



*Freshman defensive tackle Josh Tupou is one of several young Buffaloes coming of age.*  
Photo Courtesy: Asher Vandevort



## Brooks: Tuiasosopo Expects More From Frosh Trio, Bonsu

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**BOULDER** - With September in the rearview mirror for the Colorado Buffaloes, defensive line coach Mike Tuiasosopo says that's exactly where the freshman tag belongs for his trio of young interior players - in their backgrounds.

In Tuiasosopo's estimation, five games are enough for Josh Tupou, Justin Solis and Tyler Hennington to have learned how to assert themselves. He's also expecting more from junior Nate Bonsu, the lone upperclassman working the inside positions now that senior Will Pericak is spending most of his Saturdays on the perimeter.

"I just want them to understand, in my eyes the freshman thing is over," "Tui" said. "They need to play like veterans now. We're way beyond that. We've played in enough games and every one of them has had significant snaps. It's time for them to take their game to another level for us to be successful."

Tuiasosopo's message apparently came through unfiltered and very understandable for Solis, a 6-3, 305-pounder who at this time last season was playing for Westlake High School in Thousand Oaks, Calif.

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"We need to 'man up' and start playing with more intensity, more drive and playing like we know we can play," Solis said. "Even though we're all young, we came in here for a reason - to help the team out. We've had to grow up fast with a lot of playing time and a lot of experience."

Solis has shared time inside with Tupou (6-3, 325), Bonsu (6-1, 289) and Hennington (6-3, 285). That quartet, said Tuiasosopo, needs to generate more of an interior pass rush before the Buffs return from their bye week to face Arizona State on Thursday, Oct. 11, in a nationally televised game from Folsom Field (7 p.m., ESPN).

"Our young guys have been up and down - but probably more up than down," Tuiasosopo said. "I know there's the learning curve with all those guys, but they've gotten a handful of games under their belts. They understand things a little bit better. At the beginning it was knowing what to do; now they know what to do and it's time for them to just really turn it loose. They need to play faster and more physical."

He said Tupou, of Long Beach, Calif., was "a little tentative" in CU's 42-14 loss to UCLA because of a lingering ankle injury and being held out of early week practices due to a concussion suffered in the previous game at Washington State. Tupou's only work preceding last week's game came on Thursday and "some of that showed on game day. When you play a team that's averaging 250 yards (rushing) a game you have to see it and feel the snaps in practice," Tuiasosopo said.

"To see it first on Saturday after not having any contact, that's hard to do. Coaches hold steady to 'you practice, you play' for a reason. For him not to have had those physical snaps (in practice) kind of showed up at the beginning of the game."

Solis and Hennington, a Mullen High School product, are "starting to figure things out now," Tuiasosopo said. "They need to be more explosive, more decisive in what they're doing. There's still a little bit of a hesitation on their part. They need to let it go."

Bonsu, of Allen, Texas, played in 12 games as a true freshman in 2009, then redshirted the following season after suffering a knee injury during winter conditioning work. He played in 2011 before undergoing postseason shoulder surgery that could have set him back.

But Bonsu didn't allow it to, successfully rehabbing the shoulder, rededicating himself in the weight room, and shedding almost 35 pounds before reporting to August camp. "It was pretty easy to put weight on after the shoulder surgery because I couldn't run," he said. "But I wanted to be in the best shape ever for camp and did a whole bunch of hard work, a whole bunch of 'Stairmastering' and just eating a little bit better."

Plus, he got an extra push or two from coach Jon Embree, Tuiasosopo and CU's strength and conditioning staff. "When I needed it, they gave it to me - and I was able to contribute to that," said Bonsu, who has started all five games this season before settling into a rotation with the freshmen.

Tuiasosopo said Bonsu "has been holding his own, but he's not playing at top end" due to a broken right hand suffered against Sacramento State and some recurring knee issues. Bonsu has played the last two games with his right hand in a protective cast. Still, Tuiasosopo's goals for Bonsu are for him to "make more plays and rush the passer better."

Bonsu's early playing time in '09 allows him to identify with what CU's first-year D-linemen are experiencing. "I told them before the UCLA game to let their hair down and have fun because I'd been in the same situation, playing as a freshman," he said. "I know how it can be."

The interior freshmen linemen "are definitely picking it up," Bonsu added. "You can see the strides they've made from camp until now just working on the smaller things. I can see that in myself as well. They're gaining more confidence in every game they play. I'm excited to see how all of them are going to be later on this year and in the future. They're going to be making big impacts."

Despite the Buffs' early September swoon and their 1-4 overall record (1-1 Pac-12), Bonsu said progress is being

made. "What I would want people on the outside to realize is that we have a lot of really young guys and not just the freshmen - a lot of inexperienced guys in key roles," he said. "With that come growing pains. The first two games were close losses, the Fresno State game was a different story.

"How we got that road win at Washington State was special. I've been here for a while and know how scarce those were. I see improvement every week. I saw it last week (against UCLA). It's just a couple of mistakes and when you play a good team like UCLA you can't have them.

