



COLORADO BUFFALOES

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Paul Richardson appears to be back after catching three passes for 125 yards and two touchdowns Friday.

Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



Brooks: Buffs Go Long In Third Spring Scrimmage

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BOULDER – From his San Jose State offense last fall, coach Mike MacIntyre grew accustomed to seeing long, accurate throws and weekly passing yards that by season's end had morphed into miles.

BUFFALO EXTRAS



Scrimmage Statistics (April 5)

MacIntyre's first Colorado offense isn't yet close to providing an instant replay, but it at least showed signs on Friday of being able to stretch the field – which represents a significant (air) mile marker in Buffs football.

"Last season we had one of the highest percentage (passing) offenses in the country and we had a bunch, bunch, bunch of deep strikes," MacIntyre said after CU's third spring scrimmage, a 124-play (21 special teams) outing at Folsom Field. "We want to throw the ball deep, then underneath if they (defenses) back off. So yeah, that's something we need to be able to do."

The Buffs did it pretty well Friday, with four quarterbacks combining to complete 39-of-58 passes for 517 yards and nine touchdowns (no interceptions). Juniors Connor Wood (18-of-22, 269 yards, 3 TDs) and Nick Hirschman (10-of-12, 171 yards, 4 TDs) were above 80 percent in their completion percentage, while redshirt freshman Shane Dillon checked in at 50 percent (11-of-22, 77 yards, 2 TDs).

Five receivers caught passes of 33, 38, 44, 48 and 75 yards – deep balls that MacIntyre hopes will show up in CU's offense this fall. "We work on it all the time; it's something you have to work at to complete them," he said. "I thought we did a good job of completing those."

Here's his reference point: Last season, San Jose State completed passes of 35-plus yards in nine of 13 games and had five games that featured completions of 50-plus yards. Quarterback David Fales threw for 4,193 yards and 33 TDs (11th nationally) and had a passing efficiency rating of 170.76 (third nationally).

MacIntyre and offensive coordinator/quarterback coach Brian Lindgren are still trying to identify their 2013 starter. Released on Tuesday, the spring's first "pencil" depth chart showed Wood, Hirschman, Dillon and the injured Jordan Webb (thumb) sharing the No. 1 QB spot. Until he and Lindgren evaluate the scrimmage tape, MacIntyre declined to say if any of the trio competing Friday showed any separation from the pack.

"Sometimes when you're playing a bunch of different people in the secondary there's a busted coverage that I could have thrown (a long completion)," he said. "I don't know if that's a factor or not, but you can tell that when you watch it on tape. But I thought there were some good throws and some good plays made by the quarterbacks."

Receivers Paul Richardson, D.D. Goodson, Jeff Thomas, Tyler McCulloch and Keenan Canty each had scoring receptions, with Richardson and Goodson getting a pair each. Also catching TD passes were tight end Scott Fernandez and fullback Jordan Murphy.

Three players made five catches each – Nelson Spruce's 115 receiving yards topped Goodson (64) and tight end Kyle Slavin (37) – while Richardson's three receptions produced 125 yards (41.7-yard average). He also had the afternoon's longest catch – a 75-yard TD pass on Hirschman's first play from scrimmage. McCulloch made four receptions for 62 yards, Thomas three for 52.

Richardson called his day "decent," but added he was more focused on the receiving corps as a whole: "I would like to keep our composure up, keep our energy level high in the receiving group. I was just trying to make plays, have fun and congratulate my other guys for making plays and having fun as well. I think we had like seven or eight touchdowns in our receiving corps, so we each had seven or eight touchdowns. That's the way I look at it."

Wood and Hirschman both said they believe the position as a whole has improved this spring, and each rated their Friday performance as satisfactory.

Said Hirschman: "I thought I played well; I mean I had four drives that ended in one play." Entering spring drills, Hirschman said his goals were to "manage stress" better and "improve ball security. That's a major issue I had last year. When you take care of the ball everything else should work itself out . . . they say if you're not getting better you're getting worse. So every day (all the QBs) have tried to improve on something small in our game."

