take any questions at this time.

Q. So this season, the expectations are high.

MIKE MacINTYRE: What's exciting about having high expectations, we just set them. Now everybody else kind of sets them. We have a lot to prove. We're still a team that people don't believe in, and we'd like for people to believe in us, and the only way you do that is to put back-to-back-to-back things together.

That's what we plan on doing. What we want to do is be in the Pac-12 Championship game and not get our brains beat in like we did last year, so we'd like to finish it better.

Q. The breakout obviously happened last year for you guys, but when did it feel like it?

MIKE MacINTYRE: I felt like coming into last season I was saying it, and a lot of people were laughing at me when I said I thought we could be Pac-12 champions. I never told our team before that and I never said that publicly before last year. We had the makings to do that. We got there but just didn't finish it like we want to.



I felt like as the season went along, the back road games at Michigan and Oregon, we played well against Michigan but screwed it up. I think that gave our kids confidence that, wow, we can do this. Then winning the game with the style we did at Oregon where the year before we lost a lot of close games, we'd come back and lose at the end. To win it that way I think just propelled them and gave them confidence at the end of games last year that we were able to finish games often and be more successful.

Q. You had the steps to get to that point, maybe not even games --

MIKE MacINTYRE: The steps to get there, well, we'd exhaust the whole day with all the steps it took to get there. But one of the things we've done, I think we do a good job of evaluating talent. We had nine guys go to NFL teams last year. More than the five years put together previously. None of those guys were highly recruited guys, so we did a good job of developing, retaining players, is our belief in evaluating, and the standard they've set foundation-wise on our program and the expectations has been something that I see keep carrying on.

Q. Talk about the loss of your offensive coordinator and how that's impacted your team.

MIKE MacINTYRE: Yeah, Jim did a great job for us. We have an excellent guy in D.J. Eliot in the exact same scheme, the scheme I wanted to put him in when Jim came. One of my best friends is secondary coach at the 49ers, and that's how I got to know Jim. That's what I wanted to do. Similar scheme I ran when I was at the Cowboys as a secondary coach. And we've hybridized it, hybrid outside backer, safety, DB type of guy. So when we install the spread teams, I wanted to be able to two-gap and do all of that.

Jim did an excellent job of setting that up and getting it going. We weren't able to match the money that Oregon paid him. When he told me how much he was making, I said: Why are you even sitting here? Move on.

I hated to lose him, but D.J. Eliot ran the exact same defense at Kentucky. Kentucky made big strides here over the last year, and it was a big part of it. We're excited about getting D.J. here. He's played at Wyoming, and his wife at Westminster. So they wanted

to be at Colorado, which was really special for us.

Q. You obviously had the personnel to run that scheme last year, but you've lost a lot. Do you have the personnel to run it?

MIKE MacINTYRE: Yeah, we do. We do. We've recruited to it. That's what you do. You recruit to it and rebuild. We have what I consider six starters back on defense. Derek McCartney is one of the people I don't count as a starter. Isaiah Oliver, who I think is probably the -- I think is one of the corners in college football.

So we have those guys back. Rick Gamboa, who was one of the tacklers. We have two of our safeties back, Ryan Moeller and Fo, Afolabi Laguda. We call him Fo for short. Our defensive front is good. We've been able to red-shirt a lot of guys, build them up. We signed a couple of excellent junior college players that came in in the spring and played really well and they're athletic.

So we won't be as salty early on defense as we were last year, but as the season goes on we will. I think we'll be excellent on offense. We have our best offensive line we have. We have an exceptional receiving corps. We have a great running back. We have young quarterbacks that we feel are very talented so they just need to play their role. So I feel we'll probably win a little different way early. Instead of maybe 24 to 10 or 17, hopefully it will be more like 42 to 25 or 28 or something like that.

Q. Is your team going to do a lot more as far as penetrating the back fields and sacking the quarterbacks more frequently?

MIKE MacINTYRE: Yeah, we'll try to. We had one of the leading sackers last year, Jimmie Gilbert, that went out. We have Derek McCartney in the back who is a good pass-rusher. We feel like Tim Coleman is another young man on our team that's played well for us. So we'll be able to attack the back field. Hopefully we can get to the quarterback a little more than we did last year.

