

Football: MacIntyre happy with CU Buffs' first effort

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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Buffzone.com

In his first official practice as the new head football coach at Colorado, Mike MacIntyre squeezed out every ounce of sunlight -- and then some -- on Thursday.

MacIntyre might need all the time he can get to help the Buffaloes rebound from a 1-11 season, but as always with the first day, excitement was in the air.

"I thought they ran around hard and competed and tried to do what we were trying to tell them to do," said MacIntyre, who kept his team on the field long enough for the lights to become a necessity. "Great effort today.

"For the first day, very good. We didn't have a lot in, of course, but they were trying to play fast and working hard and communicating."

MacIntyre, who spent the previous three seasons at San Jose State, reiterated that every position will be looked at closely by the coaches as the staff tries to find the best players to help CU win. That includes quarterback, where six players opened up spring ball in competition for the starting job.

Nothing, of course, has been decided yet, and it may be quite a while before a starter is named.

"Last year, David Fales, we named him five days before the first game and everybody is going, 'You're crazy,' and he set every record there ever was," MacIntyre said of his quarterback at San Jose State. "All the guys get a ton of reps. The more repetitions they get, the more pressure they're under, the different people they're with, it doesn't bother them. I don't think it rattles them. I think it prepares them.

"I'd like to have one (named) quicker than five days before, but we had a good battle going on (at San Jose State), which is always a good thing."

MacIntyre was encouraged by the Day 1 performance of his signal callers, however.

"I thought they picked up the offense well today what we were doing," he said. "They were getting the signals, getting them lined up, getting the snap count. We didn't have a lot of miscues on the snap count or the snap of the ball."

Back to backer

Throughout his time at Mountain Vista High School, Clay Norgard excelled at linebacker. A year ago, he signed with CU to play fullback.

Shortly after MacIntyre was hired in December, Norgard was told he'd be going back to middle linebacker.

"I was pretty jazzed about that," the 6-foot-1, 240-pound redshirt freshman said. "I always felt that defense is where I was supposed to be. I've just always been a defender.

"Defense is pretty basic. You just search and destroy, and that's what I just love."

Norgard said he had to change his whole mindset as a fullback, and he's enjoying the return to his comfort zone.

"Instincts are going to come back slowly, but they're coming back," he said. "It's all moving really fast right now, and I definitely have a lot to work on, too. I'm going to be watching lots of film to get ready."

Teammate Derrick Webb, who is likely to start at linebacker, said Norgard "physically looks like a linebacker to me. He's a big, strong guy and he definitely has the physical tools to be a good linebacker."

New era

Thursday's practice was sort of monumental. It was the first time since the CU's final practice before the 1988 Freedom Bowl that Brian Cabral was not on the field coaching the Buffaloes' linebackers.

"His absence was definitely felt," Webb said. "It's been weird."

Cabral gained a reputation as one of the country's premier linebacker coaches. He was not retained by MacIntyre, however, and is now coaching linebackers at Indiana State.

Webb said that while Cabral will be missed, he's eager to learn from Kent Baer, CU's new defensive coordinator/linebackers coach.

"I feel like if I take everything I learned over the first four years with coach Cabral, combined with coach Baer in my last year, I can get pretty much some of the best coaching in the world," Webb said.

Notable

Dynamic receiver Paul Richardson participated in his first practice in nearly a year since tearing the ACL in his left knee. "I didn't see him favor it or pull himself out (of drills), so that was very encouraging to me," MacIntyre said. ... CSU-Pueblo coaches John Wristen, Paul Creighton, Bernard Jackson and Donnell Leomiti -- all former Buffs -- attended practice on Thursday. ... Redshirt freshman running back Davien Payne has been suspended indefinitely for violating team rules. ... Receiver Austin Vincent is back with the team as a walk-on. Vincent was arrested after an incident during the fall 2011 semester and was suspended by the school for the spring 2012 semester. He played in one game as a true freshman in 2011.

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Sophomore hoping to earn spot at left tackle, but has concussion symptoms

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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There is a big hole to fill on the left side of the Colorado offense for the second time in three years and few options to evaluate as spring football began Thursday afternoon.

The two most likely candidates to replace David Bakhtiari at left tackle are out with injuries this spring.

Last season Alexander Lewis played left guard next to Bakhtiari, a two-time, second-team All-Pac-12 Conference selection who chose to turn pro instead of returning for his senior season. But Lewis won't be fully recovered from shoulder surgery until sometime in May.

Sophomore Marc Mustoe earned a handful of snaps as a redshirt freshman backup in 2012, but he will miss most of the work this spring with concussion symptoms lingering after being hit by a truck while riding his bike in January. He wasn't wearing a helmet.

The 6-foot-7, 290-pound product of Arvada West High School was riding his mountain bike home from a workout on campus at about 7 p.m., on Jan. 21 when he was hit by a Chevy Tahoe on Baseline Avenue. He never saw the SUV coming and the driver didn't see him. He was on his bike one minute and in an ambulance the next.

"I left a huge dent in that thing," Mustoe joked Thursday afternoon before meetings and practice.

