



Junior Josh Ford rushed for 141 yards in Saturday's spring game.

Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



Brooks: Buffs Conclude Spring Healthy, Competitive

Release: 04/15/2012 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER - Colorado football coach Jon Embree walked out of Folsom Field late Saturday afternoon with his top spring game wishes granted: Every player upright, no new injuries.

Beyond that, a fast-paced 42-play scrimmage tailored to meet Embree's key goal might have offered only a few selective snapshots of what the Buffaloes could look like when they open the 2012 season on Sept. 2 against Colorado State.

And that's probably a good thing.

Embree's focus Saturday was on the offense, which likely won't have its starting quarterback identified until mid-way through August camp or beyond. With sophomore Nick Hirschman missing all of spring drills with a broken bone in his right foot, transfer Connor Wood directed the No. 1 offense Saturday to a pair of 75-yard touchdown drives in its three possessions against a makeshift No. 1 defense that was missing two-thirds of its line (tackle Will Pericak, end Chidera Uzo-Diribe).

BUFFALO EXTRAS



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Still, Embree said he liked what he saw from Wood: "I thought No. 5 was sharp. He missed a couple of deep balls . . . but I thought he played well."

Embree said Wood, also a sophomore, was good with his decision-making: "That's always the No. 1 thing with quarterbacks . . . and I thought he was better with his accuracy in the shorter passes."

With Hirschman out of his protective boot and cleared to begin drop-back drills as well as continue throwing, Embree said he and his offensive staff would have to huddle to decide which QB takes the first snap with the first unit in August camp.

"All this (spring) did is give Connor an opportunity to get some 'reps' that he wasn't able to get, not being in training camp and being on the scout team (last fall)," Embree said. "Now they should be in there even; it should be a nice competition."

Knowing the defensive personnel CU puts on the field against CSU might not resemble Saturday's unit, Embree first wanted a final insight into several offensive areas. "I really wasn't defense-focused going into this," he said. "I just wanted to see some things out of our line and our targets in pass protection, knowing who to go to."

Players he said he specifically wanted to watch were Wood, freshman fullback Clay Norgard and sophomore receiver Tyler McCulloch. Of Norgard, he said, "It was good to see him do some things," and of McCulloch, Embree noted, "It was a pretty good performance."

Wood, who completed seven of his 10 passes for 137 yards and touchdowns to Jarrod Darden (42 yards) and Dustin Ebner (14), said he believed he and the Buffs "finished on a good note. We didn't have that many plays on offense (but) I think the productivity we had out of our first stringers was really satisfactory."

He acknowledged his misfires on a couple of deep throws, saying those "were my fault. There were some plays you want back and you have to keep working on, but as a whole I was happy about the way I played. After 15 practices I think I've done well. But there's still room to improve every day. You've got to happy with yourself, you can't be hanging your head because of a few bad plays. You've got to stay positive and work toward the next day and keep on improving."

The other QBs' passing stats: John Schrock, 3-of-8, 26 yards; Stevie Joe Dorman, 2-of-2, 34 yards. Schrock suffered the afternoon's lone sack.

REDISCOVERING THE RUN: The Buffs hope to be a better running team, but they'll need more work in August against an up-to-speed defensive line to get there. Embree said gauging spring progress in the ground game was difficult "because of the situation in the defensive line . . . I feel like we're targeted better on the guys we're supposed to block. I feel like the backs understand their fit and their footwork. We'll see when there's a full complement at the defensive line position in camp."

Nonetheless, he said sophomore Tony Jones was "very good" this spring and "separated himself from the other guys. The young guys will have to come in and catch him."

Jones, who had only four carries for 23 yards Saturday, called his game "a lot different" from last season. "I've tried to work on my pass protection, my routes and pretty much discipline everything that I do. I feel I'm definitely a better player . . . my speed is better, I can definitely break away."

But the afternoon's ground-game standout was junior Josh Ford, who rushed eight times for 141 yards and two TDs (43, 36 yards). Embree said Ford "has done well. He has to find a way to continue to improve, help us on special teams. We'll see what he does when the other kids get here in fall camp. You can't start slow; that's the good thing about having competition and depth at some of these positions. You can't start slow and ease your way into it. You have to come in training camp ready to go."

