



By: CUBuffs.com

Mike MacIntyre will be on unfamiliar turf in an unfamiliar setting in Sunday's Rocky Mountain Showdown against CSU. But he knows about rivalries.

Brooks: CSU New To 'Mac,' But Rivalry Games Aren't

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BOULDER – Mike MacIntyre will be on unfamiliar turf in an unfamiliar setting in Sunday's Rocky Mountain Showdown against Colorado State. But rest assured, Colorado's first-year coach knows a little something about rivalry games.

MacIntyre grew up in a football family, with his father, George, working as the head coach at Vanderbilt from 1979-85. Mike played at Vandy during his father's final two seasons.

Ask him about Vanderbilt's bitter in-state rivalry with Tennessee and the memories – some good, some bad, all entertaining – flood forth.

MacIntyre recalls his father being "pegged in the head" with an orange during one Vandy-UT encounter, and he remembers the color orange being a taboo wardrobe choice in the MacIntyre household.

"No orange in our house, no way whatsoever," he said.

When he was a Commodores safety, the younger MacIntyre didn't successfully defend a Vols touchdown pass and was rewarded with a torrent of "about 300" sugar cubes in the UT end zone. The Vols were in contention that season for a Sugar Bowl berth and a win against Vandy secured it.

Now, fast forward to 2013 and CU's run-up to MacIntyre's debut against CSU. Having coached against the Rams at San Jose State and crossing paths elsewhere with a few of their assistants, MacIntyre has some familiarity with CSU – just not as an in-state rival.

But this much he's certain of: "It's a 365-day-a year game. That's the difference. Everybody knows everybody, they talk about it. It's always something that's brought up; it's in recruiting and everything else. When you go out to eat somewhere, that game's brought up. It's just one of those types of games that have extra special attention on both sides. Our kids will be ready and I know their kids will be ready."

MacIntyre's staffers will find themselves in the same situation Sunday – new to the CSU series but not new to rivalry games. Cornerbacks coach Andy LaRussa likens this rivalry to others he's experienced at San Jose State (vs. Fresno State) and UNLV (vs. Nevada-Reno). Having grown up in Southern California, he also recalls the USC-UCLA in-town confrontations.

But early on after joining MacIntyre's CU staff, LaRussa got a taste of the Rams' distaste toward the

Buff's.

"It was very evident to me early," he said. "I recruit the northern part of the state, so I've gone into Fort Collins to recruit. Every time you go in there with the Black and Gold on, they look at you a little funny. I'm looking forward to Sunday and seeing it firsthand. Every rivalry game is special and a lot of fun. It's usually whoever wants it more that day, and I think our guys are pretty hungry."

CU's out-of-state first-year players usually arrive in Boulder needing a primer on the Rams from older teammates. "I know it's a big game, but that's about it," said freshman defensive back Chidobe Awuzie, who noted his only real experience with a rivalry game was his San Jose Oak Grove High School team annually playing Santa Teresa.

Awuzie's older CU teammates have tried to brief him on the Rams, and he's starting to get a hint about the game's intensity from local media reports. Recalling the Santa Teresa game, he said, might help him generate some added passion and energy for the Rams – but veteran Buffs might be a little skeptical about that scheme.

Senior outside linebacker Paul Vigo, one of six Buffs captains, didn't know much – if anything – about the CU-CSU series when landed in Boulder five seasons ago from New Brunswick, N.J. That changed quickly.

"It's an important game," he said. "It's big for the university . . . big for the state of Colorado."

After last season's 22-17 opening loss to CSU, Vigo said he and his teammates "hear about it all the time" and that MacIntyre's "365" assessment of the game was "absolutely" true.

Asked what stuck with him about last season's loss, junior quarterback Connor Wood, who grew up in Houston, said, "That big 'L' looming over our heads for almost a year."

MAC'S CSU CONCERNS: MacIntyre has "about a hundred," but which of three quarterbacks CSU chooses to start isn't among them.