Q. How was it you were able to go from a guy that had one major college offer to someone you call one of the best players?

MIKE MacINTYRE: He's an unbelievable talent. He came fourth in the Pac-12 in the decathlon. He's just a freak athlete. He's very, very bright. In high school he played mainly receiver. He played a little bit of DB. And I thought he'd be a great corner because I thought he was so talented athletically. He was skinny and kind of little, and he had wide shoulders. Now he's 190 pounds and he's just grown into it.

He's played for us every year. He played as a

freshman, he played last year as a sophomore. If you watched the Stanford game last year, he covered them like a blanket and helped finish that game off. I feel like he's a phenomenal talent and excited to see him out there playing.

Q. A lot of teams are putting emphasis on social media, particularly Oregon. What are your thoughts on social media?

MIKE MacINTYRE: I think social media is good in our country. It's good and bad. Watch the news every day. There are pros and cons on that. But social media is something the kids are on all the time. I think it's a tool you can use. There are a lot of different tools in recruiting.

But still I think the best is meeting them in person, talking to them in person, and looking a young man in the eye to see if he's somebody that wants to be in your program and you want in your program. But social media is a factor of getting them excited about your school, for sure.

Q. When you talk about going back-to-back years and having success, what do you point to that makes you feel you that you guys have the ability to do that to start making people believers?

MIKE MacINTYRE: It's all about players. Players make plays, players win games. We just coach. But the players set the standard and the culture. We preach it to them, we believe in it and want them to trust us, but they have to buy in. These guys are bought in. We have a lot of good leaders coming back and a lot of good football players coming back. So it's all about the football players.

So I feel like we don't have to rebuild. We can reload. The way we've developed our program, we've red-shirted a lot of kids through the year. My belief is you win games when you have more red-shirt sophomores, juniors and seniors. You have an older team. The way we've built it, I think we'll always have an older team. So I'm excited about those guys that will be out there playing.

Q. You mentioned earning respect back-to-back, doing what you guys have done. Do you use being fourth in the media poll with your players as motivation? Do you ignore it altogether?

MIKE MacINTYRE: I think our kids have seen it. They've seen it all through. The season was over and different articles, different things have been said to them. You know, was that just a dream season? Was that just one thing? Was the Pac-12 really that good? Yeah, it's good. It's always good. It's just that we haven't been good for a long time, so everybody can't really say are they there.

They always talk about turnover on your players and staff. That happens on every team. About every two years you're going to have turnover. You're going to have good players go to the pros. So as a program, you're going to have to be prepared for that. That's part of it. I believe we have a program built well enough to sustain through that.

Q. What did your coaches and players learn from that Pac-12 Championship run?

MIKE MacINTYRE: What we learned from it is Washington's really good. Then we also learned from it that in the four games that we lost were all top ten teams, we weren't as good on the offensive line as their defensive lines were consistently. We have a lot of guys returning on our offensive line that are thirty pounds stronger in the squat and the bench. We have young guys that we've red-shirted and moved in. This is the best offensive line we've had in the five years we've been there. We're a good offensive line, and we have good depth.

So I think that will help us stay on track in those games better where we won't look so hodgepodge on offense like we did in those games. Then we'll be able to control the clock a little bit better and move and score. So I feel good about our offensive line and being able to handle that coming up.

Q. When you mentioned the experience last year and how important it was on the rise, I don't think there was any doubt that the defense was helped by the juniors and seniors.

MIKE MacINTYRE: Yes.

Q. But was there a difference that was made to transform those guys?

MIKE MacINTYRE: Well, we had very good talent. I remember when I was telling Coach Leavitt about coming to Colorado. I told him about all those sophomores we had that would be juniors, and then he would be able to work with them and mold them. Then they ended up being seniors. We got better and better, so that was a big part of it. He did an excellent job, there's no doubt.

But it still goes back to players and players buying in and believing and totally committed and 24/7, 365 that we talk about, and we were able to do that. We were able to red-shirt a lot of kids the last couple years and recruit some junior college kids that wanted to play in that system.

So I'm excited about what we'll do there. Like I said, we won't be as salty, but as the season goes along, we'll get better and better.

