



Defensive tackle Will Pericak (83) will be in the middle of a fall youth movement.
Photo Courtesy: Joel Broida



Brooks: D-Line Body Count Ready For Fall Additions

Release: 04/13/2012 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER - Nowhere has Colorado's lack of spring depth been more apparent than in the defensive line, which means that nowhere on the roster will there be a more massive infusion of youth when August camp opens.

The Buffaloes signed a school-record nine defensive linemen (one, Derek McCartney, is scheduled to be a January 2013 enrollee) to finalize their 2012 recruiting cycle. Of the eight who arrive this summer, four are ends, which will nearly double the number of players defensive ends coach Kanavis McGhee basically has been working with since spring drills opened in mid-March.

McGhee's spring roster has consisted of six players - junior Chidera Uzo-Diribe, sophomore Juda Parker and four walk-ons. (Sophomore Cordary Allen, a defensive end who switched from offense, has been out with a shoulder injury.) The four walk-ons, McGhee says earnestly, "give what they can and you can most definitely see the progress from day one to where we are now, which lets me know they've got the temperament we're looking for. But it ain't easy."

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And it has been equally difficult for Mike Tuiasosopo, who coaches the defensive tackles. His daily spring body count has held steady at four, so the incoming four interior players will double "Tui's" total. Senior Will Pericak has seen his spring participation limited for reasons of fall preservation, while junior Nate Bonsu was held out because of off-season shoulder surgery.

Add the outside-inside numbers at McGhee's and Tuiasosopo's positions, factor in the lack of returning experience at both, and you can safely assume that preseason camp competition along CU's D-line will run miles beyond interesting.

In short, the Buffs need their incoming D-linemen to be their "Elite Eight," and Tuiasosopo promises all have been briefed on the possibilities that await them: "They've been told early if you want to play, then come and get you some. So, we'll see."

The only two proven returning players on the defensive front are Pericak and Uzo-Diribe. Tuiasosopo calls Pericak "a guy we can win with," while defensive coordinator Greg Brown said earlier this spring that Uzo-Diribe consistently had proven to be the one player who was the most difficult to block.

But beyond that pair, the experience level drops sharply and alarmingly. Parker played end as a true freshman, so he has at least that much game experience. There's still room for vast improvement, but Parker has had a productive spring, said McGhee: "It's amazing how six months makes a difference . . . you can kind of see that he was someone who understands what his role is; believe it or not, those two (Uzo-Diribe, Parker) are the veterans (at end). It's hard to say that about somebody in the spring of his freshman year, but it's a reality. The other guys who will be playing at that position won't have his experience. What I really like about him is that he's embraced that role and understands that it's a 'right now' kind of approach to the spring. He's shown it."

Parker entered spring drills with a list of improvements to make. "One was having a better football IQ, just learning formations and being a student of the game from film study and being with the coaches," he said. "And having a lot of 'reps' helped me increase that IQ."

His goals for August camp are to build on that, continue to play faster and have his technical skills "become second nature to me and become really fluid in my play."

Although his 2011 experience was somewhat limited (109 plays in nine games), Parker says even that has given him "an insight into the speed of the game" and will help him help the incoming freshmen. "That's what the coaches want - helping those guys out and getting them up to speed. We (he and Uzo-Diribe) will be young veterans."

The veterans along Tuiasosopo's interior will be Pericak and . . . Pericak. Tuiasosopo was hoping for a spring breakthrough from some returning players, but with only Saturday's spring game (5 p.m., Folsom Field) remaining, the wait is over. Former offensive lineman Eric Richter will enter August camp battling to find playing time as his senior season approaches. Sophomore Kirk Poston's size (6-1, 255) makes him "physically not where we need him to be," Tuiasosopo said. And of Bonsu, he added, "He's a guy who has to step up. He's on scholarship and he's gonna need to step up."

So McGhee and Tuiasosopo will amply stock the welcome wagon and sweep off the red carpet for these eight incoming D-linemen: Tyler Hennington (6-3, 275, Mullen); Kory Rasmussen (6-4, 260, Ewa Beach, Hawaii); Kisima Jagne (6-5, 235, Phoenix); De'Jon Wilson (6-3, 250, Washington, D.C.); Josh Tupou (6-3, 305, Long Beach, Calif.); Johnny Stuart (6-4, 250, Westlake Village, Calif.); Justin Solis (6-3, 300, Thousand Oaks, Calif.); and Samson Kofovalu (6-3, 250, Riverside, Calif.).

Tuiasosopo, who coached three defensive ends who became NFL draftees at his previous stop (Arizona), said he's never been in a situation of having to count on so many incoming freshmen to play such prominent roles in a D-line. And, he added, "I'd be curious to find one BCS school that signed nine defensive linemen."

Still, that group, he said, "gives us so much hope. They were kids we were on early and we got just about

everyone we were after . . . (but) it takes a special freshman to play and even more of a special freshman, in my mind, to play in the interior of the D-line.