"There's a lot of good things going on here. There's improvement. We just need to stick in there and we'll be fine . . . the wins will start coming."

He said the Buffs are "holding together - and that's the biggest thing. When you go through something like this, you stick together because that's all you have. That's about as literal as you can put it. Each one of us, that's all we have. We've worked so hard through the off-season, through the summer. What we have is each other, and if we change the way this season is going we have to do it together."

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## Football: CU Buffs' Vincent Hobbs focused on his family

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

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Colorado's Vincent Hobbs was on his way to a big play when a UCLA defender punched the ball out of his hands on Saturday.

The Bruins recovered and it turned out to be a pivotal play in CU's 42-14 loss.

If Hobbs had his way, that would be the worst part of his first season as a Buffalo.

Instead, the worst moment for the true freshman tight end came on Sept. 16, when he got a call from his mother that his father, Leon, fell and was in the hospital. Doctors found a tumor on Leon's spine and he has been paralyzed from the neck down ever since that fall.

"It's not too good," Hobbs said. "My father is paralyzed as we speak, but rehab is going on. He's speaking, he's talking, he's laughing, so that's all that matters. As long as he's breathing, I'm good."

The news hit Hobbs and his family hard, though. Shortly after receiving the call from his mom, Hobbs flew home to Dallas and spent that week with his family. He was in Texas when his teammates were in Pullman, Wash., on Sept. 22, defeating Washington State, 35-34.

Although he's been with the team the past week and a half, Hobbs still battles every day to keep his focus when he's on the football field.

"It's tough on him right now and it's on his mind," CU tight ends coach J.D. Brookhart said. "He's working through it."

Hobbs said the long-term prognosis for Leon, 57, is unknown.

"If he can walk again, it's not going to be until probably years later," Hobbs said.

"It's weighing on me pretty hard, but you know, I love him and he's talking to me. I talk to him every day. I'm going home this weekend to go see him and spend time with him, so that'll make me have a lot of weight off my shoulders."

From the time he arrived in Boulder, Hobbs has had a lot of weight on his shoulders. The 6-foot-3, 240-pounder came to CU with high expectations. Brookhart raves about Hobbs' athletic ability and pass-catching skills. Quarterback Jordan Webb is also excited about the weapon Hobbs can become.

"You can see he's going to be really good in the open field for us," Webb said. "He's got good hands and he's a big body. That's just something you can't teach."

To this point, Hobbs has not made the impact that perhaps some thought he would. He has just three catches for 51 yards -- 31 of those coming on the play against UCLA in which he fumbled. Had he held onto the ball, there's no telling how many yards he would have gained or how that play could have made a difference in the game. CU was trailing by just 14 at the time.

Hobbs, to his credit, doesn't shy away from talking about that play.

"Freshman mistakes, everyone has them," he said. "It just makes me become a great player in the future. Once I saw it on the big screen, the hole couldn't be more open for me. I just thought I have to move on; all my players are encouraging me to move on."

Hobbs figured there would be tough moments this season. In fact, Brookhart warned him ahead of time that it wouldn't be easy.

"He told me from the get-go ... I was going to be confused the first four games," Hobbs said. "That's exactly what's happened, but I'm picking up as we progress on."

Brookhart has seen Hobbs go through some growing pains on the field, but was quick to point out that Hobbs really hasn't been on the field that much and that he will get better with more experience.

"Sometimes you have to go through some growing pains," Brookhart said. "(The fumble is) hopefully a valuable lesson for his future."

Hobbs is no stranger to growing pains. He went through them as a young high school player, too, and he said this experience is similar in many ways.

"I'm just going to have to get used to it, just like I did in high school," he said. "Obviously I have a lot of improving to do."

When Hobbs does get used to the college game, the general consensus is that he's going to be a star. Webb is eager to see what kind of playmaker Hobbs can become, and so is Brookhart.

"When he knows enough to play fast, that's when it's going to come out," Brookhart said.

Trials on the field and his father's health have already made this a challenging season for Hobbs, yet he may turn out better for it in the long run.

"It's made me stronger from the get-go, from the time I heard him, saw him," Hobbs said. "He made me stronger. The first words he told me was to go out there and grind and that's what I've got to do."

"While I'm here, I'm going to work my fundamentals, obviously not fumbling the ball and carrying it right. Then, I'll get to go home (this weekend) and see my family, so it ought to be a good week."

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## Football: CU Buffs on the mend during bye week

By Brian Howell, Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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Two days into its bye week, the Colorado football team is already looking better physically.

On Tuesday, the Buffs (1-4, 1-1 Pac-12) returned to the practice field for the first time since Saturday's 42-14 loss to UCLA. They are off this week, as they prepare to face Arizona State on Oct. 11.

With no game, the Buffs are hoping to get a little healthier this week. So far, so good. On Tuesday, linebacker Doug Rippe practiced for the first time since injuring his knee against Sacramento State on Sept. 8. The senior, who has missed three games since, said it felt good to get back onto the field and hit somebody.