Q. You had to expect the people would go after him after last season?

MIKE MacINTYRE: Yeah, when he told me he was going to make \$1.4 million a year at Oregon, I said: Why are you standing here talking to me? You better take the job. With a guaranteed four-year contract. We couldn't match that. And I'm happy for him. He's earned the right to get that. And that's good.

Q. What are your thoughts on two-a-day practices?

MIKE MacINTYRE: I like it. I've been pushing for it for years. Our kids are there already all summer. So I like the basketball model. I started talking about this four years ago. The basketball model, they went to 40 days, I think 32 practices or something where they have a day off. I was for that. So football's the most physical. Why do we practice twice a day? Why do we hit twice a day? That makes no sense. We weren't even using it correctly. So let's spread it out, have a week off. Practice one time a day, have a walk-through in the afternoon, have a little more downtime for them in between practices, because you're not having to hurry it all in. You're still going to get your meeting times.

So I personally like it a lot. Some people don't. But I personally do. I think that it's better for the welfare of the player, and I've been saying it for a while.

Q. (Off microphone)?

MIKE MacINTYRE: I like it. Huddle, social media, internet. Kids having cell phones. They can come any time they want. You can text them now. Everything's sped up. Why do we wait and stay on the old calendar, which is totally antiquated to me now. Looking around, most schools have close to 15 committed. Some schools are completely already done. Why not sign them right now? They go into their senior year like they do in basketball. If they didn't want to sign, have the other one in February, so they can go on trips after their season's over.

Now, to me, it makes all the sense in the world. But we're moving slowly there. I think eventually you'll see that one day. Now that we have visits in June, April, and May. We didn't really want them all. We just wanted June to be an official visit. But it's a little bit harder on us as coaches and assistants because we're out recruiting, and you've got camps. I think if you would have just kept it all in June, it would have worked out well, and then had a signing date in July.

Q. How did your run last year impact recruiting? How do you see it impacting recruiting in the future?

MIKE MacINTYRE: It definitely impacted it. It impacted

it in the fact that we had a lot of good guys that we were recruiting and were admitted to us that had great senior years. Then other schools came in at a time that we started, a bigger named school at that time. Now that we were up in the national limelight. We're where we should be and hopefully we stay there. That helped those guys from going to those schools that came in and tried to take them from us. I think that was big.

You're talking four or five guys a year that kind of fall into that. So if you get those four, five, after years you've got 20. So that makes a big difference.

Q. You guys do a great job out of state.

MIKE MacINTYRE: Our state's awesome, but it's not real populated. So population drives players, so we're always going to recruit California hard. We're always going to recruit Texas hard, the Arizona area, and then, of course, Colorado. We'll mix and match other places with connections and that type of thing. The thing that does happen, you get a few more outside of those areas calling you saying, hey, I'm interested. Which helps get a guy or two a year that way.

Q. You mentioned the limelight, the lights don't get much brighter than the Broncos. You'll open against rival Colorado State. Biggest challenges heading into that match-up?

MIKE MacINTYRE: First of all, that's always an emotional game. They have an excellent football team coming back. Their offense is ranked high in the country. You know, they have an advantage this year. They're playing zero week at Oregon State. So that's a big difference to me. Then we're playing the first game. So we'll have to catch up with them a little bit.

Wish I would have known that way beforehand, because we would have put a zero week game and not made it the first game. So that's going to be different for us. So hopefully we'll be fresh and ready to go. But they're very talented. They have a phenomenal -- I blank on his name right now, but he's No. 4. I've watched the film. He's really good. They'll do a good job. So it's always an emotional, hard-fought game.

Q. What is the challenge of being at not your home venue?

MIKE MacINTYRE: Yeah, I tell you what, it's kind of fun for our kids. Both teams' kids, you can see them get excited about going and playing in the Bronco stadium. Both schools, though, would rather have it on their home site. No doubt. Both fan bases would too.

It's interesting in the game, if you've been to it, that the student bodies for games show up in droves. It's amazing. I mean, it seems like you have more

students at that game than you do at your home games. I think they want to get to Denver. It's the first week of the year. It's Labor Day. They've been in school for a little bit and kind of getting out. So it's amazing how they come in on bus after bus after bus, and makes it pretty exciting.

