



*Connor Wood could get a series or two Saturday night at Fresno State.  
Photo Courtesy: Gary Kirchner*



## Brooks: Wood Eager For Backup Duty, But Duel Continues

Release: 09/12/2012 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

**BOULDER** - Connor Wood is eager to get at least a series directing the Colorado offense on Saturday night. He's been the Buffs' backup quarterback for the first two games, but according to position coach Rip Scherer the No. 2 job will remain fluid and be determined on a weekly basis.

Wood entered last weekend's loss to Sacramento State for one play when starter Jordan Webb's helmet came off, forcing Webb to leave the game for a play per NCAA rules. On his first collegiate play, Wood, a sophomore who began his career at Texas, completed a screen pass to freshman receiver Gerald Thomas for a 28-yard gain.

After going into the opener against Colorado State as Webb's backup, it might have been widely assumed that Wood had locked down the No. 2 spot in his duel with fellow sophomore Nick Hirschman. But Scherer reiterated that's not the case.

"I guess all the focus is on Connor, but both of those guys (Wood and Hirschman) have made improvement," Scherer said. "Each week whoever practices the best goes into the game as No. 2. So it's a week-to-week thing."

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"We'd like to get the second guy, whoever that is, to get some reps in a critical situation, so if we get a situation because of injury or whatever and a guy has to play early in the game he's got some experience under his belt. Right now, this week, whoever emerges as the No. 2 is the guy who's going to get the reps. It has been Connor the last couple of weeks."

And CU coach Jon Embree has indicated since last weekend that it would be Wood again on Saturday night when the Buffs play at Fresno State (6 p.m. MDT, CBS-Sports Network).

Wood deferred clarification of CU's weekly backup status to his coaches, but said he's been preparing himself for Fresno State just as he did in the three-way August competition that eventually saw Webb emerge as the starter. That experience, said Wood, "was very humbling" and contributed to him refocusing on what now has become the two-man duel for the backup job.

"You're so expectant of being the guy," Wood said. "It pushed me harder to prepare more. A lot of positive came out of that experience. I feel like I'm a better quarterback because of that."

Better how?

"A lot of things have slowed down for me," Wood said. "I think just the offense, knowing the play calls . . . when I get a play call from coach (Eric) Bieniemy I'm better at picturing it and understanding what's going on instead of getting in the huddle and processing it (there). Processing it right away has slowed things down and really helped my game."

Something else that has contributed is Wood's film study. Embree said Wood has set the tone among CU's quarterbacks with his work ethic: "That says a lot about you, when you are not 'the guy,' that you are going to watch that much tape and you are going to prepare in that manner . . . that's great because it raises the bar in the room. All those quarterbacks have been like that, and I think a lot that has to do with him because they see how hard he works. And especially at that position, you better be a student of the game."

It's not a habit Wood developed in Boulder. "I've been doing that basically since high school; I've really taken ownership in film study," he said. "I learned that at an early age from my brother, who was a quarterback at Texas A&M (Jeff Wood II, 2006-09). He stressed that as one of the most important things we can do. I've carried that through my year at Texas and until now. It's become a part of what I do."

Wood's overall consistency at the position has improved, but Scherer added so has Hirschman's: "They kind of hit a lull in training camp where they weren't nearly as productive in doing the things they need to do, then they stepped it up, especially the last couple of weeks."

Embree said Wood "is better at taking what is out there instead of forcing things. I think he has gotten a lot better at that . . . just going through his progressions and reads. He has cleaned up that and some other things with his footwork; he is a very diligent kid about it."

If Wood gets a series or two Saturday night, "getting a shot, getting that experience, getting my feet wet will be a great opportunity to show the coaches what I can do in the game," he said.

In the meantime, Scherer's task is sharpening Webb to the point of having his game performances match his practice work. In two games, Webb has completed 52.3 percent of his passes (34-of-65) for 347 yards and three touchdowns (no interceptions, eight sacks). Webb earned the starting job quickly in August camp, mainly due to his decision-making and accuracy.

Scherer wants those traits to become more evident on Saturdays in the context of better execution. "As a quarterback you only get so many opportunities in a game to make plays," Scherer said. "Some games it's a lot, other games it's not many. (Against Sac State) we didn't ask a lot of the quarterback, but there at the end we had a chance on second down and third down to make a difference."

