

CU Buffs' Daniel Munyer on target for opener

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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Buffzone.com

Junior guard Daniel Munyer is Colorado's most experienced offensive lineman, but he still hasn't been on the field in full-contact situations this month because he continues to heal from a broken leg suffered in the spring.

Coach Mike MacIntyre said Munyer is getting closer to being fully cleared each day and his experience and diligence in watching practice should allow him to play against CSU with only a few practices during game week.

MacIntyre said Munyer attends every meeting and participates in walk-throughs. He referred to Munyer as a smart guy who is engaged, asking questions and taking notes.

"I always like when (team trainer) Miguel (Rueda) sits in our staff meeting and goes, 'No setbacks. He's moving forward. Do more.'" MacIntyre said. "It's happened every day for the last five days. So if that keeps going, he will be right on track to go full speed Monday."

Contact staff writer Kyle Ringo at ringok@dailycamera.com or twitter.com/kyleringo.

Team needs more speed at position while playing in Pac-12

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Some of the great middle linebackers in Colorado history might not have played for the school at all and probably wouldn't have played in the heart of the defense if they were being recruited today.

The nature of the middle linebacker position might be the same as it ever was in the rugged Southeastern Conference, but in the Pac-12 and across much of the nation coaches are looking for speed at the position more than they did in the past to combat the proliferation of spread and speed offenses.

"It's got to be somebody who understands how to read combination blocks and zone blocks and be able to take on a guard once in awhile and flip his hips and play on the third receiver outside," CU defensive coordinator and linebackers coach Kent Baer said. "It's a unique position. You almost have to, if you don't have the talent to play in space, you almost have to have two groups of linebackers, one to play against bigger sets and one to play against smaller sets."

That might be what CU coaches are forced to do this season with eight spread offenses on the schedule.

CU middle linebacker Brady Daigh went into his sophomore season a year ago listed at 250 pounds. He was one of the Buffs' best defenders when he was on the field but he only played 250 snaps over 10 games, in part, because CU needed more speed on the field.

Daigh has worked hard to trim down in the offseason in an effort to become more of an every-down, every-scheme kind of player. He is between 230 and 235 pounds now, despite a severe knee sprain that slowed him through most of the spring.

"I'm trying to be more of a sideline-to-sideline player instead of tackle-to-tackle," Daigh said. "I've felt a lot better out here running sideline to sideline and chasing guys down. So I think that's one of the big improvements I've made."

Daigh's primary competition for the starting job at middle linebacker is Addison Gillam, a true freshman from Palo Cedro, Calif., who is 10 pounds lighter than Daigh and faster. Clay Norgard, a 6-foot, 240-pound bruiser, is another young player trying to earn playing time in the middle.

Just this week CU coaches began experimenting with true freshman George Frazier at running back. Frazier played both offense and defense in high school but was recruited to play middle linebacker at CU by former coach Jon Embree.

MacIntyre said it's still possible that Frazier will be a linebacker for the Buffs but that would likely happen after a redshirt season and year of work in the strength and conditioning program, which would give Frazier a better chance to succeed at the position in the Pac-12.

But Daigh has experience on his side.

He made 31 solo tackles last fall, including five for losses with a quarterback sack, a forced fumble and pass broken up. He also was second on the team in special teams points.

"It's kind of a different game now," he said. "It's not as much in between the tackles but you've just got to adjust."

Depending on what defense the Buffs are in, Baer could move a faster player such as seniors Derrick Webb or Paul Vigo to middle linebacker in certain situations.

Experience might be the key component when it comes to coaches making decisions about the depth chart to start the season. Baer said the middle linebacker has never been more integral to the success of a defense than it is in this new era of up-tempo, wide-open offenses. It's just a different skill set that coaches go looking for on the recruiting trail.

"I think it's more important," Baer said. "That guy has more to read to play in a box and play all this stuff in spread offenses, he's got a lot to do. Now the nature of the position is changing some in terms of how fast the guy needs to be."

Contact staff writer Kyle Ringo at ringok@dailycamera.com or twitter.com/kyleringo.

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Colorado program gets makeover after 1-11 season

After a one-victory season, Colorado has a new athletic director and football coach.

By Bud Withers

Seattle Times college football reporter

Earlier this week, Rick George, the new Colorado athletic director, was to meet with the higher-ups at the Pac-12 Conference in a getting-to-know-you session.

Commissioner Larry Scott probably didn't tell George this, but he could have: Get with it. And George probably didn't respond like this, but he could have: We're trying.

George takes over a CU program struggling mightily enough that you might wonder whether the Pac-12 knew exactly what it was getting when it expanded in 2010.

A snapshot: George, hired from a job as president of business operations with the Texas Rangers, needs to raise money fast so the Buffaloes can jump into the football-facilities race consuming most other Pac-12 schools. He has set a goal of \$50 million by Dec. 1, which seems ridiculously ambitious.

"Will it be tough? Yes," George said by phone last week. "Can it be done? Yes."

Potentially complicating the CU picture is a cart-before-the-horse move. George arrives after his predecessor, Mike Bohn, had fired football coach — and alumnus — Jon Embree after two seasons, and replaced him with Mike MacIntyre of San Jose State before Bohn himself was canned in early summer.

That doesn't have to be an issue, but if the Buffs struggle on the field for an extended period, it could be.

"I'm really glad he's our head coach," George said. "He pushes our kids really hard, but at the same time, he puts his arm around them."

It's going to be breaking news if Colorado isn't the worst team in the Pac-12 in 2013, but MacIntyre gets high marks from just about everybody for his feat of turning around San Jose State.

"He's about as solid a guy as I've met," Oregon State coach Mike Riley told me recently.

MacIntyre said he was "a little anxious" upon Bohn's firing, but added, "The only thing I can relate it to is, I had three different ADs in three years and I had three different presidents (at San Jose State). Everything changed every year, but we just kept working in the football area."

Perhaps the newsiest development of CU's fall camp is that Bellarmine Prep product Sefo Liufau, a freshman, has impressed and looks like the No. 2 quarterback. Depending on how long a leash

MacIntyre gives starter Connor Wood, who threw 42 passes last year as a backup for a 1-11 team, the launch to Liufau's Buffs career could parallel MacIntyre's.

The defense, which allowed school records of 488.5 yards and 46 points a game in 2012, looks iffy and so does offensive-line depth. The two best weapons on offense are Paul Richardson, a quality receiver returning from a 2012 knee injury, and running back Christian Powell, who rushed for 691 yards as a freshman.

Off the field, at least George has insider knowledge of Colorado, having served as director of football operations a generation ago under Bill McCartney.

He dismisses the notion Boulder is too liberal and Colorado too recreation-minded to care enough about football Saturdays.

"People do like football here," he insisted. "I just don't think we've given them a reason to like football here."

He concedes there is fence-mending to be done with alumni upset with either the top level of Colorado administration or with the abrupt treatment Embree was given.

"Sometimes you've got to get past those things that irked you, and look at why you're passionate about the school," George said.

And then he conceded: "It is going to take some work." Everywhere you look, the Buffs have plenty ahead.

Bud Withers: 206-464-8281 or bwithers@seattletimes.com