

## CU Buffs ready for first scrimmage of spring

### QB Hansen aims to retain control of starting job

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Quarterback Tyler Hansen appears to remain solidly in control of the starting job as the Buffs head into their first big test of spring practices this afternoon with the arrival of the first of three scrimmages.

Hansen has thrown one interception through the first six practices this spring as he competes to hold on to the job he inherited from Cody Hawkins last fall, when Hawkins couldn't stop pairing every touchdown he threw with an interception.

Turnovers are being emphasized as much, if not more, than ever this spring. While Hansen is doing well in taking care of the ball, the defense is winning the majority of the competitions and scrimmage situations in practice regardless of who is playing quarterback.

That's not a good sign for a team that needs improvement from its offensive line, in particular, and the entire offense in general if it hopes to produce the first winning season under coach Dan Hawkins next fall. The CU offense has generally found rough going on the ground so far this spring. Improvement in the running game will certainly be something coaches are looking for this afternoon when the Buffs hit Folsom Field sometime after 4 p.m.

"It's going real good," Hansen said of the spring so far. "We're starting to get in sync with the receivers and get a good connection going. The passing game has really flourished the last couple days."

Hansen said the plan for today's scrimmage as outlined by coaches is playing it like a real game with the offense trying to drive down the field and score. There will not be a heavy emphasis on practicing specific game situations.

Hansen said he expects to be matched against the first-team defense on many, if not most, drives.

"We hate those guys right now," Hansen said. "I mean, we'll go up to the locker room and be like, 'Hey, it's all good.' But we hate those guys right now. Everything is competition right now, which is good because on Saturdays there is a winner and loser. You can't have two winners."

The Buffs will take 10 days off after today's scrimmage for spring break and will reconvene for the final eight sessions on March 29. The spring game is April 10.

Hansen chuckled when asked why the defense seems to be getting the best of the offense in a majority of practice to this point in spring ball.

"It's because they cheat," Hansen said. "All the drills and everything are designed for the defense, and they cheat."

While Hansen has been steady to this point, Hawkins appears to be equally as effective in most drills and scrimmage situations. He remains the more accurate passer but is not able to recreate the improvisational magic Hansen does when plays break down.

Hawkins continues to ignore or refuse requests for interviews. So it's impossible to know what he is seeing during practices or where he believes he stands in terms of trying to regain the starting spot. He did not participate in Tuesday's practice because of a class conflict that also had wide receiver Scotty McKnight and cornerback Jimmy Smith out.

Before spring ball began, Hansen said he hoped coaches would choose a starting quarterback heading into the summer months because it gives the team a clear leader through summer workouts and seven-on-seven sessions, which coaches are not allowed to attend. Hansen is still hoping it plays out that way, but he understands he has to prove he deserves to keep the job, and a big part of doing that is playing well today.

"I guess we're still competing and everything lies on every rep I guess," Hansen said. "So I've just got to go out there and do good on every play and play through your reads and be smart. Right now we're still competing."

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