Wood called MacIntyre's modified pistol scheme "a great offense to play in. It not only works well with quarterbacks but the simplification of what we're doing is helping the younger guys and all the veterans . . . I'm playing much more confidently and having more fun out there."

Part of that, he said, comes from "trying to be process focused about this. This is my fourth offense and my fourth coaching staff. You can't champ at the bit too much . . . you have to take one install at a time, one day at a time. I think I've done a good job with that. I think I had a real good day (Friday), and I just want to build on it."

Both quarterbacks said the return of Richardson from last season's knee rehabilitation, Thomas from personal issues and the switch of Goodson from tailback to receiver have injected downfield speed into the offense. Plus, Canty's quickness and what Hirschman called the deceptive speed of Spruce and McCulloch make this a more formidable group.

"A lot of the concepts we run are similar (to last year), but we have guys this year who can stretch the field with D.D. converting from running back, Jeff being back and Paul being back," Hirschman said. "But again, we've got a lot of West Coast-type plays in our offense and Tyler McCulloch and Nelson Spruce and those guys are

outstanding at running those concepts and catching the ball and ducking up and getting what they can. Both of those guys are deceptively fast; they don't get enough credit for that."

CU's defensive players haven't been able to ignore the offense's renewed deep threats. "You saw that (Friday)," linebacker Derrick Webb said. "The offense throughout this whole camp has been letting the ball fly. You can tell they think they've got guys who can stretch the field. And for the most part they've been able to do it . . . they're doing a good job of catching the ball downfield. That's going to be a good test for our young DBs. They got some good work (Friday), that's for sure."

But on the flip side of an afternoon of successful long throws and catches can be subpar coverage – and MacIntyre recognizes that, too. He believed his secondary "could have made a couple more plays but didn't." Yielding that many deep balls, he added, "I'd mark it as terrible. But before (Friday) I thought they were competing and doing well. We had some different secondary guys go down and we were putting young kids, different kids, out there.

"We've got corners playing safety, safeties playing corner, safeties playing nickel. That's hard on them, too. Some of (the deep balls) obviously would have been sacks, so that kind of negates that a little bit. But we made some big catches and some good throws, which is exciting to see."

BUFF BITS: Friday's lengthy (98 minutes) scrimmage covered what MacIntyre termed "every situation imaginable, which is good. And we were able to get through some things on the kicking game." . . . Will Oliver and Justin Castor shared placement duties, each making six PATs (Castor missed a seventh attempt). Oliver kicked three field goals, Castor one . . . Receiver Gerald Thomas did not participate in the scrimmage. MacIntyre said the reason was between him and Thomas . . . The Buffs' biggest improvement from the first spring scrimmage to this one: "I think we're a little more accurate in the passing game," MacIntyre said. "Defensively we didn't tackle as well as I'd like, but that's a good sign that some of the guys were making them miss, too." . . . Goodson, said MacIntyre, played Friday despite a finger dislocated in Thursday's practice . . . Derrick Webb's overview of the defense: "We're all still learning. We've started to do some things good, but we're still working on turnovers. Effort-wise, it's just getting everyone to the ball, getting everybody to run and have great effort. We're still in the learning stages of the defense. As we continue to get our minds around the defense, we've got to play hard while we're learning. We're not there yet." . . . No surprise given Friday's air show, but before the spring game (Saturday, April 13, 10:30 a.m.), MacIntyre wants the defense to "cover the deep ball better and tackle better." Offensively, the goal is to "run the ball more consistently." Friday's leading rusher was tailback Josh Ford, who carried eight times for 136 yards, including a long run of 52 yards. Two rushing TDs were scored – one by tailback Christian Powell, the other by Connor Wood on an option run.

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SHOW MENU



Football: CU Buffs defense lit up in scrimmage

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

It wasn't a great day for the Colorado secondary Friday when the Buffs scrimmaged for the third time this spring in Folsom Field.