Ford also was a standout in the 2011 spring game, rushing 17 times for 164 yards, including a 56-yard TD. Linebacker Woodson Greer said the 5-9, 195-pound Ford "is slippery. He has great feet. If you're both going the same way he knows how to counteract that. He had a great scrimmage; he's amazing."

But Ford admitted he has work to do in a couple of areas that Embree and running backs coach Eric Bieniemy are mandatory for increased playing time - pass protection and route running.

"Coach 'EB' says anybody can run the ball," Ford said. "It takes the extra stuff to make you more valuable because anybody can run the ball. I've got to separate myself by getting better at routes. I need to get more elusive, I'm kind of like a robot. Tony (Jones) has an urgency in the pass game that we all have to have. 'Speedy' (tailback Rodney Stewart) was the No. 1 receiver on the team (and) I didn't have any catches last year."

Still, Ford impressed when he had the chance on Saturday. "I was pretending I was playing against Colorado State," he said. "I'm way better (than last year). I understand what the coaches want, I understand the mindset of the team and where coach Embree wants us to go. Just getting that little bit of experience I got in the Pac-12, it's left a taste in my mouth. That record (3-10) is definitely not where we want to be this year. We want a bowl game and to uphold the tradition of this program."

LOOKING AT THE BIG PICTURE: Coaches usually always come back to competition, and Embree returned to it in his post-practice comments. "I just thought the guys competed well and did what we asked them to do," he said, noting that entering spring drills he and his staff had identified 15-20 players they knew were going to have to play this fall and had focused on developing them and evaluating other players.

Also, Saturday's abbreviated scrimmage - the play total in the 2011 spring game was 105 - offered a chance for many players who might not see the field that often this fall.

Said Embree: "They got to play on Folsom Field, run out behind Ralphie . . . hopefully mom, dad and grandma and some of them were here to see that. It's a nice reward for some of those guys given the amount of work they've put in; a lot of time they toil in anonymity . . . they've practiced, gone through Coaches' Week. We wanted them to get an opportunity to play in front of family and friends.

"To me, this was like the fourth preseason game in the league - just get out and let the guys play, let some kids have an opportunity to show family and friends what they can do."

On a broader scale, Embree hopes the spring finale helps the Buffs' confidence and focus as they move into summer. He said Saturday, in reality, "is the beginning of our summer program. They'll have about a week off, we'll talk about some things from a school standpoint. I want them to finish in the right way, then let's get going on the football."

LINEBACKERS SHOULD BE SEEN AND HEARD: While Embree wasn't focused on defensive play, he couldn't help but notice Greer, a sophomore who made two unassisted tackles (one for a 5-yard loss).

"You could hear him playing, which is always a good sign for a defensive player," Embree said of the 6-3, 225-pound Greer. "He was physical and hitting."

Asked if being heard was a good thing, Greer said, "When I make good plays, I tend to talk a lot just to get everybody fired up, get the defense on a roll . . . I hope he heard my hits, too. I like to hit hard. So yeah, I think that's a good thing."

He also said he believes he has come "really far" this spring, particularly in the areas of "knowing the concepts, to attacking blocks, my technique . . . I think I came really far from last year - just levels above. I think I showed the coaches I'm able to compete at this level.

Elsewhere on defense this spring, Embree mentioned sophomores Brady Daigh (linebacker), Juda Parker (end)

and Josh Moten (corner) as players who gained notice.

IS THERE A BOWL IN THEIR FUTURE? The Buffs and their coach hope so. CU hasn't been involved in the postseason since the 2007 Independence Bowl. Returning to a bowl game in 2012 has been an off-season catalyst.

"I still think it's achievable, but how far we go towards that goal and how we accomplish it, we're going to lean on some guys coming in," Embree said. "So how quickly - and I told this to the seniors and the rest of the team - how quickly you're able to help them assimilate, help them know how to practice, know how to work, will help us get to that goal.

"If you want to look at it as they're the bad guy because they coming here to compete for a job, then we'll all have the same fate - we'll all be home for Christmas."

LET HIM ENTERTAIN YOU - AND DON'T STOP: Maybe Saturday was the breakout afternoon that Jarrod Darden has been seeking and his coaches have been awaiting. The 6-5, 210-pound junior caught the scrimmage's longest pass - a 42-yard TD toss from Wood - and his pair of catches for 53 yards was the best among nine receivers.

