



Nick Hirschman will start at QB Saturday.

Photo Courtesy: Joel Broida



Brooks: Hirschman To Start At QB Against Wildcats

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TUCSON, Ariz. - Sophomore Nick Hirschman will open at quarterback against Arizona, Colorado head coach Jon Embree announced on Saturday morning.

The Buffs and Wildcats kick it off at 11:30 a.m. at Arizona Stadium. The game will be televised on FX and broadcast on KOA (850 am).

Hirschman came out on top this week in competition with sophomore Connor Wood. Embree announced earlier in the week that those two would compete to see who replaced junior Jordan Webb, who had started CU's first nine games.

Webb was last in the Pac-12 Conference in passing efficiency (106.9 rating), No. 12 in total offense (142.8 yards a game) and No. 11 in passing yards per game (155.7). A change at the position was contemplated last week, but CU quarterbacks coach Rip Scherer said Webb once again outperformed Hirschman in practice.

Hirschman has one college start on his resume (last season at Arizona State), Wood none. Both have played in out-of-hand losses over the past month and both have attempted 29 passes. Hirschman has hit 13 for 160 yards and one score, Wood 14 for 160 yards. Both have been intercepted twice.

As it turned out last weekend, all three QBs played in the 48-0 loss against Stanford and were equally

ineffective as the Buffs dropped to 1-8 overall and 1-5 in the Pac-12. In addition to being shut out at home for the first time since the mid-1980s, CU was held to 76 yards in total offense (minus-21 rushing). The three QBs combined to complete 12-of-23 passes for 97 yards, with Webb throwing a first-quarter pick six. Their individual stats: Webb - four-of-10, 19 yards; Hirschman - four-of-six, 12 yards; Wood - four-of-seven, 66 yards.

The lack of consistency at the QB position is mirrored in CU's offensive stats. The Buffs are last in the Pac-12 in scoring (16.1 points a game), total offense (293.0 yards) and passing offense (193.3 yards). They are 11th in rushing offense (99.7 yards).

While Embree would not rule out using Webb at Arizona, he said the QB who finished second in this week's competition would be Saturday's backup. Scherer added if that if this week's competition "is a dead heat through the course of the week, then maybe both of them (Wood, Hirschman) will play."

CU also is expected to start six freshmen Saturday - five on defense and tailback Christian Powell. The six on defense: corners Kenneth Crawley and Yuri Wright, safety Marques Mosley, and defensive linemen Josh Tupou and Samson Kafovalu.

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SHOW MENU



Wildcats likely to be without starting QB Scott

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Colorado could actually win a football game Saturday.

No, seriously, it's not a joke.

Coach Jon Embree's team obviously has to make it happen and no one is going to believe it until they see it, but a road win over Arizona, spoiling the Wildcats' homecoming, is within the realm of possibility even for the 1-8 Buffs.

There have been only a few times in the history of the Colorado program when the Buffs and their fans have needed a win as badly as they do now. The Buffs have lost five consecutive games in blowout fashion and are widely considered among the worst teams in the Football Bowl Subdivision.

Despite all that, there is hope because Arizona senior quarterback Matt Scott is doubtful with a concussion.

Scott has been the key to the Wildcats' success this season but he is unlikely to play after getting his bell rung in a 66-10 loss at UCLA last week. Yep, that's right. There are other teams in the Pac-12 giving up monstrous point totals this season.

Without Scott, a dynamic playmaker who ranks fourth nationally in total offense, Arizona is still talented but nowhere near as polished offensively. Junior B.J. Denker is expected to make his first career start. He has played in five games this season, completing 13 of 23 passes for 123 yards and a touchdown.

Defensively, the Wildcats are nearly as bad as CU this fall. Arizona ranks 87th in run defense, 117th in pass defense, 118th in total defense and 105th in scoring defense, allowing 35 points per game.

"What you have to do as a coach is try and fix your issues, and not necessarily try to tailor and become something different, because they struggled with an offense scheme," Embree said this week when asked if the Buffs can take advantage of anything the Wildcats struggled with against UCLA.

If the Colorado offense is ever going to emerge from its slump, move the ball and score some points, Saturday is probably the best opportunity. Unfortunately, Colorado hasn't had consistent quarterback play at all this season and the Buffs are expected to use a new starter as well.

Senior Jordan Webb was benched this week after completing 11 of 21 passes for 50 yards and no touchdowns in the past two games combined. The Buffs have scored a total of 20 points in the last three games combined and rank next to last nationally in scoring, averaging just 16 points a game.