Senior safety Ray Polk has missed the past four games since suffering a high ankle sprain against Colorado State in the season opener on Sept. 1. He ran for the first time on Tuesday and was pleased with the results.

Both players are hopeful of returning against Arizona State. In fact, head coach Jon Embree is hopeful that just about every one of his injured players will be healthy by Oct. 11. Several players sat out of Tuesday's practice nursing various ailments.

"We'll probably be as healthy as we would've been since CSU," Embree said during his weekly Pac-12 conference call on Tuesday. "We have a chance to get about everybody back. If we'd play this week, it wouldn't look too good."

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# Colorado star keeps QBs, diabetes in check

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BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — Colorado star defensive lineman Will Pericak faces two opponents every Saturday: the opposing quarterback and diabetes.

After every other series, he goes to the sideline for finger pricks to test his blood sugars. High-fructose energy drinks are on hand if he needs them.

Pericak (pronounced PRE-check) was diagnosed at 15 when he was a freshman at Boulder High School, but his older brother was diagnosed much younger, "so I kind of grew up with it throughout my youth, so I kind of knew what it was all about."

Like many diabetics, Pericak, a senior who packs 285 pounds on his 6-foot-4 frame, uses a proper balance of diet, medication and exercise to control his disease, which he has come to view as more a blessing than a curse.

"Absolutely. I know it's definitely a challenge for me. But then again I'm more healthy because of it," Pericak said. "It is a disease and it definitely has pros and cons, the pro being I know what I'm eating, I watch what I'm eating. I'm able to understand my body better. And that ends up helping me be able to play my best. If I get low in a game, it may cost us a huge play or something like that."

Pericak said he's in better tune with his mind and body and more mindful of nutrition because of diabetes and the necessity to maintain proper blood sugar levels. Get too low and he'll feel shaky and find it difficult to concentrate and react quickly. Get too high and he'll have headaches, feel tired, moody, depressed.

None of those are conducive to chasing down quarterbacks or stuffing running backs.

"For games, I worry about low blood sugars because it affects how I'm thinking and what I'm able to do," Pericak said. "No, I've never had any scary moments in competition. I have had a severe low blood sugar but I was with my family, but nothing during the games and they keep a close eye on me and make sure I'm doing all right. I always have some sort of carbohydrates and sugars nearby."

Pericak used to wear an insulin pump but switched to injections in college.

"I did have the insulin pump in high school for my senior year and every game it got ripped out," Pericak said. "But it's just a little patch with a little catheter inside you so it's pretty temperamental, so after a game I'd have to have insulin syringes near me so when the pump did come undone from football, I was able to give myself insulin."

"But the pump is something I'm probably going to go back to once football is over because it does provide really good control."

About 21 million Americans have diabetes, meaning their bodies cannot properly turn blood sugar into energy. Either they don't produce enough insulin or don't use it correctly. With the Type 1 form that Pericak has, the body's immune system attacks insulin-producing pancreatic cells, so that patients require insulin injections to survive.

Pericak said his most recent glycosylated hemoglobin test, or A1C, which reflects average blood glucose levels over the past two to three months and is a truer gauge than daily finger pricks, was 5.9 percent.

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A reading under 7 percent shows Pericak has his diabetes in good control, particularly given the stress he's under as a college football player.

Pericak accidentally double-dosed before a recent practice and crashed.

"I get pretty stupid. I have no idea what's going on. Sometimes I'll get a little grumpy, too," Pericak said.

His teammates keep an eye on him whether it's on the football field or in study hall, getting him Gatorade if he needs it.

It's not his disease but his disruptive play that has NFL scouts taking notice of Pericak.

He's made 42 straight starts, highest among active Buffs, and has posted 26 tackles so far. In the opener against Colorado State, he tied his career high with 10 tackles, had a fourth-down stop, a fumble recovery and blocked a PAT after a Rams touchdown.

"After we gave up that first touchdown against CSU, it could have been easy to be demoralized. They line up to kick their extra point and he comes through and blocks it," Colorado coach Jon Embree said. "And he plays every play like this is the one play that is going to decide the game."

After that game, Embree moved Pericak from defensive tackle to left defensive end, and Pericak kept right on rolling.

Two weeks ago, in Colorado's win at Washington State, Pericak recorded his first sack, pressured the quarterback three other times, made a key third-down stop and even broke up a pass dropping into coverage.

Pericak's move to defensive end not only helps the Buffs but could burnish his credentials for the NFL.

"He's a guy that's going to play on Sunday and he may have to play on the edge, in a 3-4 front or he can play inside on an even front," Embree said.

Embree said it's folly to judge Pericak's production simply on statistics.

"Sometimes numbers can be deceiving for defensive linemen because you look at tackles and sacks and all that," Embree said. "But to me, it's about being disruptive in the run game, it's about penetration, it's about knocking the quarterback down, making him move, doing all those things. And Will has done that consistently in every game."

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Follow AP Pro Football Writer Arnie Melendrez Stapleton on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/arniestapleton>

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