Embree said he hopes Darden's day "gives him a little enthusiasm going into camp . . . It was good to see him start to make plays."

In fact, it was "the first time I've seen him make plays. I reached for my Junior Mints at that point . . . like I was at the movies. I was glad to see some entertainment from him."

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SHOW MENU



CU Buffs' Jarrod Darden hopes to build off spring game success

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Entering his fourth year as a college football player, Jarrod Darden is still looking for his first career catch.

During Colorado's annual spring game on Saturday, the junior receiver took a potential step in that direction.

Darden caught two passes for 53 yards, including a 42-yard touchdown from Connor Wood.

"It felt really good, actually," he said. "Hopefully I can get that feeling more often. I don't deny it felt really good.

"Hopefully it's the start to something I can build on in the fall and prove to these coaches and the fan base that I can do the things I'm capable of."

Darden hasn't caught a pass in a game since 2007, when he was a junior at Central High School in Keller, Texas. He missed his senior year with an ankle injury, redshirted at CU in 2009 and has never advanced enough in the depth chart to get an opportunity since.

In fact, he really hadn't done a whole lot this spring, either.

"It was good to see him start to make some plays," head coach Jon Embree said. "This is the first time I've seen him make some plays. I reached for my Junior Mints at that point, like I'm at the movies. Glad to see some entertainment there from him."

With standout receiver Paul Richardson out for the season with a torn left ACL, the Buffs need receivers to step up. Whether Darden seizes that opportunity remains to be seen, but offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy liked what he saw Saturday.

"Obviously everything hasn't been going the way he would have liked it to, but the guys like him," Bieniemy said. "The guys rally around him and they all celebrated and that's fun to watch."

Nearly five years after his last meaningful catch, Darden hopes the next one is just around the corner.

"For now, I think the thing I need to do is do what I did today more often," he said. "It's a start, but that's all it is. I haven't done anything in a game and I'm working towards that."

Ford tough

Junior tailback Josh Ford ran for 141 yards, the second time in two spring games he's topped the 100-yard mark.

"I was pretending I was playing against Colorado State in the first game, just trying to help my team get to a bowl game," he said.

Ford is third on the depth chart at tailback, but it's not his running ability that's a question. He knows he needs to run better pass routes.

"That's something that hurts me," he said. "I'm kind of like a robot. I've got to get more elusive like Tony (Jones) in the passing game. I have to separate myself by getting better at routes."

The Buffs are looking to replace four-year starter Rodney Stewart. Jones, a sophomore, is the favorite to win the starting job.

"Tony separated himself from the other guys here (during spring)," Embree said. "The young guys (three true freshmen arrive in fall) will have to come in and try to catch him."

Hirschman on the mend

Quarterback Nick Hirschman, who missed the entire spring with a broken foot, is getting close to returning to the field.

Embree said on Saturday that Hirschman is about a week away from being able to drop back and work on footwork. Hirschman is out of a walking boot and has been throwing a bit already.

Greer impresses

Outside linebacker Woodson Greer made a good impression on Embree during the spring game.

The 6-foot-3, 225-pound sophomore was in on a couple of stops, including one for a loss. He's currently listed behind Jon Major at Sam linebacker.

"I liked how you could hear him playing, which is always a good sign for a defensive player," Embree said.

Embree also pointed out Brady Daigh, Juda Parker and Josh Moten as defensive players that stood out.

Notable

Junior receiver Paul Richardson, who tore his left ACL last Monday, said that he will have surgery on the knee on Monday. It typically takes at least six months of rehabilitation to recover after surgery. ... Defensive lineman Cordary Allen (shoulder) is the only other player scheduled for surgery. ... Kicker Justin Castor was 4-for-6 on his field-goal attempts. He made kicks from 37, 42, 34 and 50 yards and was short from 48 and 52. Starting kicker Will Oliver missed all of spring due

to shoulder surgeries. ... Senior defensive tackle Eric Richter had the only sack of the day, taking down John Schrock. ... Players report to fall camp on Aug. 6, with the first practice scheduled for Aug. 7.

