

Howell blog: CU's returning production misleading

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Normally, returning a lot of production from the previous year would be considered a good thing.

In the case of Colorado, however, it's tough to really project what that means.

Phil Steele gave a breakdown of how many offensive yards each Division I football school is returning in 2013. Colorado ranks pretty high, at No. 37 nationally, with 80.4 percent of last year's yards coming back.

That number, of course, is misleading.

Quarterback Jordan Webb is back on the roster after throwing for 1,434 yards, but he tore his ACL in the spring and may not even play this season. Even if healthy, he might not have been the starting quarterback, anyway. Simply take out what Webb produced and CU's returning percentage of yards dips to about 56 percent, which would rank in the 90s.

Technically, CU does return its leading passer (Webb), rusher (Christian Powell) and top two receivers (Nelson Spruce and Tyler McCulloch) from 2012. However, only Powell projects to lead the team again in 2013.

Connor Wood is slated to start at quarterback, but he threw for just 265 yards a year ago. Dynamic receiver Paul Richardson is back after missing 2012 with a knee injury. Freshman Jeff Thomas could be a big producer at receiver, too.

If Richardson and Thomas are as good as expected, Spruce (446 yards in 2012) and McCulloch (436) may not touch last year's numbers.

While returning 80.4 percent of their yards looks good, much of CU's production is likely to come from different places this year.

The rest of the Pac-12 (in order or national rank):

- 3. Washington, 97.4 percent
- 26. Washington State, 83.9
- 35. Arizona State, 80.9
- 38. Oregon State, 80.4
- 56. Oregon, 73.0
- 67. UCLA, 67.9
- 96. Utah, 53.7
- 100. Arizona, 50.2
- 105. USC, 47.0
- 119. Stanford, 30.9
- 123. California, 27.8