"On one play we threw a post deep to (Nelson) Spruce . . . there was the wrong read. Then we come back on third down and we're wide open and we miss the throw (to tight end Vincent Hobbs). A quarterback has to make those plays; those plays make a difference in a game. And you never know which plays are going to make a difference."

Webb had been making those throws in practice, Scherer said: "He's been doing it out here, but it doesn't count out here. It counts on the field on Saturday and that's where we stubbed our toes."

Webb isn't surprised by his coach's critique. His third-game challenge is "about sharpening it up and making sure I'm staying true to the offense and true to my reads," he said. "I missed a couple of throws on Saturday that I definitely normally don't miss. I just have to bounce back from that."

Webb started 19 games at Kansas and admitted he saw similarities in what he's experienced in CU's first two games. "Especially when you're down, you have to make sure you stay true to the reads, stay within the offense and not try to go outside to make things happen," he said.

Most of CU's offense - excluding Webb - is young enough to not have a recollection of Texas A&M's defense under former coordinator Tim DeRuyter, who's in his first season as Fresno State's head coach. Webb, however, faced DeRuyter's Aggies defense in each of the past two seasons and was a combined 28-of-45 for 223 yards (one TD, three interceptions) in the two KU losses (45-10 in 2010; 61-7 in 2011). Webb left the 2010 game with a second-quarter shoulder injury and was sacked six times in the 2011 contest.

Webb said while back-to-back losses to open the season have been disappointing, he doesn't sense despair among the Buffs. "The offense was really sharp on Tuesday, pushing the tempo," he said. "It's encouraging to see after two disappointing weeks, but I didn't expect anything different out of these guys."

**BUFF BITS:** Embree said center Gus Handler (ankle) will miss Saturday's game and called cornerback Greg Henderson (ankle) doubtful. Embree was unsure how the offensive line would be shuffled in Handler's absence, but said freshmen Yuri Wright and Kenneth Crawley would open again at cornerbacks. Options at center include Brad Cotner and Daniel Munyer. Already ruled out were safety Ray Polk (ankle) and linebacker Doug Rippy (knee) . . . Wednesday's practice was conducted in cool temperatures and misting rain. The Buffs can forget the cool temps in Fresno; Saturday's high could flirt with 100 degrees - almost twice Wednesday's temperature in Boulder. Embree said working in the rain was good because it forced the Buffs to concentrate on handling the ball. As for the cool weather, that's another story. Said Embree: "I guess everyone can go home and crank their heater up."

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## **Bulldogs QB watched older brother David win at Folsom Field 11 years ago**

By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

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Derek Carr was only 10 years old.

Now all grown up at 6-foot-3, 210 pounds, little brother remembers vividly watching David Carr lead Fresno State to a season-opening victory over Colorado 11 years ago.

Especially the part when the television camera's showed David running up the field celebrating a key touchdown pass in the Bulldogs' 24-22 win at Folsom Field.

"I didn't realize how big that win was. I just grew up thinking every time my brother played, his team usually won," Carr said during a phone interview with the Camera. "It didn't hit me until I got older how big a game it was for us."

Under Pat Hill, Fresno State was the original BCS buster. The program has racked up 12 more wins against teams from automatic qualifying conferences since 2003.

The Buffs rebounded from the loss in 2001 to win the Big 12 championship and earn a Fiesta Bowl berth. The Bulldogs were ranked as high as No. 8 that season after a 6-0 start before finishing 11-3.

David Carr was the No. 1 pick in the NFL draft after setting a single-season school record with 4,839 yards passing and 46 touchdowns. He is currently working as Eli Manning's backup with the defending Super Bowl champion New York Giants.

Fresno State and CU meet again on Saturday at Bulldog Stadium (6 p.m., CBS Sports Network).

While Jon Embree is looking to get his alma mater a fourth win in Game No. 16 of a painful rebuilding process, Derek Carr is trying to get his program back on the national map as it transitions from the WAC to the Mountain West.

"Apple don't fall far from the tree," Embree, who was on Gary Barnett's staff in 2001, said when asked about facing another quarterbacking Carr. "I don't know if his mom or dad had the arm, but they passed the gene down. He's a good player. Great release, lot of velocity on the ball, he's accurate. He's not afraid to sit in there and wait for his receiver to make the throw and all that. He's a very good player."

