



By: CUBuffs.com



Brooks: Wood To Start, Calls His Grip On Pistol Firm

Release: August 26, 2013

By: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

(Last in a series of position-by-position previews of the 2013 Buffs to be posted on CUBuffs.com during preseason camp. Today: Quarterbacks)

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BOULDER – At long last, Connor Wood has an offense to command. Of more importance, he's never felt better about being in command.

An arduous and frequently frustrating journey that has taken him from Austin to Boulder and through three coaching staffs has culminated in what Wood has dreamt of all along: to enter a college football season as a starting quarterback.

The 6-4, 225-pound junior will open for Colorado on Sunday against rival Colorado State in the Rocky Mountain Showdown. Kickoff is at 4 p.m. (CBS Sports Network) at Denver's Sports Authority Field at Mile High.

Wood's backup will be Sefo Liufau, a gifted true freshman who absorbed enough of CU's pistol offense and made enough plays in August camp to ease past junior college transfer Jordan Gehrke and third-year sophomore Stevie Joe Dorman.

But the pistol is in Wood's hands first, and he and his coaches believe he has the right feel for it.

"Since March it's been a really, really good growing process for me – especially this summer," Wood said. "It was a big time for me and my maturation in the offense. It served me well."

"I've been pleased with his progress," Wood's position coach, offensive coordinator Brian Lindgren, said. "Attending the Manning Academy in the summer was really big for him, being around some starters from around the country. You could tell his confidence was boosted from that. And being selected a captain by his teammates – that's as big an honor as you can have, in my opinion. It shows the confidence this team has in him."

A high school All-America selection in Houston (Second Baptist), Wood transferred from Texas to CU in 2011, sat out the mandatory transfer season and started one game (playing in seven) for the Buffs in 2012. His lone start – against Washington – wasn't memorable: he attempted six passes, completed three for 11 yards, and threw two interceptions.

But with the early spring knee injury to Jordan Webb and the surprising post-spring transfers of Nick Hirschman and Shane Dillon, Wood suddenly found himself as the lone quarterback on the CU roster with any game experience, however scarce. If he had difficulty capitalizing on his opportunity two springs ago, he seized it this spring and summer.

"I know me and the other quarterbacks worked hard and studied film in the spring, then took it into the

offense during the player-led (summer) practices,” Wood said. “I feel like now, the many reps we’re getting – ones and twos on one field, threes and fours on the other – we just crank it out. I’ve gotten way more reps than in the previous fall camp. The more and more you do something, the better you get.”

When CU hired Mike MacIntyre last December to replace Jon Embree, MacIntyre brought Lindgren from his San Jose State staff to coordinate his pistol offense and coach his quarterbacks. From tape Wood has studied of the Spartans’ version of the pistol and what MacIntyre/Lindgren have introduced at CU, “There are great similarities. It’s a very, very similar offense and the same terminology that they brought in. Coach Lindgren and coach MacIntyre both expect a quarterback to take command of the offense. It can’t be a system quarterback out there . . . there are a lot of things to do in the post-snap; there’s some thinking that goes on out there. A quarterback in this system has to ad lib a lot.”

Wood said he is comfortable doing that: “I think in this fall camp I’ve done a good job scrambling and finding those windows to throw in. That’s what football is really about; it’s not going to go perfect like it does sometimes in practice – not at all.”

Last season at San Jose State, Lindgren tailored the pistol to suit the talents of junior quarterback David Fales. The Spartans morphed into a highly efficient offense, setting 27 school offensive records and averaging 446.2 yards a game (337.2 passing).

According to Wood, Lindgren tailored CU’s pistol to Wood’s strong suits of “passing the ball and spreading it around. The very, very short throws, the intermediate and deep throws, I think I can put the ball anywhere I want to. I think we do a variety of things and that includes me being under center some, rolling out, running the shotgun, different stuff. We’re going to be multiple in what we do.”