Rams coach Jim McElwain will select his starter from among sophomore Conner Smith, junior Garrett Grayson or true freshman Nick Stevens. He said it could be a game-day decision, even suggesting that he might get his dog involved in the selection process.

Huh?

McElwain's plan: He would roll out three footballs, apparently each bearing the three QBs' names/numbers, allow the pooch to proceed to one of the three, identify it with a sniff (or something else) and end the suspense.

MacIntyre wasn't buying it: "I guarantee you he knows right now."

The CU coach said his chief concern is with his own team: "The main one is making sure they're ready to play." Teams usually are ready for an opener, he added, with the real coaching challenges occurring at mid-season or thereabouts – depending on the state of the season.

As for preparing for an unnamed starter, MacIntyre said during the course of a game so many defensive adjustments are required that prepping for any of three QBs beforehand doesn't pose a dilemma.

MAC ON HANDLING ADVERSITY: Early, late, whenever, it will happen. When it does, MacIntyre wants his team to not blink and move on. What he doesn't want is a "here-we-go-again" mentality to set in – much as it did during most of CU's 11 bad losses a year ago.

"When you have a good team, they don't even notice (adversity)," MacIntyre said. "That's what I hope, that they just keep playing. It's true that if you don't look at the scoreboard and just keep playing . . . the whole idea is to keep playing and the most important play is the next play."

MacIntyre indicated that effective leadership among the players is paramount. "We've done everything we can (as coaches) and we'll keep pushing," he said. "We've got to keep it going in the right direction. We'll always be firm and positive. We'll keep pushing that. We try to put them under ultimate pressure in practice at a lot of times in a lot of different ways. We try to put pressure on them in the meeting rooms . . . hopefully they're bonded enough with each other that they care about fighting through those things."

QUOTE OF THE DAY: Asked if he would be nervous on Sunday running behind Ralphie for the first time, MacIntyre answered: "Not as nervous as I would be running in front of Ralphie."

NOTABLE: True freshman Sefo Liufau is Wood's backup at quarterback, and MacIntyre says even if Wood has to come out for an equipment-related issue or whatever, Liufau goes in. MacIntyre answered

“no” to a questioner who asked if it was realistic to look at this as a possible redshirt season for Liufau. Said MacIntyre: “Sefo is really good . . . good enough to be second team. I wouldn’t hesitate to play him. Hopefully nothing happens to Connor, but if it does then Sefo is ready to go.” . . . Junior guard Daniel Munyer missed a couple of weeks of August camp due to a spring leg injury, but he’s scheduled to start Sunday. MacIntyre said Munyer was eased back into practice work, with his reps increasing as Munyer was able. “He’s bright, he’s been able to be in meetings,” MacIntyre said, adding that Munyer’s return has had no adverse effect on O-line chemistry . . . More will be revealed in September, but here’s what MacIntyre learned about his first CU team in August: “Every day they came to play. They came to meetings focused. They were on time to everything. They showed signs that this is very, very important to them.” . . . The last CU head coach to win his debut? Rick Neuheisel in 1995. His Buffs waxed Wisconsin 43-7 in Madison.

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Colorado Buffaloes Football

Show Menu



MacIntyre has team believing in themselves again

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

There is doubt surrounding the Colorado football program even as a more positive vibe is quietly growing within it.

The 2013 season opener is just five days away and no one on the outside expects much from the Buffaloes following a seventh consecutive losing season in 2012 in which the Buffs went 1-11, leading to a coaching change.

The doubt encasing the Buffs, like a fist around a marble, is no surprise. It's coach Mike MacIntyre's job to show his players how to break free from it and thrive. He seems to be making progress.

"I have no reason to think we would not make a bowl game," wide receiver Paul Richardson said recently. "I'm very confident in our program. I'm confident in our coaches to put us in the right position to be successful. That's where all my confidence in this team is coming from.