Carr was named the Mountain West preseason offensive player of the year in July. So far the junior from Bakersfield, Calif., is living up to the hype by completing 68.1 percent of his passes with 532 yards, three touchdowns and no interceptions.

Fresno State is coming off a 42-25 loss at No. 4 Oregon. The speedy Ducks surged out to a 35-6 lead in the first half before the Bulldogs bit back.

"It gave us a lot of confidence. We played in the first half like ... you know what," Carr said. "I'll just say we didn't play well or execute our game plan. But we came out in second half and really took it to them. I know their players were shocked because of what they were saying to me.

"I think we know we can play with anyone in the country."

Even though CU has opened the season with back-to-back losses to Colorado State and Sacramento State, the Bulldogs view this as an opportunity to make another statement.

Fresno State is 11-5 all-time in home games against Pac-12 schools.

"When we get any BCS school walking down our ramp, we're going to be pretty fired up for that one," Carr said.

Carr threw the ball 47 times against Oregon, completing 29 passes for 234 yards and a touchdown. Starting running back Robbie Rouse had 115 yards on 27 carries with a touchdown.

Fresno State is well aware of the fact that the Buffs had trouble stopping Sacramento State's running game and are relying on three true freshmen in the secondary due to injuries.

"They're really talented if they are playing as freshmen at a school like that," Carr said. "Obviously, they're good at what they do. But they haven't played that many games at this level, and our experience at wide receiver with coverages, techniques and leverage should help us."

With senior free safety Ray Polk still out with an ankle injury, Parker Orms is the veteran leader in the secondary. The junior is seeking some redemption after CU allowed Sacramento State signal caller Garrett Safron to complete 25-of-37 passes for 312 yards and two touchdowns.

"We've got to step up and we can't let big plays happen like we did the last few games," Orms said. "(Carr's) accurate. He's got good receivers, a good running game, too. He's got a good back behind him. They can run the ball and throw the ball, so we've got to be good at stopping the run and defending the pass."

Boise State is set to leave in 2013 for the Big East. With the previous departures of Utah (Pac-12) and TCU (Big 12), the Mountain West really needs a program to emerge as a consistent top-10 threat capable of stealing BCS bowl bids or perhaps even sneaking into the four-team playoff down the road.

Fresno State has a history of performing well in perceived David vs. Goliath matchups.

"It would help out a bunch if we could get back to that," Carr said. "I think that's why they want us in the Mountain West."

It sounds like first-year Fresno State head coach Tim DeRuyter, whose team is a 14-point favorite in Las Vegas, is trying to convince the 2012 Bulldogs that they're going to be facing the 2001 Buffs on Saturday night.

"I know they are a well-coached football team. Obviously, they are not happy with their first two results," DeRuyter said on the Mountain West coaches teleconference. "We expect a team that's going to play their absolute best game of the year against us."



## Football: Bill McCartney feels Jon Embree will 'get it done'

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

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Bill McCartney saw this coming.

Two years ago when Colorado fired Dan Hawkins and began looking for a new head football coach, McCartney threw his hat in the ring. In fact, it might be more accurate to say he approached CU officials with an idea.

McCartney, who has paid close attention to the program he built into a national champion since he left it at the end of the 1994 season, recognized an overall lack of talent on the roster. He told CU he would be willing to come back as head coach for several years and groom a coach to take over once the program was back on solid ground.

"What I was saying then was that recruiting really needed to be upgraded and in the process of doing that, it was going to be slow," McCartney said in an interview Wednesday. "I had no intentions of coming back into coaching for a long time. I just wanted to bridge the gap and make the transition between not having enough talent and getting the cupboard stocked again so that whoever came in after me would have a fair chance."

McCartney had two men in mind for the job long term, former CU tight end Jon Embree or former running back Eric Bieniemy. Both men also had shown interest in the job and CU ultimately hired Embree as head coach and Bieniemy as offensive coordinator.

Now, 21 months later with the Buffs off to an 0-2 start and coming off a disappointing loss to Sacramento State, a Football Championship Subdivision team, Embree and Bieniemy are in the cross hairs of frustrated and angry fans, some of whom believe the coaches are in over their heads.