"Think about it: when you were a freshman in high school going against a senior, you know what I'm saying? A kid has to have the temperament, the toughness, the skills . . . but I think it's all a part of the reason we got in on those kids. We could say if you want a job, come and get your job. There's going to be jobs here."

Added McGhee, who was Butkus Award winner Alfred Williams' opposite bookend on the Buffs' 1990 national championship team: "When we look at what we have coming back, there's not any depth there . . . when we were talking to those guys about what Colorado had to offer, a lot of them realized we were looking for guys who had the ability to come in and compete and give us something right away. We're hoping they're taking care of what they're supposed to take care of before they get here this summer so they'll have themselves physically in a position to compete for some playing time here. We're just thin all across the board . . . it's important for all of them to be ready to go.

"We just hope the maturity factor is there and they understand that they can't be like the normal freshmen because the team is depending on them. We hope the mental aspect is there and we can help them take care of the physical part - playing the game and getting them the speed and size they need."

SPRING DEPTH CHART: With only Saturday's spring game remaining, coaches have released what amounts to a [post-spring depth chart](#) - and in many positions it reflects how heavily the Buffs will rely on the incoming freshman class as well as the return of players who missed spring drills due to injury.

Nick Kasa's continued progress at tight end earned him the No. 1 spot there ahead of Kyle Slavin. The position will be reinforced in August by the addition of three freshmen.

Elsewhere on offense, Ryan Dannewitz is penciled in as a backup at right guard and right tackle, while a strong spring showing elevated D.D. Goodson into a backup role behind No. 1 tailback Tony Jones.

On defense, Brady Daigh is listed as the No. 1 Mike (inside) linebacker in the absence of Doug Rippy, who missed spring work while rehabilitating from knee surgery. Rippy is expected to be cleared to begin full conditioning work by early June.

The No. 1 cornerbacks are Greg Henderson (left) and Josh Moten (right), while Ray Polk (free) and Parker Orms were listed as the No. 1 safeties. Orms missed most of spring practice with a hamstring injury.

Both the kick and punt returning positions are on hold until August camp and the arrival of the 2012 freshman class. And with eight defensive linemen due to check in, change also is expected in that area.

SEE LINK ABOVE FOR COMPLETE DEPTH CHART

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SHOW MENU



CU Buffs ready for Saturday's spring football game

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Three of the four largest crowds in the history of the Colorado spring football game have come in the past four years, but nobody is sure what to expect Saturday when it comes to interest in this year's offering.

Has a spring of closed practices created more intrigue that will bring Buffs fans out in droves for a 5 p.m., kickoff (KOA 850 AM), or will more fans opt out this year because the game is expected to feature only 30 live scrimmage plays along with situational work with many starters sitting out to protect themselves from injury or because they are already injured?

Saturday marks the first opportunity for fans to see Texas transfer Connor Wood play quarterback at Folsom Field, which is sure to attract some.

By all accounts, the former blue-chip recruit has done well this spring, making the most of his invaluable opportunity to take most of the snaps with the first-team offense while fellow sophomore Nick Hirschman recovers from his third foot surgery in the past nine months.

"Connor has been good," coach Jon Embree said. "He finished strong. His problem is he just needs to relax. At times he presses whether it's over-gripping the ball or trying to throw it real hard. He's just got to relax and spin it, but he had a good spring. I'm anxious to see Nick come back and see those guys compete and Shane (Dillon).

"It's fun when you have a quarterback competition because it forces them to really push themselves and really be on, every day, every pass counts."

Wood has been a fan favorite to earn the starting job in 2012 since he arrived in September of last season after finishing third in the summer quarterback competition with the Longhorns. He looks the part, has a work ethic that has impressed coaches and has started strong this spring after working mostly with the scout team last fall.

He is still early in the development stages with no college game experience to draw on and he faces a competition with Hirschman, who is popular among teammates and whom coaches characterized as being very competitive with former starter Tyler Hansen last summer before he was injured.

"My expectation coming in here was to execute as great as I can," Wood said. "I don't think in some areas I did that at points during spring ball. So I want those plays back, those periods back where I didn't do too well.

"I'm happy about how we did. Obviously, we've got to finish (Saturday) but there are things we've got to improve on."

Wood was excited to learn Saturday will be his first opportunity to run on to Folsom Field in uniform behind Ralphie V, but it's obviously much more important to him to be able to make that run as the starter when the season opens Sept. 2 in Denver against Colorado State.

Wood said he has to be more consistent and continue to develop command of the offense to reach that goal.

"What we hope as an offense is that we want them to see consistency," Wood said when asked what fans can expect Saturday. "From an offensive standpoint we really want to have a good showing. You know, it really doesn't matter about the fans and who is watching. That's not what we're about. No matter if no people are watching or if there is a stadium with 100,000 people, we've got to do our thing and be consistent and execute. That's what we want to get out of it."

Embree has been forced to endure a spring with a depleted roster because of injuries and an overall lack of depth in the program he inherited 15 months ago. He said he hopes to get through the spring game without losing any more players to injuries and begin to prepare for fall camp and the arrival of reinforcements.