"I'm out here in the trenches with my team. I'm in the team periods. I'm on special teams. I know how good we can be on offense and how good we can be on defense. I don't see us, just going game-by-game on our schedule, I don't see why we wouldn't be in position to make a bowl game this year."

The Buffs are starting to believe in themselves again, in part, because they have their best weapon back on the field in Richardson, but also because of the approach MacIntyre and his staff have taken with them. It's a 'firm but positive' tact that players appear to like after two years of a more R-rated in-your-face style from their old coaches.

Still, they are continuously confronted by the doubt on the outside. It happened again Tuesday at the first of MacIntyre's weekly press luncheons when he and captains Connor Wood and Paul Vigo were asked several times if they believe this year's team will handle adversity better than it did a year ago when the team was repeatedly routed in seven of the final eight games, all losses.

Last season got off to a sour start as well with a loss to CSU.

The Buffs gave away a double-digit lead to the Rams in a 22-17 defeat. It was a mistake-filled game for CU and harbinger of what was to come the rest of the season. Only once, on the road against Washington State, did the Buffs show the ability to overcome their mistakes, band together and win.

Wood described last season's loss to CSU as 'a big L' that has been hanging over the Buffs' heads for nearly a year. He said the way CU coaches handle practices and meetings has given players confidence to stick together more than in the past -- at least on the practice field. CU fans will find out Sunday and in the coming weeks if it all translates to games and improvement.

"Coach MacIntyre does a good job during fall camp specifically of giving us surprise situations,"

Wood said. "I think we'll be more prepared for it and hopefully capitalize on those opportunities."

MacIntyre said he understands his players will look to him in those adverse situations most of all and it is important that they see him handle every situation with consistency.

"I have moments when I'm fiery, I have moments when I'm very even keel and I have other moments when I'm watching and doing things," MacIntyre said. "So they know who I am and I've got to be that same person every day.

"As you do that, then you sustain stability and everyone knows how to react and there is a calmness to it and eventually, great things start to happen."

MacIntyre said he has 100 concerns at this point but his primary emphasis is that his players are ready to play on Sunday. He says he believes they are.

"Usually that's pretty easy the first game," he said. "It's when you get down to the middle of the season and they're tired and they're sore. That's when you have to keep pushing them and pushing the right buttons and keep working and keep finding and keep searching to motivate young people."

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Howell: CU Buffs still working to repair ego

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Optimism is flowing in Boulder as the Colorado football team looks forward to Sunday's season opener against Colorado State.

New head coach Mike MacIntyre speaks with refreshing energy. There's reason for hope when the players talk confidently about the drastic attitude difference within the program.

Then again, the memory of last season is still difficult to wipe away. The last time these Buffs got on stage, they coughed up a game to Utah. At least that one was competitive. The Utah loss, which polished off a 1-11 season, was preceded by seven consecutive beat downs. The Buffs were blown out of the water by halftime in most of those seven games.

For all the good MacIntyre and his players have done in the spring and summer, one has to wonder: Has the quit been flushed from the Buffs?

Throughout that 1-11 disaster of a year ago, CU looked like a team that severely lacked confidence and quit more often than not. Former offensive tackle David Bakhtiari admitted that in a recent article published by the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.

Now with the NFL's Green Bay Packers, Bakhtiari spoke of "dysfunction," a "lack of preparation" and a "lack of caring" from the 2012 Buffs. Another player said half the team quit in 2012.

There were only eight seniors on the squad last year, so if Bakhtiari is accurate, a good chunk of the players still at CU gave up last year.

Junior quarterback Connor Wood said MacIntyre and his staff have done a good job of putting the players in difficult situations during practice to simulate some adversity and get a sense for how they'll react.

"I think we'll be more prepared for it," Wood said.

The coaching staff has introduced a lot of changes since arriving in December. The offensive and defensive systems are different. The attitude is different. Several players are new to the team.

MacIntyre, however, realizes that he's got a team with a potentially fragile psyche and he's been working to repair that.