McCartney said it is "absolutely" possible that if he was hired two years ago, he could have the same 3-12 record that Embree has produced to this point. McCartney, who has watched both of CU's games this season from the press box, said comparisons to the era when he took over the program in the early 1980s are on target. He said he sees Embree encountering many of the same problems he did and some he didn't.

The program left in Hawkins' wake was short on talent and starving for depth and unable to seriously compete in the Pac-12 Conference just like the team McCartney inherited from Chuck Fairbanks in 1982. But McCartney didn't have to turn around a program in a Twitter age where each decision a coach makes is analyzed within seconds and the scrutiny is tenfold.

"I absolutely think that if things were how they are now, they would have gotten me out of town in a hurry," he said.

Fans want results to come quickly. McCartney said he doesn't blame them, but he does believe they are over reacting, especially so early in the second season since the coaching change. He said progress is being made and he believes the overall talent on the roster is better now than last year, despite the Buffs' record.

In an interview with the Camera in November 2010, McCartney predicted it would be a slow climb out and he feared that fans already asked for patience during Hawkins' tenure would turn quickly against the new coach. It was part of his motivation for wanting to stand in the gap for a few years and take the bullets.

On Wednesday, McCartney said he hopes CU fans will hang in there with Embree and his staff. He said few staffs around the nation can match the overall experience at both the college and pro level of Embree and his assistants.

According to research by the CU sports information department, CU has more NFL experience (63 years) on its staff than any other college coaching staff in the nation. McCartney said there is more experience on the current CU staff than on any of his coaching staffs. He believes that will eventually pay off for the program.

"I mean this genuinely, wholeheartedly, sincerely, authentically. I believe these guys are going to get it done," he said. "I wish it were easier. I wish it were a quick fix, but I knew it wouldn't be. Did I think they were going to lose these two games? No. But am I blindsided? No.

"Everything rises and falls on leadership... The leadership on this team is excellent. It just needs to play itself out."

## Football: CU Buffs face revamped Fresno State defense

By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

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Fresno State's offense, which features standout quarterback Derek Carr and running back Robbie Rouse, grabs the headlines.

But if the Bulldogs win the Mountain West it will be led by a revamped defense.

First-year Fresno State head coach Tim DeRuyter, a successful defensive coordinator at Air Force and Texas A&M, has implemented an aggressive 3-4 front. Oregon stormed out to a 35-6 lead last Saturday but only scored one touchdown in the second half and committed three turnovers in a 42-25 win over the Bulldogs in Eugene.

Colorado starting quarterback Jordan Webb, who has not thrown an interception through two games, knows the Buffs will have to avoid miscues to have a chance on Saturday at Bulldog Stadium.

"Those turnovers are something we're going to have to really focus on, being good about not making the same mistakes," Webb said. "We've been pretty good in that area, we've just got to keep working at it."

The Bulldogs (1-1) are one of seven teams in the nation without a turnover this season. They are tied for eighth nationally in turnover margin (plus-4).

CU is in a three-way tie for ninth in the Pac-12 with a minus-1 turnover margin.

Fresno State had three sacks and 11 tackles for loss against Chip Kelly's explosive Oregon offense.

"Fresno State is fast and really technically sound," said Webb, who has been sacked eight times already. "They're really fundamental in what they do. We have to really pick our spots, take what they give and move down the field."

### Injuries mounting

CU will be without starting center Gus Handler against Fresno State, according to head coach Jon Embree. The junior suffered an ankle injury in the fourth quarter against Sacramento State.

Daniel Munyer, the starting right guard, filled in for Handler. Earlier in the game, Munyer slid over to left guard after starter Alex Lewis was shaken up.

Starting right tackle Jack Harris moved to right guard, and Ryan Dannewitz came off the bench and played right tackle.

Embree said redshirt freshmen Brad Cotner (center) and Stephane Newmbot (tackle) could also be a part of the patchwork unit this Saturday. Offensive line coach Steve Marshall will look closely at the film from Wednesday's practice before setting a starting five.

"We'll just keep plugging," Embree said. "The good news is a lot of those guys played last week and got their feet wet and all that."



