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CU fullback Evan Harrington is looking good in Buffs' backfield

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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BOULDER — Apart from blocking, Colorado hasn't gotten much punch from its fullback since Lawrence Vickers headed off to the NFL after the 2005 season.

That could change in a big way this fall.

Evan Harrington, a 5-foot-11, 230-pound senior and former linebacker, is turning heads during August camp with powerful runs and smooth receptions. And yes, he is a punishing blocker as well.

Quarterbacks coach Rip Scherer said the physical presence of Harrington makes fullback one of the strengths of the team.

"To me, the guy on offense that has made the biggest improvement from the start of spring practice to now is Harrington," Scherer said Wednesday after a two-hour practice. "He's gone from being a good fullback to being a way-above-average fullback."

Even more impressive is the fact that, until spring drills, Harrington had played solely at linebacker since 2006 — his senior year at Bowie (Md.) High School in suburban Washington, he

split his time between linebacker and running back.

"I always thought linebacker and fullback are about the same thing — there's a lot of contact," Harrington said with a grin.

Harrington played two years of linebacker at College of the Canyons, a junior college just north of Los Angeles, and earned all-conference honors as a sophomore with 85 tackles and seven sacks. Considered one of Colorado's best gets of its 2010 recruiting class, Harrington was expected to make an immediate impact last fall in his first season with the Buffaloes. As it turned out, he was mostly relegated to special teams, logging just six snaps on defense.

Polite and conscientious, Harrington went to CU's new coaching staff before spring practice and asked to get a trial at fullback in the new pro-style offense.

"I was trying to find a place where I could help the team be special," Harrington said. "I'm happy. I'm having fun. Last year was kind of tough not playing a lot."

If August camp is an indication, look for Harrington to be a receiving threat out of the backfield.

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"I spent a lot of time in the summer catching footballs from our quarterbacks," Harrington said. "I'd have them throw the ball as hard as they could at me every day until I got confidence in my hands. In the spring, Coach (Eric) Bieniemy would get on me when I dropped a pass."

"Evan is a guy that will listen," Bieniemy said. "He has really taken to the position. He's going to help us."

Footnotes. Today's practice, scheduled for 9:30-11:30 a.m., is the final session of August camp open to the public. . . . Scherer said the team's top backup quarterback, redshirt freshman Nick Hirschman, is expected to be cleared for practice next week. Hirschman sprained his left ankle last week and has been wearing a protective boot. . . . At his request, junior Makiri Pugh switched Wednesday from cornerback to wide receiver — a move, he said, that could become permanent. Pugh (5-11, 190) sat out the 2010 season in Boulder as a transfer from Georgia. "It looked like I wasn't going to contribute on defense," Pugh told reporters.

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The Field House — Blogs — The Denver Post

AUGUST 18, 2011, 8:42 AM

Two-minute drill becoming a focus of CU camp

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments



Paul Aiken, The Camera

Tyler Hansen and CU's offense put a lot of work into the two-minute offense.

BOULDER — Colorado spent a large portion of its two-hour practice Wednesday on the two-minute drill.

Bufs coach Jon Embree explained to reporters afterward:

“We’re doing it as a form of conditioning,” Embree said. “And working on different situations, being aware of a few things.

“We wanted to work on field goals with no time on the clock. We wanted to work the 10-second runoff (game clock reduced by 10 seconds if a penalty is assessed); we’ve had that in the (NFL). I just wanted to get them introduced to that and understand what the rule is, how they need to react, what we need to do.”

How did the offense look in the two-minute stuff?

“They did alright handling the situations,” Embree said. “We need to better shape, better running. I know they’re tired, but they have to push themselves. But for the most part, I’m pleased.”

CU Buffs' Will Pericak finds niche on D-line

Former Boulder High TE had 45 tackles, three sacks in 2010

By Joshua Lindenstein Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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Anyone who watched Will Pericak clear space in the lane for Boulder High's basketball team like he was Paul Bunyan felling trees knew he had a bright future ahead of him on the football field.

But playing defensive tackle? That wasn't even on the BHS tight end/linebacker's radar back then. He planned on catching passes for the Colorado Buffaloes.

It didn't take Pericak long to realize once he got on CU's campus, though, that his future lied elsewhere.

"I weighed 260 by the time I was done with my first summer here," Pericak said Wednesday. "That was about the heaviest tight end we had, and I was just a freshman coming in. It wasn't hard to see that I wasn't going to be a tight end or, if I was, it was going to be a blocking tight end."

Three days into his first fall camp he moved to defensive line, and three years later the 6-foot-4, 285-pound redshirt junior is helping anchor a front four that is shaping up as one of the Buffs' strengths.