CU defenders gave up nine touchdown passes and failed to make an interception against quarterbacks Nick Hirschman, Connor Wood and Shane Dillon.

Hirschman and Wood were particularly effective. Hirschman completed 10 of 12 passes for 171 yards and four touchdowns. Wood completed 18 of 22 for 269 yards and three touchdowns while also running for a 32-yard score.

Coach Mike MacIntyre is used to seeing his quarterbacks complete a high percentage of passes. His offense at San Jose State last year was among the best in the nation in the passing game. It looks like that is at least beginning to translate here in Boulder, though the fact that it is happening against a CU defense that was among the worst in the nation last year dampens the excitement somewhat.

MacIntyre said coaches are playing "a bunch of different people in the secondary" but he didn't pull any punches in describing the defense as "terrible" in the scrimmage when it came to giving up big plays, a problem that ruined last season.

MacIntyre said injuries and a lack of continuity in the secondary contributed and he also noted the quarterbacks would not have been as efficient if they weren't off limits from being hit. He said some of the bigger passing plays in the scrimmage would have been sacks in an actual game.

Safeties coach Charles Clark said players in the secondary have made strides this spring but there is a long way to go in their development.

"It's a lot of learning different things that we're implementing," Clark said. "Those guys are trying to grasp a lot of it in a small amount of time. What, 10 practices now? It's a learning curve, but they will get it. We will get it down."

Defensive backs Jered Bell, Marques Mosley and John Walker were three of the five leading tacklers in the scrimmage. Linebacker Brady Daigh forced and recovered a fumble, accounting for the only turnover of the day for the defense.

Missing in action

MacIntyre said sophomore wide receiver Gerald Thomas did not attend the scrimmage because of an issue that is "between him and me." MacIntyre said he believes Thomas will be back with the team next week when practices resume.

Thomas played in all 12 games last season as a true freshman and made 18 catches for 171 yards. He was listed fourth at the X wide receiver position on the first depth chart issued this spring.

Mr. April

Tailback Josh Ford is having another strong spring. He led the Buffs in rushing in Friday's scrimmage with eight carries for 136 yards, including one 52-yard run.

Returning starter Christian Powell also had eight carries for 52 yards and scored on a 25-yard run.

Notable

MacIntyre said he would wait to review the film before deciding if any of the quarterbacks has taken a lead in the competition. He said the area he has seen the most improvement this spring has been in completion rates. ... Senior linebacker Derrick Webb led the team with eight tackles. True freshman linebacker Addison Gillam had seven. ... Punter Darragh O'Neill averaged 53 yards on two punts with one inside the 20-yard line. ... The Buffs will practice on Tuesday and Thursday next week (3:45-6 p.m.) ahead of the spring game Saturday (10:30 a.m.). The spring game will be televised on the Pac-12 Network.

Follow Kyle on Twitter: @KyleRingo

Wide receiver believes he's better than ever after knee injury

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Colorado football fans want the old Paul Richardson back. They miss the guy who provided some spark in the offense. They need the guy who spent a September afternoon in Folsom Field two years ago looking over his shoulder a lot at California defenders chasing him.

But Colorado football fans will never see that Paul Richardson again. Paul Richardson says so.

"I don't even remember who he is," Richardson said. "I think I surpassed him somewhere around five months out of surgery. I don't really think in the past I've done much. So I expect a lot out of myself and I know a lot of my teammates are going to be leaning on me."

Richardson missed all of last season because of a torn knee ligament suffered during spring drills a year ago April 9. The CU offense sorely missed his speed and play-making ability. His absence was a major contributing factor to the Buffs going 1-11 in 2012.

Richardson participated fully in a scrimmage for the first time this spring Friday at Folsom Field and he looked as fast as ever. This time he was looking over his shoulder at CU defenders who are hopefully learning from the lessons he provides them in each practice. He caught three passes for 125 yards and two touchdowns, including a 75-yard bomb from quarterback Nick Hirschman to open the scoring.