## CU Buffs freshman Christian Powell learning tailback on the run

By Mike Chambers The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — Christian Powell's 28 rushing attempts last Saturday were about 24 more than what the Colorado freshman has ever carried the ball in a game. His 154 yards rushing exceeded his career high by well more than 100.

So, in an otherwise forgetful afternoon at Folsom Field, a stunning loss to Sacramento State, there was one bright spot. The Buffs may have found a new running back.

"I thought I was going to get five to 10 (rushes), tops," Powell said after revealing he has never been a featured running back previously. "I really didn't expect (28)."

A 6-foot, 235-pounder, Powell was a dominating fullback and defensive end at Upland (Calif.) High School, where he played with CU classmates Donta Abron, a tailback, and safety Marques Mosley. Abron was the featured back at Upland last fall, amassing many of his 1,754 yards and 33 touchdowns with Powell blocking in front of him.

"He was always a good runner. He always had breakaway speed and was an outstanding pass-catcher," Upland head coach Tim Salter said of Powell in a phone interview. "He was very versatile. But we had Abron, and I would never take (Powell) off defense, and I would rest him on offense.

"We always thought that once he focused on one side of the ball he would take off. But really, I think he's still a prototype NFL fullback. He really is."

Powell played fullback in CU's 22-17 season-opening loss to Colorado State (one carry, 3 yards) and replaced sophomore Tony Jones at tailback in last week's humiliating 30-28 loss to Sacramento State. Powell opened the game with a 64-yard scoring run, one of his three touchdowns. It was the fourth-longest by a freshman in program history. His 154 yards rushing were the most by a CU freshman since Herchell Troutman in 1994.

"I tried to make the most of it. I just gave all I could," Powell said. "It was a good experience, something new, (and) I had fun doing it. Everybody likes to get the ball."

Powell will again start at tailback Saturday at Fresno State.

"In recruiting him, he showed some ability as a tailback, and we thought he might eventually be a tailback. He has that skill set," CU coach Jon Embree said. "And when we were able to have this opportunity arise this past week, putting him in there, he obviously did a very good job.

"He's a guy, when there was 2 yards there, he was getting 5 and 6. That's what you like in a back, so it doesn't always have to be blocked perfectly."

Abron, meanwhile, is third on the depth chart, behind Powell and Jones.

"He's going to support me and I'm always going to support him, so we're going to continue to work together," Powell said of Abron.

Powell was also recruited by Nebraska and UCLA, among others, but was intrigued by CU because of the

program's Southern California connections and his desire to continue to be teammates with Abron and Mosley. Powell and Salter are close, and Salter's brother, Tom Salter, coached former Buffs standout running back Eric Bieniemy in high school, at Bishop Amat in La Puente, Calif. Bieniemy is in his second year as the Buffs' offensive coordinator.

"They all had offers to go to different places, but they really were impressed with Coach Embree and his history with the program," Salter said. "And I think they want to be a part of the resurgence in Colorado, developing something new again."

Salter and Upland athletic director Jim Drake will attend CU's Sept. 29 game against UCLA in Boulder.

"I'm telling you, I've been coaching a long, long time (32 years) and he's one of the very best," Salter said of Powell. "Not just as a football player but as a person. When you have a guy like that, it really invigorates you as a coach."

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**The Field House — Blogs — The Denver Post**

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SEPTEMBER 13, 2012, 8:38 AM

## Colorado freshman defensive tackle Tupou adjusting to speed of the game

By **TOM KENSLER** |  No Comments

BOULDER — Size and strength are not issues for Colorado true freshman defensive tackle Josh Tupou, who checks in at 6-feet-3 and 325 pounds.

But the Long Beach, Calif., native said he is still adjusting to the speed of the college game compared to that of the high school level.

“All the the players are faster,” Tupou said. “Everything happens faster.”

Tupou will make his second college start Saturday at Fresno State. His starting debut came a week earlier against Sacramento State when a spot opened after CU coaches moved senior Will Pericak from defensive tackle to guard.

Tupou, rated the 82nd best prospect from the state of California player last fall by SuperPrep, opened eyes early during CU’s August camp.

In the season opener against Colorado State, he already was in a three-player rotation at defensive tackle with Pericak and junior Nate Bonsu.