CU Buffs' transfer quarterback Connor Wood shines in spring game

By John Henderson The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER —When you lose 86 percent of your offensive production from a 3-10 team, you take new production where you can get it. Second-year Colorado coach Jon Embree and an estimated 7,100 fans found production in Colorado's spring game Saturday at the perfect spot.

Quarterback.

It was the public's first glimpse at Colorado's quarterback of the future, and unlike projections at other positions, this starter isn't still in high school. Texas transfer Connor Wood provided some promise to a program that's projected to have a second painful rebuilding season.

Embree has repeatedly said the quarterback competition will remain open in the fall. However, with sophomore Nick Hirschman out this spring with another broken foot and Wood's strong spring, you can likely pencil Wood's name in the starting lineup for the Sept. 2 opener against Colorado State.

"I thought (No.) 5 (Wood) was sharp," Embree said. "He missed a couple deep balls, but I thought he played well."

Wood was 7-of-10 for 137 yards and two touchdowns. But, hey, it's a spring game. And with Colorado's injury-inactive list as long as the Nederland phone listings, it was a highly controlled spring game.

Most important, Wood looks like a major college quarterback. He's 6-foot-3, 225 pounds and is Colorado's tallest quarterback since Kordell Stewart in 1994, although the NFL listed him at 6-1.

Wood throws hard. He throws deep. He throws to secondary receivers. He led a 70-yard drive on his first possession, ending with a 13-yard TD pass to senior receiver Dustin Ebner.

Wood also hit junior Jarrod Darden with a 42-yard TD.

"I thought he did a good job with his decision-making," Embree said. "That's always the No. 1 thing with quarterbacks. And he was better with his accuracy on his shorter passes."

Wood's problem is rust. The third-year sophomore from Houston hasn't played since a high school all-star game in January 2010. He redshirted at Texas as a freshman in 2010 then transferred last August when he found himself too far down on Texas' depth chart.

Embree won't pardon his anxiety. His one criticism is Wood "tries too hard."

"I agree with that," Wood said. "I'm a perfectionist at what I do. I treat this thing like a job. Sometimes I hold that ball too tightly, but I've learned over the years that when you handle the game loosely ... you're going to play bad."

He has made an impression since he arrived on campus. He solidified that impression this spring.

"Connor has a cannon for an arm," sophomore receiver Tyler McCulloch said. "He'll lay it out there. He overthrew me by 10 yards on one of them."

The other crucial skill position, tailback, is now Tony Jones' to lose. The sophomore, the Buffaloes' top returning rusher at 297 yards, had 23 yards on four carries to end a good spring. Although a perennial spring game star, junior Josh Ford, had TD runs of 43 and 36 yards on his way to 141 total, Embree said, "Tony separated himself from all the young guys here."

How this all translates in the 2012 season isn't clear. From what Embree has seen, he won't back down from his goal of a bowl game.

"I still think it's achievable," Embree said. "But how far we go toward that goal and how we accomplish it, we're going to lean on some guys coming in."

John Henderson: 303-954-1299, or jhenderson@denverpost.com

1. Tony Jones. The 5-foot-7, 185-pound sophomore looks like a Rodney Stewart clone, and that's not all bad.

2. Pass rush. Junior Chidera Uzo-Diribe could become CU's first primo pass rusher since Abraham Wright six years ago.

3. Culture change. Coach Jon Embree says he and his staff could finally concentrate on coaching football than worry about external clutter.

1. Overall health and team depth. The inactive list for Saturday's spring game numbered 15 players. The incoming 28-man freshman class can't get here soon enough.

2. QB competition. The Nick Hirschman vs. Connor Wood battle was to be the highlight of spring drills. But Hirschman (foot) sat out after undergoing his third surgery since last summer.

3. Stepping up at cornerback. This was to be a big spring for sophomore Jered Bell and redshirt freshman Sherrard Harrington. But Bell (ACL) was out and Harrington (hip) wasn't 100 percent.

1. WR Nelson Spruce. The redshirt freshman (6-2, 195) from California dazzled in the spring and may be the favorite to replace injured Paul Richardson.

2. OG Alex Lewis. Coaches said before the spring that the 6-6, 285-pound sophomore has a bright future. He didn't disappoint.