"He's an extremely talented receiver," CU cornerbacks coach Andy LaRussa said after Richardson played a significant role in a tough day for his group. "He does a lot of things well. He finds a lot of ways to get open and he's really a challenge for the secondary."

"Going against a guy like that every day in the secondary, you're bound to get better. He's one of the better receivers, I would imagine, in the conference."

The fourth year junior is brimming with confidence, not just about returning to the field this fall, but also about what CU might be able to accomplish in a new offensive system under new coaches.

Richardson has had a class conflict on Tuesdays and Thursdays this spring that has forced him to leave practices early on those days, but he says he's still getting a lot out of the time he has on the field.

"Confidence in our offense and the play calling of our coaches," he said. "Of course you have scripted periods, but you also have periods where we're live and we do realistic situations where we don't have to go off scripts. I've developed a lot of confidence in the coaches, confidence in my receiving corps and confidence in my knee."

And just how is your knee Paul?

"My knee is great," he says. "It's almost scary."

Richardson hasn't played a full season yet in his career. He missed part of his sophomore season in 2011 with a sprained knee and didn't consistently earn playing time in his freshman year until the second half of the

season. He's curious what he might be able to do if he is able to stay on the field for all 12 games this fall.

Most fans of the program would be happy to see the Buffs take a few steps forward this fall. Win three, four, maybe five games and be more competitive in every outing. Richardson isn't necessarily making any predictions, but it's clear he's aiming higher.

"Our team is looking amazing right now," he said. "Our offense is great now. We're very fluid. The coaches have just been like encouraging us to go 100 percent whether we're making mistakes or not because the only way we're going to get better is getting out there and doing it. For the most part, like coach preaches to us every day, you're either getting better or you're getting worse. You're not staying the same. Every day we're progressively getting better. I just can't wait to see CSU."

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CU Buffs football clearly going deep

By John Henderson The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — When Mike MacIntyre's San Jose State team led the nation in passing percentage last year, it wasn't done with a bunch of screen passes and safety dumps.

"We had a bunch, bunch, BUNCH, BUNCH of deep plays," MacIntyre said after his three Colorado Buffaloes quarterbacks threw nine touchdown passes, three of at least 38 yards, in Friday's scrimmage. "So we're going to throw the ball deep. And to do that it enables you to throw underneath because (defenders) back off."

The third scrimmage showed some separation in the tight quarterback race. Junior Connor Wood was 18-of-22 passing for 269 yards and three touchdowns. Junior Nick Hirschman was 10-of-12 for 171 yards and four scores, including a 75-yarder to Paul Richardson. They have been receiving most of the reps with the prospective starters while redshirt freshman Shane Dillon went 11-of-22 for 77 yards and two TDs.

Senior Jordan Webb, the starter most of last year, remains out with a sore thumb, the same one he broke a year ago.

In their 1-11 season in 2012, the Buffaloes had only four completions longer than 37 yards. But with the return of Richardson from a knee injury, the switch of junior D.D. Goodson from tailback to receiver and the arrival of 6-foot-3 freshman Jeff Thomas, Colorado finally has some deep threats.

"The offense is really clicking in that aspect right now," Hirschman said. "Plus, we've got some great playmakers outside that do a lot of the work. We just put the ball out there."

Of course, as Richardson said of San Jose State's passing game a year ago: "This is a little different conference." Yes, the Pac-12 will have a little quicker secondary than the Western Athletic Conference. Also, these quarterbacks were throwing against a secondary trying to pick itself off the mat from last year's pratfall.

That will be one point of evidence leading into the spring game April 13 at 10:30 a.m. MacIntyre isn't getting excited yet over the numbers.

"Sometimes we're running a lot of different people in the secondary," MacIntyre said, "and sometimes there's a busted coverage where I could've thrown it."

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