Some kids might respond one way and other kids the other, so we've got to keep it going in the right direction," MacIntyre said. "We're always going to be firm and positive; we're going to keep pushing that."

It's easier to preach that message in spring and summer than it is in the fall, though. Adversity in August practice doesn't match dealing with a 35-point deficit in the first quarter, or falling behind

in the fourth quarter at home against an FCS opponent, or a costly turnover to kill a promising drive.

It'll be during those times that the Buffs truly get tested. It could be as early as Sunday that we find out whether nine months of positive energy from MacIntyre has been enough to remove the quit.

Not even MacIntyre knows the answer.

"That's up to those young men," he said. "We've done everything we can and we'll work with them and we'll keep pushing them.

"Hopefully the bond between each other is enough that they care about fighting through those things. When you have a good team, you don't even notice those things are happening. I hope we get to the point that they don't even notice, they just keep playing."

The Buffs aren't good enough right now to ignore adversity. They can get there, though, by handling it better than they've done in the past.

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Football: CU Buffs' Parker Orms hoping for healthy season

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Parker Orms remembers all too well how his first college game ended.

On Sept. 4, 2010, just a few minutes into Colorado's opener against Colorado State at Sports Authority Field at Mile High, Orms went down with a torn ACL. He was covering a punt on his first series as CU's starting nickel back.

"It ended quickly on the punt," he said. "I can't think about that. I just have to think about how I was able to play through the last two games that we played them."

On Sunday, Orms is hoping to create a positive, lasting memory of the Rocky Mountain Showdown. Now a senior, Orms and the Buffs will open the season against the Rams at 4 p.m. in Denver.

"I'm excited," said Orms, CU's starting strong safety. "I can't wait to play these guys."

A Denver native, Orms said this rivalry, which he's followed most of his life, means a lot to him.

"I remember the first (CU-CSU) game I actually saw was up here when I was 7 years old," Orms said. "It's a special game for me. I can't wait to go out there and have an opportunity to play CSU and play in this game. I think I'm going to have a lot of fun this year."

He's also hoping this is the first of 12 full games for himself. After his knee injury in 2010, he missed the last 11 games. Then, he missed seven of CU's 13 games in 2011 because of injury and suspension. He missed two games in 2012 because of a concussion.

CU coaches limited his participation in training camp, which Orms said should help him going forward.

"The biggest thing for me was not having any setbacks (physically)," he said. "It's been a blessing so far, staying healthy, and hopefully that can continue throughout the year."

"I basically live in the training room. I know all the people in there; they're my best friends. They're making sure that I'm going to have a healthy body to go out there and run around and fly around like I usually do."

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Football: CU Buffs' Daniel Munyer back in action

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

After missing most of training camp while recovering from a leg injury, guard Daniel Munyer has been at full speed for the past few days and said he's ready to go for CSU.

"I'm feeling really good," said Munyer, who fractured a fibula in March. "The only thing to get used to is playing fast again, but that comes. I feel like I'm back there with everyone else."

Munyer, who started all 12 games (six at center, six at guard) in 2012, has moved back into his starting role at right guard. He said that because he's been at every team meeting and standing near his teammates during drills, he didn't feel behind when he came back.

"I haven't done a whole lot of hitting, but hitting is one thing that I like," he said. "Everyone around here knows that, too. I've been really looking forward to getting back out there with my teammates."

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Mike MacIntyre says CSU has an advantage over Buffs in Showdown

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Coach Mike MacIntyre said Colorado State holds an advantage over his Colorado Buffaloes in at least one way going into his first Rocky Mountain Showdown on Sunday.

The majority of the Colorado State coaching staff and players have been together for a season and have a feel for each other -- a chemistry of sorts -- while most of the Buffs will be playing their first game in a new system for a new coaching staff.

MacIntyre is trying to become just the second CU head coach in the past 15 coaches to win his debut game with the Buffs. His counterpart, CSU coach Jim McElwain won his debut against the Buffs last season.