Along with its offensive counterpart, the defensive line was the crew mentioned by coach Jon Embree when asked Wednesday which position group he was most pleased with so far in training camp.

"Our D-line has been maligned, and I'm excited to see them play," the first-year head coach said.

The front four is one that, at least in the first two weeks of camp, has appeared to be two or three players strong at almost every spot, with a healthy dose of upperclassmen. Both defensive end Josh Hartigan (second team) and Pericak (honorable mention) were Associated Press All Big 12 performers a year ago.

Such a luxury is one the Buffs haven't always had in recent years, which is in part how Pericak got his start.

The Buffs were short on bodies up front in 2009 when Pericak broke into the starting lineup as a redshirt freshman. But he proved he belonged, becoming the first CU defensive tackle ever to start every game as a freshman.

He tallied 36 tackles and three sacks in 2009 and 45 tackles and three sacks in 2010.

"There was a need numbers-wise, but Will is a highly intelligent guy," said defensive coordinator Greg Brown, who was the Buffs' defensive backs coach in 2009.

You can add athletic and coachable to his list of attributes as well. All of those days at BHS of starring at tight end and on the basketball court helped turn Pericak into an agile player who isn't just good in the trenches but can scrape down the line and make tackles on the perimeter when needed as well.

"Especially with offenses spread out more ... this is a different era of football, and you've got to be able to move," Brown said. "And this guy can move and think on his feet."

Pericak, who was the Defensive Scout Team Award winner during his true freshman year in 2008, kept his starting streak alive last season as the defensive line increased its production over the year before.

Despite allowing more yards overall in 2010, the Buffs got tougher against the run and the defensive line doubled its sack output from 11 to 22.

Most of that sack production returns this season with Hartigan (seven) leading the way, and Pericak said the group has continued to improve in camp thanks in large part to a new coaching staff that includes Brown and defensive line coaches Mike Tuiaosopo and former Buff Kanavis McGhee.

"They're really hammering the technique and fundamentals, which is good," Pericak said. "I've seen the improvement from spring to now. Every day with these coaches we're getting better.

"We're definitely deeper."

Senior Curtis Cunningham (6-1, 285), who has started every game the last two years next to Pericak, also returns at tackle, though he was supplanted atop the post-spring depth chart by senior Conrad Obi (6-3, 310). Sophomore Nate Bonsu (6-1, 295) also got experience inside two years ago before redshirting last year with an injury.

On the outside, sophomore Chidera Uzo-Diribe (6-3, 240) figures to start opposite of Hartigan. But others, including junior Nick Kasa (6-6, 275), senior David Goldberg (6-1, 250), and true freshman Juda Parker (6-3, 250) have gotten reps in camp.

"As a unit, I feel like we're doing a lot better than we have (in the past)," Pericak said. "Everything starts up front with the front four. We kind of set the tone, and I think we're going to be able to show we can do it."

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CU Buffs' Jon Embree emphasizes late-game situation

By Joshua Lindenstone Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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Penalties committed in the final minute of a half that stop the clock will include a 10-second run-off. The opposing team has the option to take the penalty yardage and the run-off, just the yardage or to decline both. The clock restarts when the ball is again ready for play.

"We just wanted to get that introduced to the guys and get them to understand what that is and how we've got to react,"

The Colorado football team spent a good deal of time working on the 2-minute drill as the Buffaloes practiced in shorts and helmets on Wednesday morning.

But the main intent wasn't solely on getting a rhythm down for the offense and defense.

"We're doing it kind of as a form of conditioning and just some more situations, being aware of a few things," CU coach Jon Embree said.

The team worked multiple drives on getting the ball into position for field goals while leaving no time on the clock for the opposing team to answer.

Embree said he also wanted to make players cognizant of the new 10-second run-off rule in college football this year.

Embree said.

Pugh switches sides

Defensive back Makiri Pugh, who transferred from Georgia in June 2010 and sat out last season, was working with the wide receivers on Wednesday after asking the coaching staff if he could make a switch.

The 5-11, 190-pound junior hadn't been seeing much playing time on defense during training camp.

"We'll see," Embree said when asked if Pugh could contribute on offense. "It will be hard to evaluate him right now. I guess we'll have to find out more in the spring."

Moten shines

One name that hasn't been mentioned among the top four or five names vying for time at cornerback is that of Josh Moten.

But the 6-foot, 195-pound redshirt freshman from Carson, Calif., has turned heads with a quartet of interceptions in recent days. Two of those came during the 2-minute situations Wednesday -- one that resulted in a big runback and one in which he reeled in the ball while rolling on the ground.

"J-Mo's played well the last couple days," Embree said. "He's one of the few guys out there that catches it when he touches it. That's always good."

"He's doing a good job of being aggressive and being physical. So J-Mo has definitely put himself in the mix."

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