Notable

Former coach Bill McCartney will host a 2 p.m. luncheon Saturday in the practice bubble north of Folsom Field. Cost is \$10. An alumni flag football game begins at Folsom Field at 3:30. ... CU is hosting approximately 50 recruits Saturday, including as many as 35 who have traveled to Boulder from other states to watch the Buffs' spring game and see the school.

CU Buffs to learn if they're up to speed, health in spring game

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — Especially in light of the season-ending knee injury suffered by standout wide receiver Paul Richardson early in the week, Colorado football coaches may keep their fingers crossed during today's 5 p.m. spring game at Folsom Field.

"First of all, I want our guys to come out of the spring game healthy," CU offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy said. "Secondly, I want them to play fast. Have fun and play fast. I don't want them to be tight because there are a few people in the stands."

There is no admission charge to the spring game or to the CU alumni flag football game, which is scheduled to begin at 3:30 p.m. The 2 p.m. luncheon and pregame rally hosted by legendary Buffs coach Bill McCartney in the practice bubble costs \$10 per person.

The previous 14 spring practices were closed, so this is the only opportunity for the public to see Colorado in anticipation of its second season under coach Jon Embree.

Embree said the spring game will have about 30 live scrimmage plays, 20 or so "7-on-7" plays and various situational plays. Some players who have been on a spring-long "pitch count," as Embree calls it, may see limited action or not play at all.

Tom Kensler, The Denver Post

The Field House — Blogs — The Denver Post

APRIL 13, 2012, 11:29 AM

Embree happy with Kasa's transition to tight end

By **JOHN HENDERSON** |  No Comments

BOULDER — Colorado Jon Embree likes what he sees in the learning curve of senior Nick Kasa, a washout at defensive end who's making the transition to tight end.

"It started way up then went way down and now it's way up," Embree said of his learning curve. "That's a good thing. Nick made some real big catches (Thursday). He's starting to get a feel for things. He's a natural athlete and has good size."

Embree, of course, has taken a special interest. He played tight end at Colorado and in the NFL, a source of pride. Sometimes, uh-huh, too much.

"His problem is he's trying to play the hardest position on the field," said Embree, trying to keep a straight face. "Everybody knows that's where you put your best athlete. His mental errors have been pretty minimal. It's just catching the ball and technique stuff."

Other observations, I asked Embree how his offensive line looked. This was six days after I watched Colorado State give up 27 sacks in a 2-hour, 15-minute scrimmage.

"They've done well," Embree said. "They're the veteran group of the team."

Punt return remains a major issue. Basically he has found no one. Asked who his punt returnees will be, he said, "I don't think they're on campus yet. P-Rich (Paul Richardson) was doing some of that. Keenan (Canty) has been back there some. As I said the other day, he's getting that orange tuxedo ready for prom."

ARTICLE PRINTED FROM THE FIELD HOUSE

<http://blogs.denverpost.com/colleges/2012/04/13/embree-happy-kasas-transition-tight/23626/>

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The Field House — Blogs — The Denver Post

APRIL 13, 2012, 11:15 AM

Numerous key players out of Colorado's scrimmage Saturday

By **JOHN HENDERSON** |  No Comments

BOULDER — Colorado's 5 p.m. scrimmage Saturday at Folsom Field will feature about 30 live scrimmage plays, 20 snaps of 7 on 7, some red zone and kickoff coverage drills. After last season's injury-plagued 3-9 season and this spring, I asked Embree Thursday what he hoped to see Saturday.

"I want to see everybody walk off the field," Embree said. "That's all I want to see. The work is in."

It's not just Monday's loss of star receiver Paul Richardson for the year with a torn ACL. There's a laundry list of players who won't play: quarterback Nick Hirschman (foot), cornerback Jered Bell (knee), defensive tackle Nate Bonsu (shoulder), tailback Malcolm Creer (knee), linebacker Doug Rippy (knee) and defensive back Patrick Orms (hamstring).

The cornerback position remains thin, especially with starter Greg Henderson out of town for a family funeral. Two walk-ons — freshman Brandon Brisco of Bishop O'Dowd High in Oakland, Calif., and sophomore Harrison Hunter of Fountain-Fort Carson High — may be starting in the scrimmage.

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<http://blogs.denverpost.com/colleges/2012/04/13/numerous-key-players-colorados-scrimmage-saturday/23624/>

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The Field House — Blogs — The Denver Post

APRIL 13, 2012, 11:32 AM

Embree says QB Connor Wood “needs to relax”

By **JOHN HENDERSON** |  No Comments

BOULDER — Saturday’s 5 p.m. scrimmage at Folsom Field will be the public’s first real look at sophomore Connor Wood, the Texas transfer who has the inside track on injured returning backup Nick Hirschman, for the starting quarterback job.

“Connor’s been good,” Embree said Thursday after practice. “He finished strong. His problem is he just needs to relax. At times he presses. Whether it’s over gripping the ball or trying to throw it really hard, he’s got to relax and spin it. But he had a good spring and I’m anxious to see Nick come back and see those guys compete. It’s fun when you have quarterback competition because it forces them to really push themselves and really be on. Every day. Every pass counts.”

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