3. LB Derrick Webb. The 6-foot, 230-pound junior is finally understanding the nuances of the game.

Tom Kensler, The Denver Post

CU Buffs' progress on offense pleases coordinator Eric Bieniemy

By Tom Kensler The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

A unanimous All-American running back for Colorado in 1990 and later a Buffs assistant coach, Eric Bieniemy returned to CU on Dec. 6, 2010 as offensive coordinator and running backs coach. Bieniemy coached the previous five seasons with the Minnesota Vikings. He sat down with The Denver Post to talk about spring drills.

Q: How much progress were you able to make this spring?

A: "If you compare this to where we were at this time last spring, we're a lot farther along. Guys know what to do and how to do it. They're striving to do it the right way all the time, and that's huge. We're coaching more football than trying to organize and show guys how to practice."

Q: Everybody wants to know about quarterback Connor Wood, the transfer from Texas. He he met your expectations this spring?

A: "Is he where we want him to be at this stage? Yes. But he still has a long ways to go, and we don't have a game tomorrow. We had 15 spring practices to get him ready for the fall. He's had his good days and his bad days. But the thing I appreciate about Connor is, he learns from mistakes. That's a big bonus, a big plus. He's very sharp."

Q: So, your intention during the spring was to pull Wood even with injured sophomore quarterback Nick Hirschman (off-season foot surgery) so they can go at it in August?

A: "That's right. Competition breeds success. We want to make sure that position provides the competition to allow each player to flourish and grow."

Q: What did Wood do well?

A: "He's doing a great job of managing our offense. He has also taken on the role of being a leader. When he's out there, he's the field general. But obviously, when you hear a play for the first time, you're going to struggle. So the first time we install something, he might not get it. But the next day he will correct his mistakes. That's all you can ever ask of a player."

Q: It sounds like you're pleased with what you have at quarterback and you're looking forward to the mano-o-mano battle in August when Nick is healthy.

A: "There's no question that Connor (6-foot-3, 225 pounds) and Nick (6-3, 230) both have the physical structure you're looking for at that position. It's a matter of having the knowledge and confidence and belief that you can get it done."

Q: Has sophomore Tony Jones solidified himself as a featured running back?

A: "Tony has done a great job of running the ball and catching the ball out of the backfield. The thing I'd like Tony to continue to do is gain consistency with pass protection. To take his game to another level, he has to become a dominant blocker."

Q: Coaches talk about sophomore Alex Lewis as Colorado's next great offensive lineman. Will he be a tackle or a guard?

A: "We have him at left guard and he's done a heck of a job. He's very athletic. He can move. He's competitive. He's got that nastiness about him. He loves to have a ballcarrier running the ball behind him. The sky can be the limit for him. We've got Alex at guard and (David) Bakhtiari can stay at left tackle. But we want all those guys to be flexible, interchangeable."

Q: Who replaces Ryan Miller at right guard?

A: "(Converted center) Daniel Munyer is there and he's also doing a heck of a job. We're not very big as far as bulk. But we'll have a very, very athletic offensive line. And the thing about this group is they all played last year. As a group, they're the heart and soul of what we're doing on offense."

Q: Nick Kasa, the former national blue-chipper from Legacy High, has had a star-crossed year and, as a senior, this is his last shot. Does the move from defensive end to tight end give him a chance to finish his college career with pride?

A: "When we moved Nick to tight end at the end of last season, we didn't know what to expect. But the thing he's done every day is improving. ...He wants to be known for something. I'm expecting him to have a big year for us."

Q: Losing Paul Richardson to a season-ending ACL tear a few days ago was a huge blow. Can the young receivers such as sophomores Keenan Canty and Tyler McCulloch and redshirt freshman Nelson Spruce step up?

A: "All have elevated their game. But I'll tell you what, Nelson Spruce has probably come out and been the surprise. He has a savvy-ness about him. He has established himself to be a factor for us this fall. He's a tough football player. That's what we're always looking for."

CU Two-Deep offense this fall?

The Denver Post's CU beat reporter Tom Kensler takes a stab at what Colorado's two-deep depth chart may look like for the Sept. 1 season opener against Colorado State:

QB

Connor Wood, 6-3, 235, Soph.

Nick Hirschman, 6-3, 230, Soph.

TB

Tony Jones, 5-7, 185, Soph.