Lindgren said Wood “throws a nice deep ball and has a little stronger arm than some of the other guys, but some of them are a little more accurate on some of the underneath stuff. So each have their strengths, but each one of them has the ability to do it physically.”

Liufau played in a pro-style offense at Bellarmine Prep in Tacoma, Wash., and took practically every snap from under center. But the 6-4, 210-pound Liufau apparently has settled very comfortably into a new offense and taking the short center snaps.

“I love it; it works to your strengths,” he said. “Coach knows how to work it in. There’s good things for the offense and individually. It feels great back there, being a little further back from the line. I understand it, too; it really hasn’t been that big of a deal.”

That’s undoubtedly due to the instruction of MacIntyre, Lindgren & Co. “They put you in a spot to be successful,” Liufau said. “The amount of teaching they do in the film room and out here on the field even between plays really puts you in a good spot to know coverages, reads, checks and all that. Right now I feel comfortable but there’s always room to improve and I look to do that every day.”

Liufau arrived on campus in early June wanting to challenge for the starting job. “Obviously everyone wants to come out and start, but mainly I wanted to do the best I possibly could,” he said. “The coaches know what we need, what positions to put us in. If the team needs me to play this year, I’ll play. If the team needs me to sit at No. 2 and be ready to play, I’ll do that. If I have to redshirt this year, I’ll do that, too. It’s whatever the team needs me to do.”

The Buffs will go into this weekend’s season-opener, said Lindgren, with practically all of the offense at Wood’s disposal. But how much of it is used in week one will depend on game-planning for the Rams that Lindgren preferred not to discuss.

Said Lindgren: “A lot will be determined by what we like against Colorado State and what Connor’s good at, what he’s comfortable with. We’ll have a fair amount of stuff in; in fact, we’ve got most of our stuff in.”

Wood knows he’s not a finished product, and Lindgren expects him and the trailing trio of QBs to steadily develop through the season. As a group, said Lindgren, their biggest challenge “is the mental part, understanding the concepts we’re trying to teach and understanding defenses – from zones to pressures to coverage – and understanding weaknesses of defenses and how to attack within what we’re calling. That just comes through repetitions.”

A sticking point for Lindgren through August camp was increasing the number of completions by the entire group. Wrong decisions, increased defensive pressure and simply missing throws initially contributed to more incompletions and inconsistency than Lindgren wanted.

“There were times you thought we were really about to be there and it was starting to click,” he said. “Then we’d make a mistake and I’d have to remind myself that for these guys it’s their first year in the system, they hadn’t been in it a full year and they’re still learning. We’re learning as we go, but we’re

constantly challenging those guys to be consistent every day in their decision making. We're getting better but we've definitely got room to improve."

Gehrke (6-1, 190) said the biggest area of improvement for him must come in sharpening his timing with receivers: "Timing is the hurdle. It pays off in the long run when you don't have to constantly look at your guys. You're throwing to so many different receivers and you have to learn who can get out of breaks quicker, who takes a little more time. That just comes with time."

Dorman (6-2, 215) said his biggest strides in August camp were in his accuracy: "I felt like I really improved a lot and had a good camp. From the spring until now, I'm way more comfortable with the offense. There's not a big difference (in the pistol), but we have more wrinkles out of it. There's a whole lot more diversity in having a back behind you instead on left or right side because you can run either way. I like it."

THE INSIDE LOOK AT . . .

Quarterbacks

Coach: Brian Lindgren, first season at CU

Returning starters: None (2012 starter Jordan Webb's status is undetermined)

Returnees: Connor Wood, Jr.; Stevie Joe Dorman, So.

Newcomers: Jordan Gehrke, So.; Sefo Liufau, Fr.

Key losses: None

Stat line: CU's quarterbacks had a 55 percent completion mark in 2012, with Webb's completion percentage at 54.3 (eight TDs, eight interceptions). Buffs QBs have to be more accurate in 2013.