"I think it would definitely give them an advantage," MacIntyre said. "...Continuity is always good."

The first weekly press luncheon of the season Monday was MacIntyre's sixth press conference since he was hired in December. He has also had several informal media roundtables and dozens of post-practice interviews.

"You've done all this work. Now you want to see them play," MacIntyre said.

While MacIntyre believes the continuity on the CSU side is a big plus for the Rams, he said that advantage is mitigated somewhat by the fact that most of the CU coaching staff was together last year at San Jose State and that team played CSU and beat the Rams.

He said that familiarity works both ways.

"I think it helps, but it helps them also," MacIntyre said.

Starting quarterback Connor Wood and senior linebacker Paul Vigo, two of the team's six captains, joined MacIntyre in the Flatirons Club on the west side of Folsom Field. Both players said the 22-17 loss to the Rams last season has stuck with them for a year and they are constantly reminded of it.

"The big L has been looming over our heads for almost a year now," Wood said.

Follow Kyle on Twitter @KyleRingo

CU Buffs vs. CSU Rams game in downward spiral for selling tickets

By John Henderson *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — Numbers don't lie. People do. However, when it comes to the Rocky Mountain Showdown, people at Colorado and Colorado State say the numbers do lie.

No, the in-state football rivalry is not fading, they maintain.

Attendance figures say otherwise. When the game first went to Denver, in 1998, it drew 76,036 fans. It peaked in 2003 with 76,219. Since then, attendance has steadily declined.

A record low could be set Sunday. As of noon Tuesday, Colorado had sold 29,097 tickets, including 5,302 student tickets, the slowest sales it has ever had for the Showdown. As of Tuesday, CSU had sold 18,700 tickets, 6,400 for students.

That's 47,797 tickets. A major walk-up crowd will be necessary to avoid big empty patches in 76,125-seat Sports Authority Field at Mile High.

"With big events, you'd like to fill it," new Colorado athletic director Rick George said. "Full stadiums create atmospheres people get excited in."

George said he'll see how Sunday's game is aesthetically and economically before discussing a move back to a campus venue. The game is contracted for Denver through 2019, and any change George wants, CSU will likely oppose.

Much of the drop in attendance in recent years can be attributed to a drop in the quality of the programs. Colorado is in the throes of a school-record seven consecutive losing seasons, including 1-11 last year. CSU has had one winning record in the last nine.

This isn't exactly Alabama vs. Auburn.

"We need to generate excitement ourselves," second-year CSU coach Jim McElwain said. "That's why I was brought here. I get it. It's my responsibility to build that excitement. That's part of our jobs."

Regardless of the records and how many fans attend the game, this is the players' Iron Bowl. Take Kyle Slavin, Colorado's junior tight end from Chatfield High School. His parents are longtime Colorado season-ticket holders. His grandfather, Jack Anderson, was on the board of regents.

"I was always brought up to not like gold and green," Slavin said. "It's a good university, but to me it's complete ends of the spectrum on how a university approaches stuff and the lifestyle."

"Boulder is much more liberal; Fort Collins is more conservative. We're much more metropolitan; they're more rural."

Those aren't exactly fightin' words. But after last year's 22-17 upset loss, the Buffaloes received plenty of bulletin board material from their own fans.

"You hear it from everybody," said Colorado senior safety Parker Orms, a Wheat Ridge High School grad. "Classmates and stuff like that: 'How can we lose to CSU?' "

The traditional theory goes that it's a bigger game for CSU, which plays in the Mountain West, than it is for Colorado from the Pac-12, a major BCS conference. But Colorado is only 7-5 in the 12 games in Denver.

"I've got a newspaper article from last year, and we're all holding up the trophy," said CSU junior tight end Kivon Cartwright, from Pueblo South High. "I really couldn't describe it in words. It felt amazing."

The Buffaloes have felt awful, for an entire year.

"It's been a long one," Slavin said, "but it's about ready to get a lot better."

