

Connor Wood at QB tops list of CU Buffs' key football players for 2013

By Tom Kensler *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*

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It's never too early to look ahead to the 2013 college football season, especially for a University of Colorado program that has a new coach, Mike MacIntyre, anxious to begin the rebuilding process after the program went just 4-21 under Jon Embree, including a disastrous 1-11 last fall.

With preseason camp still more than two months away, here's my stab at CU's 10 most important players:

- QB Connor Wood — The 6-foot-3, 225-pound junior and former University of Texas transfer hasn't been "the guy" since his senior year of high school four years ago. It's now or never for him to take the starting role and be the team's unquestioned leader.
- WR Paul Richardson — Without question, the junior is the team's most talented, athletic and explosive player. He sat out last year to recover from ACL surgery and showed signs of regaining his 2011 form during spring drills. The offense needs his threat, experience and, especially, production.
- OT Jack Harris — Colorado's starting left tackle for the past two seasons, David Bakhtiari, is now earning a paycheck with the Green Bay Packers. Harris, a 6-5, 305-pound senior, moves from right tackle where it is imperative he protect Wood's "blind side."
- OG Kaiwi Crabb — The junior (6-3, 295) from Hawaii was seldom used by Embree. But he showed enough this spring to be listed atop the depth chart at left guard, which had belonged to Alex Lewis. Lewis is transferring to Nebraska, assuming he can get legal problems behind him.
- CB Kenneth Crawley — The sophomore from Washington D.C. arrived in 2012 with a blue-chip reputation but was torched by big plays far too often. Crawley showed good improvement in the spring, and if he can play to his potential, he and fellow starting cornerback Greg Henderson can give the Buffs defense a chance against the pass-happy Pac-12.
- LB Addison Gillam — MacIntyre was recruiting the 6-3, 225-pounder from Palo Cedro, Calif., for San Jose State and got him to switch to CU. Gillam, who supplies some speed and exuberance, earned the top spot at middle linebacker on the end-of-spring depth chart. That speaks volumes.
- TB Christian Powell — The barrel-chested sophomore (6-foot, 240) looks more like a fullback — his high school position — than a featured runner. But he has deceptive speed and can break tackles. Although MacIntyre may use several tailbacks, CU needs Powell to build on his solid freshman season (691 yards, seven touchdowns) because the pistol offense can't function without a dependable running threat.
- DE Samson Kalovalu — The sophomore (6-3, 250) from Riverside, Calif., finished spring drills as a starter. For three years, CU has been looking for another pass rusher to complement veteran defensive end Chidera Uzo-Diribe, who is now a senior. Perhaps Kalovalu can show he has the game to match his name.

Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280, tkensler@denverpost.com or twitter.com/tomkensler

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