Bottom line: New coaching staff, new offense, new starter, new results? CU's quarterback play has been anything but efficient of late, so maybe wholesale changes in the football program are what it takes to increase the position's productivity. The receiving corps should be better, but the running game must be too to take the pressure off of an inexperienced starter. Wood, a junior captain with renewed confidence, was the QB to watch throughout a summer of player-led practices and preseason camp and will open against CSU. Liufau and Gehrke are picking up the system and Dorman has had his moments in August. The importance of efficient play at the position can't be over-emphasized.

Contact: BG.Brooks@Colorado.EDU

Colorado Buffaloes Football

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By: CUBuffs.com

Freshman quarterback Sefo Liufau has impressed the coaching staff enough to be placed second on the depth chart.



MacIntyre: Frosh Liufau Has 'Phenomenal Maturity'

Release: August 26, 2013

By: Josh Casey, CU Sports Information

BOULDER – After spring drills, Connor Wood had the inside track to be named Colorado's starting quarterback. But it was true freshman Sefo Liufau's position on the fall depth chart, released Monday, that raised more than a few eyebrows.

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Liufau is listed as Wood's backup, ahead of sophomores Jordan Gehrke and Stevie Joe Dorman.

First-year CU coach Mike MacIntyre reasoned that in just a few short months since arriving on campus, Liufau has already proven he is a unique individual who is worthy of the opportunity.

"He has phenomenal maturity," MacIntyre said of Liufau. "I know I used the word phenomenal but I mean it with him sincerely. I think the reason I use it with him is where he grew up, his family situation. He has two great parents and he really works well with his family. He's really done a great job with his family and his family situation with his brother and sister. He's really had to be a really mature kid."

MacIntyre said he and his offensive staff "like the way Connor has played and we think he gives us the best chance right now. We're excited about what Connor has done (thus far)."

In an ideal situation, MacIntyre would redshirt Liufau in order to get five good years to work with him and develop him into a top-flight quarterback. MacIntyre, though, knows things may not work out that way and emphasized the team is prepared to use Liufau and either of the two other quarterbacks because of injuries or poor play.

"If Connor plays every snap the whole year and never gets hurt and plays really well then I would redshirt (Sefo) but if we've got to have him and he's doing really well (he'll play)," MacIntyre said. "Since this new concussion thing has come in I have not gone a season without a quarterback getting a concussion and I don't think many people do anymore. You're always careful about concussions but everything has changed now (and you must be ready)."

NOTABLE: MacIntyre placed true freshman defensive back Chidobe Awuize atop his listings for the team's starting nickel back spot. He said his athleticism, smarts and physicality make him a prime candidate to make a significant impact on the team immediately and he will be the first defensive back on the field in situations in which the opposing offense moves into three and four receiver sets . . . Offensive lineman Daniel Munyer and tight end Kyle Skavin are overcoming injuries and both are continuing to make progress, according to MacIntyre. Both are expected to play in the opener on Sunday against Colorado State (4 p.m., Sports Authority Field at Mile High) . . . Monday was the first day of fall semester classes, with many players scrambling after the morning workout to get to noon classes. The

team will continue its preparation for CSU with a Tuesday morning practice from 8:30-11 a.m.

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By: CUBuffs.com

Paul Richardson is humble by nature and usually cares little about being seen or heard. But the 2013 football season is different.



Healthy 'P-Rich' Wants To Make Noise As CU Captain

Release: August 26, 2013

By: Lauren Lanier, Student SID

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BOULDER — Junior wide receiver Paul Richardson is humble by nature and usually cares little about being seen or heard. But the 2013 football season is different; "P-Rich" is a Colorado captain and has the potential to be a game-changer.

This fall, he knows quiet won't cut it.

"I have a lot of respect for my teammates and being selected as a captain shows that they respect me too," said Richardson. "I'm very appreciative of this opportunity."