No timetable has been set for Mustoe to be cleared to participate fully in practices this spring. He said he believes he will be able to join the competition to replace Bakhtiari at some point this spring. He was told after the accident that police estimated the Tahoe was traveling approximately 30 mph at impact. He believes he hit his head on the car and not necessarily the ground.

"I'm really glad I'm the size I am I guess cause I feel like if it was anyone else, it could have been really dangerous," Mustoe said. "I'm fortunate I guess to be alive. I don't know.

"God was definitely looking out for me."

While Lewis and Mustoe are the most likely candidates to man the left side next fall, for now CU coaches will make due with junior Jack Harris practicing on the left side after playing either right tackle or right guard last year. CU coaches are likely to move sophomore Stephane Nembot to right tackle for now.

Harris spent his first two seasons at CU practicing at left tackle behind former All-American Nate Solder, who became a first-round draft pick three years ago. Harris said left tackle has always been a natural position for him but he believes he will ultimately end up back at guard once all his teammates recover.

Harris missed most of the 2011 season with a leg injury but returned to start 11 of 12 games in 2012 at right guard or tackle. He said he is looking forward to the opportunity to play the left side this spring.

"I'll play there if I have to, if (Lewis) is not ready to go and if I earn the spot," Harris said.

Mustoe, a former four-star recruit, has been waiting patiently behind Bakhtiari the past two seasons as a freshman and redshirt freshman while working to get stronger and improve his technique. Now that his opportunity to possibly move up the depth chart has arrived, he is frustrated to be limited with spring drills starting.

"That's really hard because I want to be out there," Mustoe said. "I want to be competing. I want to be playing. I want to be working out. I want to do all the stuff that I'm not really allowed to, but I guess it's kind of like what coach MacIntyre is saying. If you can't go over, you go under. If you can't go around it, you go through it. You find a way to get it done and it doesn't matter what gets in your way. You've got to keep going. ... When I get back, I think the victory will be even more sweet."

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Paul Richardson catching attention for CU Buffs after injury

By John Henderson The Denver Post The Denver Post

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DenverPost.com

BOULDER — For those of you who weren't among the curious few who saw new Colorado football coach Mike MacIntyre's first practice Thursday, you missed something that didn't happen once last season.

To tell you about it, here's Shane Dillon, the redshirt freshman quarterback who's favored to lead Colorado out of its current abyss: "(Paul Richardson) caught like three touchdowns (Thursday). He caught like two 60-yard touchdowns."

Coming off the worst season in school history, Colorado should welcome back no player more this spring than Richardson. As a sophomore in 2011, he was one of the most dangerous receivers in the Pac-12.

He earned honorable-mention sophomore All-American, mainly on the strength of a school-record 284 yards on 11 catches in a narrow loss to California.

When he tore up his left knee last spring, Colorado's receiving corps turned into a posse of plodding possession guys, plus true freshman Gerald Thomas, catching passes from three struggling quarterbacks.

Thursday was Richardson's first day back in practice at 100 percent. Scratch that. He claims he's 110 percent.

"I'm more healthy," he said. "I'm more healthy mentally. My attitude is better just as far as my approach to the game, my appreciation for the game. I've always been a hard practicer but I'm practicing even harder. I'm picking up the little things. I'm asking as many questions as possible to be a complete athlete."

Colorado went 1-11 in no small part to an offense that scored only 17.8 points per game (117th nationally) and averaged 302.8 yards (116th). Only one team in the country had a lower team pass efficiency than the Buffaloes' 102.6.

With Richardson, plus speedy freshman Jeff Thomas, defenses won't stack the line against a weak — yet superior — running attack.

"(Richardson) gives us so much depth down the field for us," Dillon said. "He stretches the field. It's going to open up so much. Stuff like the running backs and Gerald and those guys working in space like they love doing. Him and (receiver) Nelson (Spruce). They were just blanketed last year because we just didn't have anybody to run deep."

Richardson, one of those prep All-Americans everyone expects to explode someday, had to overcome more than physical hurdles. His injury (torn ACL) came on a cut in which he wasn't touched.

So far, he has had no problems with his knee — or his mind. He credits one driving force.

"Hunger," he said. "That's the best word I can use. That's what keeps me focused. That's what keeps me from reinjuring myself. I'm hungry. I'm hungry as far as being happy to be out here, No. 1, and set a good example for these receivers and wanting to be that breath of fresh air for our offense."

"Knowing our offense is depending on me is why I can't worry about reinjuring myself."

Like Dillon, Richardson had to hide his eyes during last season's debacle. But all through the losses and the Jon Embree firing, he kept working. He even made some practices toward the end of the year although not at 100 percent.

"He's been awesome," said new receivers coach Troy Walters, the 1999 Biletnikoff winner at Stanford. "The first thing that really stuck out was his willingness to learn and to grasp what I had to share. He's by my office every day. He wants to learn. He wants to get better.

"A lot of guys who've had success think they know it all. He's the opposite."

"Opposite" is a very attractive word for Buffs fans these days.

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