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# Some observations from Colorado practice

By Ted Miller

BOULDER, Colo. -- Colorado's practice went well over two and a half hours Tuesday. There was plenty of hitting and suffice it to say that new coach Jon Embree leads an animated, vocal staff.

Some observations.

- There seems to be little question that Tyler Hansen will be the starting quarterback. He didn't have a great practice, but even then his command and presence stood out. Redshirt freshman Nick Hirschman seemed to lead in the battle with JC transfer Brent Burnette for the backup job.
- Two defensive players who stood out haven't done so previously in their careers: senior defensive tackle Conrad Obi and junior linebacker Douglas Rippy. Both pass the eyeball test and, more important, both have been consistently making plays. Obi, in particular, is intriguing: Athletic 310-pound defensive tackles are really, really nice to have.
- The offense ran better than it passed. Running back Rodney Stewart and company will benefit from a pro-style scheme that uses a fullback. Of course, seeing that the Buffaloes didn't use a fullback last year, the fullback candidates converted from other positions, including Tyler Ahles, who was in the rotation at linebacker last fall.
- Embree said before spring he would emphasize special teams and he's clearly following through, though that doesn't mean the special teams were consistently good.
- UCLA fans probably won't want to watch Colorado's offense this year: Sophomore receiver Paul Richardson, who transferred from UCLA after an off-field incident, appears poised for a breakout season. He's clearly the Buffaloes best receiver.
- Junior Ray Polk may have the inside track at safety, where he'd start beside senior Anthony Perkins, who's out with a knee injury. Cornerback still seems unclear among a gaggle of candidates, including senior Jonathan Hawkins, sophomore Deji Olatoye, junior Makiri Pugh and sophomore Jered Bell.