On the playing field, he is one of CU's biggest offensive threats. He enters the current season ranked 21st in career receiving yards (1,069) and 25th in career receptions (73), despite missing all of last season with a torn ACL. His numbers are impressive, but he is committed to making a similar impact off the field.

Humbled by the opportunity bestowed upon him, Richardson is eager to start the 2013 season alongside his teammates.

"My teammates mean the world to me," said the Los Angeles, Calif., native. "I've never felt the way I feel about my teammates. From the coaches, to coming to practice every day - I've never felt this feeling before. Everything feels right. I'm not saying that to be cliché, I'm saying it because it's true. I'm very grateful to be a captain of these guys."

Richardson's persistence to grow as a player and as a leader has not only been noticed by his teammates, but by the CU coaching staff as well.

"From this spring, he's been the leader of the wide receiver group," said wide receivers coach Troy Walters. "He's worked hard with his rehab and doing what he needs to do to get back on the field. You wouldn't even know he was hurt if you came out and watched him.

"He's a leader for our offense. He's explosive. He's going to be our playmaker. He wants to be great. Every day that he comes out to practice, he works as if he wants to be the best in the country."

Walters, a former All-American and Biletnikoff Award winner, understands the importance of having someone like Richardson that is committed to guiding and positively influencing others on the team.

"When you're a player, it's a great honor to be chosen as a captain," said Walters. "Paul has cherished that role and I've seen him grow as a leader even from spring workouts. He's not only a leader on the field, but also vocally. He is great about taking the young guys aside and mentoring them."

Mentoring his teammates is something that Richardson truly believes in. Hoping to do for others what was once done for him, Richardson's eagerness to help his team is something he learned from those that came before him. Richardson cites former CU wide receiver Scotty McKnight (2006-10), a senior when Richardson arrived to the program as a true freshman, as one of his biggest role models.

"As far as being a leader, I try to imitate Scotty," said Richardson. "He was the best role model a receiver could ever have. I still talk to him every week. When I go home to Los Angeles, he comes to visit me. He taught me what it takes to be a great leader. As a young guy, he took me under his wing when he didn't even know me. He saw something in me that made him want to push me to be better. That's what I've been trying to do with our young guys, and even some of the older guys. I try to keep them focused and keep them involved."

Richardson leads by example and is now the standout wide receiver that hopes to make an impact on those around him.

"When my time at Colorado is through, I just want to be remembered as a good leader and someone my teammates looked up to and respected," said Richardson. "I want to be remembered as a guy that helped turn this program around through leadership."

Colorado Buffaloes Football

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Connor Wood named starting quarterback by CU Buffs for game vs. CSU Rams

By John Henderson The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — Connor Wood's sigh of relief wasn't very audible. He has improved enough as a quarterback to know what a good quarterback looks like. The Colorado job was his to lose since fall camp began, and he did nothing to lose it.

First-year coach Mike MacIntyre confirmed that Monday by issuing a new depth chart, six days before the opener against Colorado State, with Wood atop the quarterback list.

"Officially, it's always a good feeling to see your name on top of the depth chart," Wood said. "I'm ready for this opportunity, and I've been ready for this since the last game against Utah."

True freshman Sefo Liufau is No. 2. How he'll be used will be determined by Wood's play. Despite Jordan Webb's knee injury and Nick Hirschman's transfer to Akron, MacIntyre said Wood did not win the job by default.

"He performed well in the spring, and he kept doing a good job in the fall," MacIntyre said. "He gives us the best chance right now, and we're excited about what Connor's done."

MacIntyre does not plan to have a quick hook. Ideally, he would like to redshirt Liufau, who showed flashes of brilliance in fall camp. Offensive coordinator Brian Lindgren called Liufau "as impressive as any freshman I've ever coached."

MacIntyre will not use Liufau just to give him game experience, or provide a change of pace.

"I'm not throwing him in the game unless something's not going good," MacIntyre said. "He's doing really, really well. If Connor plays every snap the whole year and never gets hurt and plays really well, then I'll redshirt (Liufau). But if we've got to have him, he's doing well."

