

nfl

Former CU Buffs quarterback Tyler Hansen fights for an NFL job

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It took four years, but for one glorious week former Colorado quarterback Tyler Hansen finally found a comfort zone in an 11-player huddle. In Tampa, Fla., of all places.

For all of the ups and downs during his Buffs career, he left his work week at the East-West Game last month with the hope his future could still have the NFL in it.

"It was funny, enough that I almost had to keep myself from laughing out loud," Hansen said. "I step in the huddle on the first day of practice on a team where I didn't know most of the guys and we had never played together and I'm just spewing it all out. I knew all the reads, all the adjustments, it was a really awesome feeling, just to be locked in like that.

"The other quarterbacks on the team — Dan Persa from Northwestern and Chandler Harnish from Northern Illinois — were like, 'What's up with these play calls? How do you know all this already?' I finally had to tell them it was the same offense I just ran for a

year. But it was so cool."

It was an offense that gave Hansen, who may not have always gotten to show what he could do with the Buffs, the chance to offer up some of his best work as he prepares for April's NFL draft. That's because former Minnesota Vikings head coach Brad Childress was calling the shots for the West team for which Hansen played.

And it was Childress' Vikings offense that Colorado offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy brought with him from Minnesota to Boulder. Childress, who interviewed for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' head coaching job last month, was just hired by the Cleveland Browns to run a version of the offense there.

Hansen, who is working out not far from the Broncos' Dove Valley complex as he prepares for the draft, is hoping his work in Childress' offense is a springboard to bigger things.

"I thought I really helped my stock," Hansen said. "But I'm not trying to impress all 32 teams, just one team. I need to impress one team. That's what I keep telling myself. It's

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been nice. Talking to teams, they seem really interested in hearing my story. They know there have been a lot of ups and downs with injuries, redshirt, nonredshirt. It's been a crazy ride.

"Some people are like, 'Wow, it's been a rough ride for you.' It's kind of fun to go out there and kind of sell yourself."

As a pro prospect, the first battle Hansen has to fight is the one he can do the least about. He measured in at 6-foot-½ and weighed 222 pounds when East-West practices opened, which is not the frame many teams are looking for in their passers.

But scouts said Hansen showed a better-than-expected arm in his workouts, pointing to more possibilities for him to improve his standing when the Buffs hold their pro timing day March 8, the week after the scouting combine. Hansen did not get one of the coveted invitations to Indianapolis for the combine. He hopes the fact the Buffs' pro day falls so early in the month will give him more time to meet with potential suitors leading up to the draft.

"I was hoping for a combine invite, but didn't get one, so all my focus now is on March 8," Hansen said. "Whenever you get a chance to work out for teams, you just want them to say, 'Wow, that guy can sling it a little bit,' and then hope for the best."

Some of the 15 teams that formally interviewed Hansen in Tampa said he has been given plenty of consideration for the way he handled the roller coaster that was his career at CU, especially losing the opportunity at two separate redshirt seasons

when he was called on to replace Cody Hawkins at midseason. Because of Hansen's ruptured spleen in 2010, to go with former coach Dan Hawkins' juggling of Cody and Hansen, this past season was Hansen's only year in which he started more than eight games.

He had 2,883 yards passing to go with 20 touchdowns and 11 interceptions. At the East-West Shrine Game, he directed four drives and the West scored on three of those possessions.

"I think people have an open mind when they look at it," Hansen said. "I tried to stay positive through it all; I think I did for the most part. It was tough. Maybe some other guys would have handled some things differently, but I think I handled myself the right way and did it with class, and hopefully teams will look at that and take it for what it's worth.

"But all that stuff, that baggage, that's gone, that's in the past. I loved my time at CU, my teammates. Things didn't always go the way I'd hoped, but I took away a lot of good



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things. In terms of football, I still think I have some really good football left in me."

Jeff Legwold: jlegwold@denverpost.com



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