

CU Buffs quarterback competition set to be fierce this spring

Hirschman, Wood most likely to win starting job

By **Kyle Ringo** Buffzone.com
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2012 CU football schedule

Sunday, Sept. 2 - Colorado State, at Sports Authority Field at Mile High

Saturday, Sept. 8 - Sacramento State at Folsom Field

Saturday, Sept. 15 - At Fresno State

Saturday, Sept. 22 - At Washington State

Saturday, Sept. 29 - UCLA at Folsom Field

Thursday, Oct. 11 - Arizona State at Folsom Field

Saturday, Oct. 20 - At Southern California

Saturday, Oct. 27 - At Oregon

Saturday, Nov. 3 - Stanford at Folsom Field

Saturday, Nov. 10 - At Arizona

Saturday, Nov. 17 - Washington at Folsom Field

Friday, Nov. 23 - Utah at Folsom Field

Tyler Hansen made things easy on Colorado football coaches a year ago.

Coach Jon Embree and his staff went into spring practices in 2011 knowing relatively little about the players they inherited, and Hansen performed so well they were comfortable naming him the starting quarterback in early April.

There are five quarterbacks on the roster this spring. Add all of their college experience together and it falls considerably short of where Hansen was at this time last year heading into his senior season. While quarterbacks coach Rip Scherer isn't ruling out the possibility of naming a starter at the end of spring ball again, he's settling in for what could be a prolonged competition that isn't decided until the third week of August.

"We've got a lot of bodies, no experience," Scherer said. "But I think we've got a lot of guys who have ability and that's what spring practice is all about, seeing them compete and seeing who comes out of that ahead."

"I think whenever one surfaces who separates himself from the rest, we'll name a starter. That's ultimately coach Embree's call, but I think that's something that will take awhile because we've got a lot of guys to evaluate."

Scherer noted that even if one of the five quarterbacks did separate himself from the others this spring, that man would have to continue to play well in August when true freshman Shane Dillon joins the roster.

Scherer said when spring practices begin March 10, third-year sophomores Connor Wood and Nick Hirschman will receive the majority of the practice repetitions and redshirt freshman John Schrock will be right behind them. Senior Brent Burnette and redshirt freshman Stevie Joe Dorman must earn more time on the field by doing well with whatever time they are allotted.

Burnette is actually the most experienced player in the group, playing in seven games at Middle Tennessee State in 2009, including one start.

"We don't start evaluating these guys from scratch," Scherer said. "Everybody has a body of work, the five guys that are here. So that goes into the evaluation process. Some of them aren't going to get as many reps in the spring as others. Not everyone is going to get equal reps because some guys have proven over a period of time that they are deserving of more reps. Some guys have proven that they are not yet ready."

While Hirschman is the only quarterback on the roster who played last year and is one of the favorites to earn the starting job, he is recovering from foot surgery to correct a problem that plagued him last season and he might not be available for the first half of spring practices.

Scherer said the latest reports from the athletic training staff is that Hirschman is ahead of schedule in his recovery and might be able to participate as soon as the

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first week of spring drills, if not the first day. But coaches are taking a cautious approach.

Scherer said Hirschman probably tried to play too soon after injuring his foot last season and his injury lingered throughout the year. He said Hirschman was playing very well at the end of spring ball last year and through August, but he never regained that form after being injured in September.

"The thing I don't want is for him to hurry himself back and not be at his best or set himself back and then we're back to Square One again," Scherer said.

The player who ultimately wins the job and starts against Colorado State in the season opener, will probably be the one who takes the most complete ownership of the entire offense. Scherer said Hansen was the only quarterback to do that last fall.

Wood transferred to CU at the start of last season after finishing third in the quarterback competition at Texas. He had signed with the Longhorns in 2010 as the No. 3 rated pro-style quarterback in the nation in that year's recruiting class.

That rating is the primary reason many CU fans have pegged him the frontrunner to succeed Hansen.

Scherer said Wood brings a lot to the table and was very impressive at times leading the scout team last fall. He said playing on the scout team with no real pressure is quite different from what Wood and his four teammates will experience this spring.

"It becomes a totally different game," Scherer said. "He demonstrated a lot of positive skills. How that translates and transfers to now when he's running our offense and has to call our offense and has to process our offense and then process what the defense is doing and react to that accordingly within the framework of what we expect of him, that's the great unknown."

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