

Football: CU Buffs' Mike MacIntyre likes depth at quarterback

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Mike MacIntyre has some history as a head coach Colorado fans might find a bit disconcerting heading into the 2013 season.

In each year MacIntyre has been a head coach, he has had to use his third quarterback at some point in the season either to start a game or play a half or a quarter of a game that was on the line.

It was with that history in mind that MacIntyre went looking this spring for a junior college quarterback who could come to Boulder and either win the starting job or allow coaches to breath a little easier knowing they had another quarterback on the roster with some college experience. They signed Jordan Gehrke last month after he threw for nearly 2,400 yards as a freshman at Scottsdale Community College last fall.

"We felt like he would fit good in the mix with all the kids we have and just keep pushing along," MacIntyre said.

MacIntyre inherited six quarterbacks from former coach Jon Embree -- seven if you count 2013 signee Sefo Liufau. And three of them had logged meaningful playing time in games. But Jordan Webb, who was the Buffs' starter for most of 2012, suffered a torn knee ligament in spring ball and Nick Hirschman, a fourth-year junior with three starts under his belt, decided to transfer when spring ball wrapped up.

That left junior Connor Wood as the only quarterback with any real playing time to speak of on the roster.

"I think it's pretty obvious with Nick leaving and Jordan's knee and other circumstances," MacIntyre said. "...When that happened, we felt like we had one quarterback on our roster who has played in games. Nobody else has, and I feel like the other guys are coming along, but if he got hurt or another guy got hurt in fall camp, all of a sudden you're sitting there (in a tough position)."

While MacIntyre has that history of needing a third quarterback every year, he also has some pretty strong history in signing junior college quarterbacks. He did so twice in his three years at San Jose State and both players became the starter for the Spartans. David Fales, who started for MacIntyre last season, threw for nearly 4,200 yards with 33 touchdowns while completing 73 percent of his passes.

MacIntyre saw a junior college quarterback he liked in Gehrke and signed him last month to compete with Wood and Shane Dillon for the starting job. Liufau will also be given a chance to prove he can do the job during the first 12 days of camp. After that point, coaches will whittle things down to just one or two guys competing for starting jobs for the season opener.

"We'll make some projections there and see what we feel like we can do so we can get ready for

the first game," MacIntyre said. "Last year at San Jose State -- I hate to keep referring to that but it's my history -- we didn't name the starter until five days before the first game, and he ended up breaking every record in the history of the school."

Colorado's new coaching staff is constantly trying to find ways to make practices more efficient and get as many reps for all players as possible. MacIntyre doesn't believe in players sitting and watching for two or three years before they're ready to play. He believes in every player on the roster getting meaningful work in practice each day, especially at quarterback.

Wood finished spring ball alone atop the depth chart because of Hirschman's decision to transfer and Webb's injury but also because he played better than anyone in the spring. He will go into camp as the first-team quarterback, but he will have a tough month of competition from Gehrke and possibly Dillon and Liufau before anyone is named the starter for the season opener Sept. 1 in Denver against Colorado State.

"We run four huddles and they're all going to get a lot of throws and a lot of reps," MacIntyre said. "I really believe in 11-on-11 and getting it going. We'll work other guys in there, too. I mean, it's not clear cut his job, but if we played tomorrow, he would be the starter."

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