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Staff writer Tom Kensler contributed to this report.

Showdown figures

A look at the attendance figures for games in denver of the rocky mountain showdown.

Year, Attend, Result

1998 —76,036, Colorado 42-14

1999 73,438 CSU 41-14

2000 67,466 CSU 28-24

2001 75,022 Colorado 41-14

2002 75,531 CSU 19-14

2003 76,219 Colorado 42-35

2006 65,701 CSU 14-10

2007 68,133 Colorado 31-28 OT

2008 69,619 Colorado 38-17

2010 60,989 Colorado 24-3

2011 57,186 Colorado 28-14

2012 58,607 CSU 22-17

Kiszla: CU Buffs, CSU Rams must go young at quarterback, and soon

By Mark Kiszla The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

In football, hope begins at quarterback.

For too long, Colorado and Colorado State have been hopeless from the start of every season.

For the Rams and Buffs, it doesn't really matter who starts at quarterback when the teams meet Sunday in the Rocky Mountain Showdown, the game that hope forgot.

What does matter: If either CU or CSU is going anywhere in 2013, a star needs to be born at quarterback. For the Rams, it's Nick Stevens. For the Buffs, it's Sefo Liufau. For goodness' sake, both are 18-year-old freshmen.

There are quarterbacks at both CSU and CU with more experience. You know their names, which maybe you have taken in vain. We won't mention the names or deeply analyze the games of the experienced quarterbacks for the Rams and Buffs on the depth chart, because QBs have mothers, too.

Here's the bottom line: Unless Liufau and Stevens are starting sooner rather than later for the state's long-suffering football schools, the pain of watching the Rams and Buffs play could well linger throughout 2013.

"The scoreboard matters. Period," Colorado coach Mike MacIntyre said Tuesday.

The Rocky Mountain Showdown at Sports Authority Field has stopped mattering much to Denver football fans who get way more worked up about a banner of Baltimore Ravens quarterback Joe Flacco hanging on the stadium to celebrate the NFL season opener.

The only way the Rams and Buffs will force their way back in the football conversation? Find a QB.

And there is hope.

Liufau stands 6-foot-4. Coming out of Bellarmine Prep in Tacoma, Wash., he was ranked the No. 27 quarterback prospect in the nation by Rivals.com. As a prep senior, Liufau passed for 2,518 yards with 24 touchdowns against five interceptions.

Stevens stands 6-3. Coming out of Vista Murrieta in California, ESPN.com rated him a three-star prospect. In high school, a 4.0 scale wasn't enough to measure Stevens' intelligence; he graduated with a 4.2.

But statistics aren't required to see what must be evident to MacIntyre and his coaching counterpart at Colorado State, Jim McElwain. The most talented quarterbacks on their respective rosters are freshmen.

It's not a question of if Liufau and Stevens will start for our downtrodden local college football programs, but how quickly the change will come.

Playing quarterback on a horrendous team is bad for the ego. It can wreck a quarterback's confidence. For MacIntyre and McElwain, the tough part won't be deciding whether Liufau and Stevens give their teams the best chance to win. The tough part might be determining if Stevens and Liufau have sufficient talent around them to give the young quarterbacks a fighting chance.

As a member of the Pac-12, the Buffaloes like to pretend they are the big brother in this rivalry. But the truth hurts. During the past four seasons, CU has won 12 games, while CSU has won 13. This rivalry is essential, if only for the fact it gives both the Rams and Buffs a team on the schedule that's actually beatable.

Forget dreams of a national championship or even receiving votes in the national polls. For the Buffs and Rams, an invitation to any old bowl would be received like a gift from heaven.

"It think it's time," Colorado senior linebacker Paul Vigo said. "It's time to blossom into the team we've been dying to become."

The football stories at Colorado and Colorado State are remarkably similar.

The past is forgettable.

The present is a work in progress.

If there is going to be glory in either team's future, then Liufau and Stevens need to be great.

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