“I thought (earning a starting job) would happen as fast as I could make it happen,” the soft-spoken Tupou told me after a practice this week.

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Wednesday, September 12, 2012

## Things won't get easier for Colorado

By Ted Miller

Here are two pieces of stone-cold reality for Colorado: 1. It's best chance to win a game this season probably happens Saturday at Fresno State; 2. The Buffaloes are two-touchdown underdogs.

Preseason hopes for the Buffs lay in the schedule, which seemed super-soft entering the season. Game 1 was against a Colorado State team that Colorado beat a year ago, one that was breaking in a new coach. Game 2 was against Sacramento State, an FCS team.

A 2-0 start seemed not only reasonable to project, but likely. And a 2-0 start would bring confidence to a young team. It would energize a fan base. A 2-0 start probably would have made the Buffs even money at Fresno State. After that, a trip to Washington State, UCLA coming to Boulder ...

It wasn't difficult to be charmed with optimistic possibilities in August. It wasn't unreasonable, looking at the schedule, to think: "Hmm. Colorado could be 4-2, heck, even 5-1 when it goes to USC on Oct. 20."

Then stone-cold reality set in. It seems more likely now that the 0-2 Buffs win no games in 2012 than they match their three wins from last season. Making matters worse, while the Buffs have receded from modest preseason expectations, the rest of the Pac-12 has advanced. Perhaps significantly. In particular, the South Division no longer appears to have any easy outs. Other than the Buffs.



Colorado coach Jon Embree is facing an uphill battle with a young roster this season.

We should have seen this coming, though. The coaching staff was under no illusion that its team wouldn't be extremely young this season. As bad as things have been the past couple of years, losing 28 seniors -- 26 of whom started or saw significant action (when healthy) in 2011 -- is not something that a team can easily overcome.

You want young? There are only nine seniors on the entire roster. The current depth chart features 16 freshmen -- 11 true freshmen -- seven on offense and nine on defense. Both starting cornerbacks on Saturday are likely to be true freshmen.

Did we mention costly injuries. Receiver [Paul Richardson](#) started things in the spring when he blew out his knee. He's only Colorado's most explosive player. But wait ... there's more. Linebacker [Doug Rippy](#) and safety [Ray Polk](#), both seniors, are likely out at Fresno. Cornerback [Greg Henderson](#) and center [Gus Handler](#) are questionable.

The simple fact is Colorado, even against some lower-division teams, faces a talent and experience gap. Remember what Bum Phillips said about Bear Bryant: "He can take his'n and beat your'n and take your'n and beat his'n."

Bryant couldn't win with Jon Embree's roster.

The problem for Embree is he walks a fine line between maintaining confidence in his locker room -- aka, "We're close!" -- and pleading for patience to a disgruntled fan base that sees the talent gap, but also is micro-analyzing the coaching, looking for creative failures and every blip of inefficiency.

"What's killing us right now is details," Embree said. "We have to be more detail-oriented as coaches and as players."

Granted. There were mistakes aplenty in both losses. But those are the sorts of miscues young players make. The devil might be in the details, but the losses are reflective of the depth chart, which Embree has had control of for just one and a half recruiting classes (he was hired in December of 2010, so he gets a 1/2 for his first recruiting class).

Of course, the coaching staff can't just sit back and hope things work themselves out, and it doesn't appear it is. The staff made a change at tailback, and 235-pound freshman [Christian Powell](#)'s move from fullback yielded 147 yards rushing and three TDs against Sacramento State. Embree said backup quarterback [Connor Wood](#) would see action at Fresno State, along with starter [Jordan Webb](#). And you can expect to see plenty of shuffling along the depth chart over the coming weeks as Embree and his staff try to figure out who can play and who needs to sit.

Embree has suffered through a horrible start before in Boulder. In 1986, his senior season as Colorado's tight end, the Buffs opened with a 23-7 loss to Colorado State, the first defeat in an 0-4 start. That team stepped up and finished 6-6.

That's not going to happen here, though. The more instructive numbers Buffalo fans should consider are 2, 4 and 1.

Those are the number of wins Bill McCartney produced his first three seasons. You might recall that things got better.

Patience is no fun. Being told to have patience is even worse. But that spoonful of cod liver oil is probably the best medicine right now in Boulder.

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