Third-year sophomores Nick Hirschman and Connor Wood competed for the job in practice all week. Who starts is expected to be a game-time decision.

Embree made it clear that he will play whoever he feels gives the team the best chance to win and he is not making the change simply to give younger players experience. Embree did not rule out turning back to Webb if things don't go well for Hirschman and Wood Saturday.

Quarterbacks coach Rip Scherer said this week he believes Webb has lost confidence in recent weeks as the Buffs have struggled badly against three consecutive top-25 opponents. But the reality is, coaches still believe Webb is their best option under center and they are hoping that seeing things from a different perspective this week on the sidelines helps get him back on track.

"Part of it is we need to help him make plays," Embree said of Webb. "He can be streaky in that if he gets a couple things going on early, he can build off of that. Last week, obviously those things didn't happen."

With Scott out of the lineup, the Buffs can expect a heavy dose of Arizona running back Ka'Deem Carey, who has already rushed for more than 1,000 yards this fall with 13 rushing touchdowns and one receiving. If Colorado can slow down Carey and make Denker the focal point, the Buffs could be in the game in the fourth quarter for the first time since it won at Washington State in September.

But the CU offense has to make a dramatic improvement from its most recent outing. The Buffs were shut out at home last week for the first time in 26 years and failed to produce even 100 yards of total offense.

At least the Buffs appear to have a chance before the opening kickoff this week. What they do with it will tell us a lot about players' commitment to finishing the season strong or playing out the string.

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Thorburn: CU Buffs seniors still have time to make highlights

By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Mike Leach isn't going to be at Arizona Stadium.

This game still sets up quite well for the Buffs.

Let's put it this way: If Colorado can't compete with Arizona into the fourth quarter, the coaching staff should have to take a bus home.

That will give the locksmith extra time to get the job done at the Dal Ward Center before they return.

Historically, CU owns this series with a 13-1 edge.

The Wildcats (5-4, 2-4) will likely be without concussed senior quarterback Matt Scott, who leads the Pac-12 in passing with 2,848 yards and 20 touchdowns. His replacement, junior college transfer B.J. Denker, has completed 13 passes in relief this season with one touchdown and one interception.

Amazingly, Arizona actually ranks last in the conference in total defense, giving up an average of 498.0 yards per game compared to CU's 497.3 yards per game.

Last week while the Buffs -- now 1-8 overall and alone in the South Division basement at 1-5 in Pac-12 play -- were suffering a 48-0 loss to Stanford, the Wildcats allowed UCLA to score 66 points.

Rich Rodriguez has done a terrific job during his first season in Tucson. Arizona upset Oklahoma State in non-conference play and USC two weeks ago.

With a victory over the lowly Buffs, Rich-Rod will have the Wildcats -- 48-29 losers in Boulder last season with Nick Foles at quarterback -- bowl eligible.

"I knew we were going to have to hang on this season (defensively)," Rodriguez said recently. "We can fix some of that now, some we can fix over the next few seasons."

In other words, the Buffs had better beat Arizona before Rodriguez puts together some speedy recruiting classes.

The Wildcats rank 105th nationally in scoring defense (35.0 ppg) and 117th in passing defense (314.9 ypg).

You have to feel for Jordan Webb, who has been benched this week after starting against ranked opponents the three previous Saturdays.

If Nick Hirschman and/or Connor Wood can't move the chains Saturday, they might want to consider a move to Big Sky country next season.

"No, no we are trying to win now," CU head coach Jon Embree said when asked if benching Webb was about the future. "So it doesn't have anything to do with that."

CU's offensive line should also be able to create some holes big enough for Christian Powell to squeeze through, considering Arizona is also giving up 183.1 yards per game on the ground.

"That's exactly what (a win) would be: Therapeutic," senior tight end Nick Kasa said. "We're just trying to put the losing behind us."

Over the last four seasons, the Buffs' seniors have experienced the thrill of 12 victories and suffered the agony 34 defeats with three games left in their college careers.

As hard as it is to imagine outside of the CU practice fields, this team still has an opportunity to end a wretched season with a winning streak.

Washington and Utah aren't exactly Alabama and Kansas State. The Huskies and Utes visit Folsom Field to wrap up Embree's second season.

"To be able to go and have some success would mean a lot, especially going into these last three games for our seniors," Embree said. "Them trying to finish up on a high note ... they have been through a lot as a group."

Time to add some highlights to the reel for the 2012 football banquet.

Right now the fourth quarter comeback against Leach's Washington State Cougars (2-7, 0-6) is the only footage available.

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