

Jon Embree pleased with effort in CU Buffs' first spring scrimmage

Coach sees improvement in attitude, effort from a year ago

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Quarterback Connor Wood connected with wide receiver Paul Richardson on two touchdown passes Saturday afternoon in the first scrimmage of spring football at Colorado.

Coach Jon Embree said those two plays stole the show, noting the passes covered approximately 70 and 35 yards, respectively. The scrimmage was closed to media and the public and statistics were not released aside from those plays.

Embree said he is pleased with the way his team has performed in the first five practices this spring. He said the team is much better prepared this year than it

was last year when CU coaches spent much of their first spring in charge of the program just trying to get players to practice at the right tempo with the proper enthusiasm and discipline.

"It's unbelievable," Embree said. "It's like we get to coach football now. Last year we didn't really get to coach a lot of football (in the spring). Whether it was coaching attitude, tempo, standard or effort. There were only three guys today who got in trouble for effort and one was a freshman. It's been very refreshing to finally coach football."

Embree described the touchdown passes from Wood to Richardson as "freak plays" on Richardson's part. The junior wide receiver has been at the top of Embree's list of Buffs who are performing at a high level this spring.

Embree said all three of his quarterbacks looked good with the snaps they were allotted. Wood is getting the majority of the work with the first team and Embree said he has "taken a step forward each day." Redshirt freshman John Schrock is second in the pecking order and fellow redshirt freshman Stevie Joe Dorman is third.

All three are getting the little things right so far such as calling plays quickly and accurately in the huddle, using the proper cadence at the line of scrimmage and making the correct pre-snap reads.

Wood said those little things are more difficult than some might realize. He said play calls in the CU offense can be pretty wordy for the quarterbacks. So it is good that they have the spring to perfect that aspect.

Wood said he believes he is doing a good job managing the offense and moving the football.

"The offense moved the ball well for the most part," he said. "We had definitely some great plays, some highlights to be happy about. There are definitely some things we've got to work on."

Embree said there were no turnovers in the scrimmage -- good for the offense, bad for the defense -- and no significant injuries were reported.

"The thing I'm happy with right now about this team is there is a sense of urgency and it's not created by the coaches," Embree said. "Players are creating this urgency. Leadership is creating this urgency. I'm pleased with that because they go out and practice like that. You can tell guys are in their playbooks at night and not just out on the town."

"There is a mindset, a certain attitude, that is in them now about wanting to be good, wanting to get better the next day. That makes it so much more fun as a coach."

While Embree says he is happy with the overall performance of his players to this point, he had a message for them after the scrimmage.

"We have to keep getting better," he said. "The test is tomorrow. You're a little bit tired, you're not rested, you're not fresh. What are we going to do tomorrow?"

Defensive line tweaks

With limited numbers on the defensive line, CU coaches are getting creative in scrimmages and live tackling portions of practices this spring trying to give the offense a good look without wearing down those few defensive linemen.

Embree said coaches are putting the offense in different downs and distances giving the advantage of the defense. They are also allowing the defense to use different fronts while limiting the offense to either throws or runs against each look.

Making his mark

One of the areas Embree said he was most curious about this spring was who would emerge at wide receiver opposite Richardson.

Redshirt freshman Nelson Spruce appears to be the early favorite there. Embree has mentioned Spruce in three of his first five post-practice interviews this spring, including Saturday after the scrimmage.

Notable

Tight end Nick Kasa did not participate but is expected to return to practice next week. ... Embree said defensive linemen Chidera Uzo-Diribe and Will Pericak played well Saturday. He also mentioned running back Tony Jones, linebacker Derrick Webb, cornerback Greg Henderson and safety Terrel Smith as players who had "very active" first scrimmages.

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