Q. Coach, four to five years ago, Colorado wasn't very competitive.

MIKE MacINTYRE: No, we weren't good at all.

Q. I like your honesty. Two years ago it was kind of like, yeah, the Buffs are going to upset them. And then last year happened where I think you were actually favored in some games. So every couple years you've elevated. It's been a slow thing, which I think is good. This year, where do you see yourselves as far as compared to last year where, yeah, they could do it maybe, they'll upset some people. And this year --

MIKE MacINTYRE: Right. Well, you know, I definitely believe we're a good enough team to win the Pac-12. That's our goal. We'll see what happens from there. But we've got to go do it. You can't just say it. You've got to work at it.

Our kids are excited. They're a good football team. We have a lot of good depth and good football players coming back.

I don't know how many games we'll be favored in or that type of thing, but I think we can beat everybody we play. We've just got to find a way to do it.

But like I was saying earlier, we just don't have the pedigree that some of the other teams do the last ten years. Our pedigree has been pitiful. Now we've just got a blip. So we need to turn that blip into year after year, and that's what we'd like to do.

Q. With the players after that season, you've seen probably a definite difference in their attitude?

MIKE MacINTYRE: Yes, I have. Their work ethic has been phenomenal. It's always been great, but this group of guys understand what was left by the legacy of the other young men, and they don't want a letdown, so I've seen a little bit more intensity. I've seen a little bit by the leaders, more involved, vocal.

And Derek and Phillip are both here, this is Derek's second time Derek to be a captain, and this is Phillip's third time. So we have two other captains on our team, it's their second being captain. So we have four guys out of our six captains that have been captains multiple times. Which you get a second chance to do it again, and you understand different things to do.

I really haven't had to say much at all. They've been leading by example and by vocal. That makes a big difference. They've held the standard higher. I don't hold the standard anymore. They set it. So that's probably the difference.

developed, and all of a sudden now he's 298 pounds and he's now growing hair on his chest and everything. He went from 16 to 18, so it's just different. So we're really excited about Colby.

Q. Do you run criminal background checks on guys? How do you approach that?

MIKE MacINTYRE: Yeah, we do look at the Twitter and those type of things. We look at that hard. The other thing that I do is we recruit a lot of kids in the same area and same schools. I have the kids on our team. What do you know about that kid? Coach, he's a good kid. Coach, don't touch him. When they have him come around for official visits or unofficial visits, I talk to the kids that are with them. Most of the time they'll say, Coach, we don't want that guy on our team.

So that's kind of how I do it. You learn more from the kids than you do adults or coaches, to be honest with you. They want their kids to get scholarships. They want them to. They're nice, but you know how it is. You can just ask other kids, and that's how we find out about young people.

Q. In recruiting, where are you most likely to notice a guy? Game film? Seven on seven? In a camp?

MIKE MacINTYRE: It's game film. The way it's designed, and we break down the huddle and watch that. So athletic ability, attributes to each position. Then we'll go see a person, see how big or how tall they are. Sometimes you do that in reverse. You're at a game and you say, oh, look at that sophomore. But most of our valuation for their athletic ability is done on the tape. Then we'll see them in person and say, well, how flexible is he or how quick is he? Then he looks better in person when you see him in person.

Q. The guy who came in the spring, Colby Pursell, what have you seen from him in his first spring?

MIKE MacINTYRE: Yeah, wow. Colby had a phenomenal winter than spring. He's farther ahead than I thought he would be. He's 298 pounds now. We gray-shirted him, and the reason we gray-shirted him is when we signed him, he's only 16. He will not turn 17 until September 20th of his freshman year. When I talked to him, I thought, oh, I don't know if I want to bring a 16-year-old kid to college. So we sat him. Now he'll turn 18 this September, and it's made all the difference in the world.

I'm anxious to see what he does early this fall. He might be one of our true back-up guys or one of our first guys to play at back-up center. I think he's got a great future ahead of him. So he's a guy that we found and evaluated him and realized he was young, and lot of people didn't offer him because he wasn't quite