"I'm not putting him in the third series just for the heck of it."

MacIntyre said he has never gone through a season when his starting quarterback didn't suffer a concussion. That's not great news for Wood, but having the starting job instead of pitching relief a year ago makes up for it.

His next step is handling adversity, which he admits he didn't do too well last year while throwing for 265 yards with one touchdown and four interceptions.

"That'll absolutely be key for me," Wood said. "To go into the game, into the season, knowing that there's going to be ups and downs and the best quarterbacks stay even-keel."

Footnote. Another depth chart decision was sophomore Nelson Spruce holding his starting job at receiver, despite the added speed at the position. He'll also return punts. Middle linebacker Addison Gillam is the only freshman starting, except for Chidobe Awuzie, the highly touted

cornerback who will be a nickel back.

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Fourth-year junior and once highly rated recruit finally wins job in camp

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Connor Wood was named the starting quarterback by Colorado football coaches as expected over the weekend putting the fourth-year junior at the helm of two revival efforts here in Boulder.

Not only is Wood trying to lead the Buffs out of a dark period of seven consecutive losing seasons, he is directing an effort to restart the Fellowship of Christian Athletes chapter that has been dormant at CU.

Wood, who transferred to CU two years ago this week from the University of Texas, said making that move was 'a leap of faith.' He said something gave him a good feeling about choosing to come to CU, when he had multiple options from which to choose back in 2011. Monday morning he said he felt his leap of faith had been rewarded.

"It's an amazing, amazing feeling," Wood said. "My family has been so instrumental in keeping my head above water when it sometimes feels like I can't do it any more and helping me stick through it.

"The last four years have not been very easy for me. To get this position is such a huge honor. I'm so very blessed and thankful, but at the same time, it's my job to keep. I've got to work to keep my job. It's not mine for the whole year. I have to work every game to earn it."

Coach Mike MacIntyre, who coincidentally earned the Grant Teaff National Coach of the Year Award from the Fellowship of Christian Athletes last season at San Jose State, said Wood won the job this month by building on his work in the spring.

"We feel like he gives us the best chance right now," MacIntyre said. "We're excited about what Connor has done."

True freshman Sefo Liufau will serve as Wood's backup. Liufau out-performed junior college transfer Jordan Gehrke and third-year sophomore Stevie Joe Dorman during fall camp.

Wood was thrilled to be discussing his confirmed status as starter on Monday morning after practice, though it was long suspected he would win the job. But it's also clear Wood does not believe he is in Boulder for football reasons alone.

On Monday night, Wood and eight other CU student-athletes, who comprise a leadership council, held the first meeting of the FCA at CU in years. They held a similar event without the FCA moniker earlier this year and it attracted 80 student-athletes or roughly 25 percent of those in the athletic department.

Wood said he asked former long-time CU linebackers coach Brian Cabral about the Boulder FCA chapter when he transferred here and Cabral told him it hadn't been active since the late-1990s.

"The best possible way for success at FCA that I've learned from the past at Texas -- FCA is really, really big at Texas -- is it has got to be student-athlete driven," Wood said. "Kind of like a football team has to be player driven. That's how it's going to really blossom."

Back in March when the Buffs began spring football under a totally new coaching staff, Wood was just a face in the crowd of a gaggle of six quarterbacks trying to make an impression. Wood proved to be the most dedicated to earning the job. Three other quarterbacks on the roster at that time left the program and another -- last season's starter Jordan Webb -- was charged with assault in the spring for an off-campus incident that came not long after he blew out his knee in spring practice.

Wood was the only quarterback on the roster in fall camp who had playing experience at this level of the college game. He appeared in seven games last fall throwing four interceptions with just one touchdown pass. The majority of that work came in mop-up duty in ugly losses.

Wood did start one game late last season, but he was replaced when it didn't go well.