Davien Payne, 5-11, 225, Fr.

FB

Christian Powell, 6-0, 250, Fr.

Clay Norgard, 6-1, 240, Fr.

WR (X)

Tyler McCulloch, 6-5, 210, Soph.

Jeffrey Thomas, 6-3, 190, Fr.

WR (Z)

Nelson Spruce, 6-2, 195, Fr.-RS

Keenan Canty, 5-9, 160, Soph.

LT

David Bakhtiari, 6-4, 295, Jr.

Alexander Lewis, 6-6, 285, Soph.

LG

Alexander Lewis, 6-6, 285, Soph.

Kaiwi Crabb, 6-3, 285, Soph.

C

Gus Handler, 6-3, 290, Jr.

Kaiwi Crabb, 6-3, 285, Soph.

RG

Daniel Munyer, 6-2, 290, Soph.

Ryan Dannewitz, 6-6, 310, Sr.

RT

Jack Harris, 6-5, 305, Jr.

Ryan Dannewitz, 6-6, 310, Sr.

TE

Nick Kasa, 6-6, 260, Sr.

Austin Ray, 6-6, 235, Fr.

PK

Will Oliver, 5-11, 195, Soph.

For CU Buffaloes' defense, plenty of opportunity remains

By Tom Kensler *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*

Posted:

DenverPost.com

Greg Brown is in his third stint with Colorado, but first as a defensive coordinator. He coached CU's secondary for three seasons (1991-93) under Bill McCartney and for four seasons (2006-09) under Dan Hawkins. Regarded as one of football's keenest defensive minds, Brown coached 15 seasons in the NFL, with stops in Atlanta, San Diego, Tennessee, San Francisco and New Orleans. He talks about his impressions of spring ball from the defensive perspective:

Q: Until the 28-man recruiting class arrives this summer, CU's roster is thin along the defensive line and in the secondary. With those holes, what were able to accomplish during spring drills?

A: "We got a look at guys that will be able to help us this fall. We developed a little chemistry with each other. We had to replace guys that moved on and it was time to see guys step up and filling roles and see how we all fit together."

Q: Is the defense ahead of where it was last year?

A: "We think we are. The proof will be in the pudding, but we think we are. As a staff, you always think the unit is further along in the second year. Everybody knows what the expectations are. Everybody is more familiar with the schemes, etc."

Q: How did the young cornerbacks look? I'm sure you were disappointed in not having Jered Bell (ACL tear in first week of August) on the field.

A: "That was really unfortunate that he couldn't go. We need him to come in and help us. Jered was at the point of winning the starting job when he got hurt...Sherrard Harrington (redshirted last fall with hip fracture) has been hit or miss with injuries this spring with that same hip problem. Harrison Hunter (sophomore transfer from Fort Lewis) has done a good job. He's head's up. He's got some quicks. He's learning the system, learning how to play. We'll see how he stacks up with all the guys we have coming in."

Q: You must look forward to getting the five incoming freshmen this summer. Two national top-100 signees at cornerback, Kenneth Crawley and Yuri Wright. That's impressive.

A: "Opportunities are certainly there for anybody. We have a lot of positions open - 'Jobs: Come take 'em' signs for our defense. If you want a job, come take it.' But for guys that were here in the spring, that has to help them. We're going to have all those guys in the front end (defensive line) and back end (secondary) that will have a chance to do what Greg Henderson did last year as a freshman cornerback - there's an opportunity so take the job. We're not going to play favorites. The freshmen all will be Buffs just like everybody else. Now, show us what you've got."

Q: This must be a big year for sophomore linebackers Brady Daigh, Woodson Greer III, K.T. Tu'umalo and Lowell Williams because the starting trio this year is comprised of two seniors and a junior. Did the sophomores make the progress in the spring you anticipated?

A: "There's no question that it's time for guys to step up and be counted upon. You certainly did see some progress taking place. We're excited to see the progress, but they're in a group where we're not there yet."

Q: You gave another sophomore, safety Kyle Washington, a lot of work at linebacker? Why?

A: "We wanted to see if linebacker is Kyle's position. He made good progress at linebacker. He can play safety and he can play linebacker. Once you get to third-down coverage, those positions become so similar."

Q: You lost a huge senior class. How's the senior leadership on defense?

