

## Tyler Hansen looks like frontrunner at QB for CU Buffs

**Burnette, Hirschman competing with experienced quarterback**

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Tyler Hansen is going to make it tough on his Colorado teammates to take his job as the starting quarterback.

That much has been made obvious through the first five practices of spring ball.

The new coaching staff made it clear that there was no hierarchy at any position coming into spring practices. Players were listed alphabetically at each position. First team, second team and so on will come later, possibly at the end of spring. Maybe not until fall.

But Hansen was the starting quarterback at CU for an entire year until an injury prevented him from finishing last season. He took over the job in October 2009 and was injured in the seventh game last fall. And everything about his performance thus far says he is still the starter.

Coach Jon Embree was asked Monday to name players who have stood out in the early going. Hansen was on his list.

A different reporter asked Tuesday if certain players were filling the leadership vacuum that often exists at this time of year when last season's seniors are gone. Once again Hansen was on his list.

Quarterbacks coach Rip Scherer said he has been pleasantly surprised by his senior signal caller.

"I think Tyler, he has game experience, game maturity. I've been really pleased with him," Scherer said. "Some of the

things I saw on tape that were bad habits that I thought he needed to correct right away, he has taken to heart and improved on right off the bat. I like his leadership. I like his huddle demeanor. And he's done a good job playing within the pocket."

Staying in the pocket will be a key factor for whoever wins the job.

Colorado fans have grown accustomed over the past three years to seeing Hansen scramble, buying time in the passing game and making plays with his feet. That won't completely go away, but the West Coast offense the Buffs are installing demands quick decision making by the quarterback because it relies on timing with receivers much more than the offense CU used last year.

Junior transfer Brent Burnette and redshirt freshman Nick Hirschman are competing with Hansen this spring and both have done reasonably well. Hirschman said he loves the new offense and the new coaches and feels more comfortable than ever because the system is very similar to what he thrived in at the high school level.

"It's more pro style than we were last year," he said. "That suits me a little better than last year's offense did. I'm more of a traditional drop back kind of guy who can run around with his feet if he needs to, but I'd rather stay in the pocket and throw."

Burnette is probably having the most difficult time adjusting so far but only because he has more to. Burnette isn't just learning new footwork and terminology and the subtleties of how coaches like things done, he is also learning the tendencies of his teammates. They are things Hansen and Hirschman already know well.

"That's something we tried to do a little bit during our offseason conditioning. We'd throw a little bit in the bubble after we got done running, but it doesn't really compare to coming out here and strapping the pads on and going full against the defense and against a rush. That's something I'm still working on and figuring out how this receiver runs routes compared to another. That's just something that with time it will come."

Choosing a starting quarterback is well off in the future and probably won't happen until some time in training camp in August. Scherer is focused on building confidence in the three quarterbacks and teaching them to play at higher level of efficiency. Right now they are swimming in too much new information to play without having to think everything through in the process.

While the decision is still far off, Scherer says he knows on what factors it will be based.

"What will go into it is the guy that has leadership skills and also will handle the ball and value the ball," Scherer said. "You know, if you don't turn the ball over in this game, you've got a chance to win. So it doesn't matter how talented a guy is, if he is going to spray the ball around and turn it over, you've got problems. So value the ball and then making plays.

"The bottom line with a quarterback is how many times do you take the offense and cross the last line? If you can put the ball in the end zone, you may not be the most stylish guy doing it, but the bottom line is making sure the ball gets in the end zone."

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