Wood started a Bible study for members of the football team not long after coming to CU because faith is such a big part of his life. Wood said Monday that he believes his work to restore FCA at CU helped him on the football field as well. And he has no reason to believe it won't continue to help him thrive as he tries to lead the Buffs back to the glory days.

"It's everything," Wood said of the role faith plays in his life. "It's amazing how I can see how my life has made a turn for the better once I turned my life to the Lord."

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

Did you miss our CU football preview section on Sunday? If so, scroll over the image below for links to all the stories in the section.



Football: Sefo Liufau named CU Buffs' backup QB

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Naming a starting quarterback always grabs the headlines even when the chosen one comes as no surprise as was the case Monday when Colorado named Connor Wood its starter.

But the more eye-catching development on coach Mike MacIntyre's initial depth chart for the 2013 season was true freshman Sefo Liufau earning the backup job to Wood. CU, a program forced to play way too many young players in recent years, is now one play away from having a true freshman leading the charge.

MacIntyre said he has no plans to try to get Liufau some early experience this season by allowing him to take a few series from Wood or put him in the game in select situations. Instead, MacIntyre said he believes Liufau is getting enough reps in practice to prepare him should he be called on to replace Wood.

MacIntyre also made it clear he would have no problem putting a true freshman in as a replacement if Wood is ineffective, even though that true freshman would be taking his first college snaps.

"If things aren't going really well, I'll make a change with anybody and any position," MacIntyre said. "I'm not planning on putting him in like for the third series just for the heck of it."

Offensive coordinator Brian Lindgren said he already is emphasizing to Liufau that he must prepare as if he is going to be the starter each week. Lindgren said Liufau is the most-mature true freshman he has ever been around and he believes he is prepared to handle the spotlight if he is called on.

"I'm really excited for Sefo to see him in that position," Lindgren said. "I think his future is extremely bright at quarterback."

Lindgren said if Liufau does need to go into a game at some point, it could affect the game plan somewhat. He said coaches wouldn't necessarily take things out of the game plan, but he would call plays geared toward what he believes Liufau does best.

"I think any time you're putting a freshman in, you want to simplify it a little bit and focus on things he's comfortable with," Lindgren said. "That will be something we determine every week going into the game."

MacIntyre's policy is not to allow true freshmen to speak with media until after the first game of the season, unless those freshmen were enrolled in spring classes and went through spring football.

Football: More surprises on CU Buffs' depth chart

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

There were a handful of surprises Monday when Colorado released its depth chart for the season opener against Colorado State.

Senior Scott Fernandez earning the starting tight end spot was one, though the former walk-on has played a lot of football and fellow tight end Kyle Slavin suffered a hand injury that has hampered him.

Another surprise was defensive tackle Samson Kafovalu is listed at third string behind senior Nate Bonsu and fellow sophomore Tyler Henington.

Two more eye-openers involved true freshmen being listed as backups. Tedric Thompson has worked himself into a tie for the backup job at strong safety. He is tied with senior Terrel Smith who has played a lot of football for the Buffs the past two years.

True freshman Kenneth Olugbode is a backup linebacker playing behind senior co-captain Derrick Webb. Coach Mike MacIntyre said coaches really like Olugbode's athleticism and speed.

Third-year sophomore Nelson Spruce retained his starting job at one wide receiver position, holding off Tyler McCulloch and Jeff Thomas. Spruce is also the starting punt return man and clearly has impressed coaches with his reliability.

"He can play any spot, which really helps you," MacIntyre said. "Nelson does a good job. I think Nelson is a good football player."

It was no surprise that true freshman cornerback Chidobe Awuzie was listed as the starting nickel back. Awuzie has made the transition to the college game look easy in fall camp.

He has been a pest to wide receivers and quarterbacks this month and has shown the ability to play physical football.

"If you looked at him, you wouldn't say he looked like a freshman DB, the way he's built, the way he is athletically," MacIntyre said. "He's very bright. He was a 3.5 GPA student coming out of high school and he carries that over to the football field."

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