A: "With (defensive tackle) Will Pericak, (linebackers) Jon Major and Doug Rippy, and (safety) Ray Polk, we feel we have a few leaders on defense, and strategically in the right spots. We're lucky that way."

Q: Getting back to that sophomore theme, how are your young defensive ends Chidera Uzo-Diribe and Juda Parker looking?

A: "Chidera has had a standout spring. He's had a breakout spring. His spring could be similar to last year with what happened with Doug Rippy. All of a sudden, things click and he becomes 'the man' and blossoms and take command. Juda Parker has progressed and he will continue progressing. He can run, he comes off the edge."

Q: What's been the biggest downer of the spring?

A: "Having Parker Orms hurt (torn hamstring on the third day of spring practice). He's had issues all up and down the leg. That's a shame. You look back at last fall, and every game (six) he played in, we either won the game or had a chance to win. We knew as a staff that we could call things when he was in the lineup that we couldn't call when he was out. He's tough, he's smart, he's very instinctive. We need him on the field."

CU Two-Deep defense this fall?

The Denver Post's CU beat reporter Tom Kensler takes a stab at what Colorado's two-deep depth chart may look like for the Sept. 1 season opener against Colorado State:

LEFT DE

Will Pericak, 6-4, 285, Sr.

Josh Tupou, 6-3, 305, Fr.

NT

Nate Bonsu, 6-1, 300, Jr.

Justin Solis, 6-3, 300, Fr.

RIGHT DE

Juda Parker, 6-3, 245, Soph.

Kisima Jagne, 6-5, 235, Fr.

JACK (OUTSIDE) LB

Chidera Uzo-Diribe, 6-3, 255, Jr.

Samson Kafovalu, 6-3, 250, Fr.

MIKE (INSIDE) LB

Doug Rippy, 6-3, 240, Sr.

Brady Daigh, 6-2, 245, Soph.

WILL (INSIDE) LB

Derrick Webb, 6-0, 230, Jr.

Kyle Washington, 6-1, 220, Soph.

SAM (OUTSIDE) LB

Jon Major, 6-2, 240, Sr.

Woodson Greer III, 6-3, 225, Soph.

LCB

Yuri Wright, 6-2, 175, Fr.

Kenneth Crawley, 6-1, 170, Fr.

FS

Ray Polk, 6-1, 205, Sr.

Marques Mosley, 6-1, 175, Fr.

SS

Parker Orms, 5-11, 195, Jr.

Terrel Smith, 5-9, 195, Soph.

RCB

Greg Henderson, 5-11, 180, Soph.

Jered Bell, 6-0, 195, Soph.

P

Darragh O'Neill, 6-2, 185, Soph.

The Field House — Blogs — The Denver Post

APRIL 14, 2012, 7:21 PM

Goal of a bowl game unites CU Buffs

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

BOULDER — “It Happens Every Spring” is the name of a 1949 movie comedy but it could apply to Colorado sophomore tailback Josh Ford.

The former Mullen standout (5-9, 205) stole the show for the second straight CU spring game, this time running for 141 yards on just eight carries Saturday night at Folsom Field. Ford also scored twice, including a 43-yarder.

Sophomore Tony Jones (5-7, 185), who is projected as the 2012 starter at tailback to fill the shoes of four-year starter Rodney Stewart, was purposely limited to four carries. He netted 23 yards.

“I just read what the defense gave me,” Ford said afterward. “I just came out here to finish (the spring) strong. Speedy (Rodney Stewart) was a great running back. It’s in the hands of me and Tony (Jones). We encourage each other.”

Playing in a bowl game has united the team, Ford said. Colorado, 3-10 last fall in the first season under coach Jon Embree, has not played in a bowl game since losing to Alabama in the 2007 Independence Bowl.

“Last year, sitting at home (during the holidays), I don’t want to disrespect anyone,” Ford said, “but some of the teams playing in bowl games, I’d never heard of those schools. We’re the University of Colorado. We have to get that swagger back.”

Sophomore quarterback Connor Wood, a transfer from Texas who was playing in his first game-like conditions since a January 2010 high school all-star game, looked sharp. The 6-3, 235-pounder completed 7-of-10 passes for 137 yards and two touchdowns.

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