



By: CUBuffs.com

Junior Will Oliver will handle both the kickoff and field goal kicking duties as the season opens.

'Mac:' Starters Have Special Place On Special Teams

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By: Josh Casey, Graduate Assistant SID

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BOULDER – In today's college football landscape, special teams have become just as significant to a coach's game plan as the offense or defense. Often times the difference between winning and losing is more noticeable on special teams than in any other area, and as a result coaches everywhere are spending a substantial portion of every practice on improving in that facet of the game.

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One look at Colorado coach Mike MacIntyre's practices is just another example of how much more significant special teams has become as the evolution of the game demands teams to be much more detail-oriented and meticulous.

"We've been spending a lot of time on (special teams) here right now," MacIntyre said. "We spend a lot of our practices on special teams. We're working hard on that. We did team situations then we did special situations like at the end of the game."

One of the biggest questions for every head coach is deciding who will play on special teams. Some coaches are reluctant to play their starters there due to injury concerns, but MacIntyre has indicated that he has no such reservations.

"Yes (we will play starters on special teams), but guys that play on a ton of plays are not going to be on four (special teams units) because they'll wear out," he said. "Different times of the game you can get different guys in there depending on how the flow of the game is going. If our offense has a 15-play drive and our defense can rest for a long time a guy might be able to go back out and be on a kickoff or a punt team type thing. So we'll work on that and make sure we have the best players out there."

One of the most important players on special teams will be kicker Will Oliver, who will handle both the kickoff and field goal kicking duties as the season opens. Oliver has never held both jobs full time and taking on the added responsibilities will be something new for the junior.

"He's been doing good," MacIntyre said. "He was kicking really well. He kicked two field goals (Wednesday) in our two minute drill and made both of those. I think his confidence level is good. He's resting his leg and we're making sure we're good on that so we feel good about Will's strength."

On kickoffs, Oliver will be asked to consistently neutralize speedy kick returners and limit field position opportunities for other teams. If he is to succeed in that area he must be able to kick the ball out of the end zone and more often than not that is exactly what he'll be asked to do.

"If we can boot it out of the back of the end zone we'd like to," MacIntyre said. "There are certain situations sometimes where you might not do it for a game situation though. There might be some type of reason but I would think the majority of people would say, 'OK, let's just kick it out and put it on the 20 and play.'"

NOTABLE: MacIntyre spoke highly of Colorado State's offensive line in preparation for Sunday's game. He praised the team's tackles and center and admitted that he has admired the team's tight ends since he first saw them play two years ago when he was at San Jose State . . . MacIntyre admitted that tight end Scott Fernandez has been one of the biggest surprises throughout camp. In the wake of an injury to fellow tight end Kyle Slavin that caused him to miss practice for a few days, Fernandez has stepped up and assumed the role. He has "really pleased" the coach with both his blocking and receiving skills . . . MacIntyre told the media that the team will have a Saturday walk-through at Sports Authority Field at Mile High and "get a feel" for the stadium before Sunday's kickoff (4 p.m., CBS Sports Network).

Colorado Buffaloes Football

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Veteran Rams improved on the ground as last season progressed

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Colorado coach Mike MacIntyre says he isn't concerned with not knowing who will start at quarterback for Colorado State on Sunday because he doesn't expect much to change in the Rams offense regardless of who is taking snaps.

MacIntyre and his staff respect the fact that CSU can make plays in the passing game, but facing a potential All-American center anchoring a veteran offensive line, two potential NFL tight ends and several strong running backs, MacIntyre is emphasizing stopping the run.

"We have to stop the run," senior defensive end Chidera Uzo-Diribe said. "That's one thing our coaches have been preaching to us. I feel like we've been doing a good job out here.

"I feel good. My technique during this fall camp has gotten better against the run. There is still always some things I can work on to get better at it, but as far as my basic technique, I feel I have that down and I'm going to make a big step up against the run this year."

Uzo-Diribe and his teammates will face a big test on the ground when the season opens Sunday in the Rocky Mountain Showdown at Sports Authority Field in Denver.

Colorado State wasn't exactly stellar running the ball throughout the 2012 season, but the Rams improved in the final five weeks of the season rushing for at least 150 yards in four of their final five games. Most of the contributors to that improvement return this season including tailbacks Donnell Alexander and Chris Nwoke.

"They've been together for three years and they're very talented and they have their goals," CU defensive line coach Jim Jeffcoat said. "At the end of the year, they were achieving their goals. They went from 99.6 yards a game to over 160 yards per game. We understand that it's a very talented offensive line group and we're going to have to play up to their level."

Jeffcoat has watched a handful of his defensive linemen drop significant weight in the offseason and learn to play with quickness and agility this month. But their first real test comes against the Rams.

Jeffcoat says he is going into the season believing he will be able to rotate between eight and 10 defensive linemen. But he said that number could change based on individual performances, injuries and other needs.

"I want to play guys and keep them fresh and going after people," Jeffcoat said. "I want to keep them with a lot of energy."

The CU defensive line will face a CSU offensive line featuring four seniors and one junior. Center Weston Richburg has started 36 straight games for the Rams and didn't commit a penalty all of last season. He is on the preseason watch lists for the Rimington and Lombardi Awards and the

Outland Trophy.

"We've definitely have been paying attention to him on film and really making sure we know how he kind of works," CU sophomore defensive tackle Tyler Henington said.

CSU ran the ball 44 times for 125 yards in last year's game against the Buffs, but the Rams were able to control the game in the second half, earning tough yards by winning in the trenches.

The Buffs are expecting the Rams will try to pound them until they prove they can stop the running game. Jeffcoat said his players have to be mentally sharp and do all the little things right to win the battle this time around.

"The biggest thing is to understand our assignment and our gap control, not jumping out of gaps and understand where we've got to be at any certain time," he said. "That helps us. We have to make sure we're physical. Make sure we're using our hands and make sure that we're shedding blocks and getting to the ball."

Henington said he and his teammates on the defensive line feel confident about the task in front of them. They believe they can be much improved from last season when the CU defense allowed 226 rushing yards a game. Playing well up front will go along way toward becoming a tougher run defense.

"To me, a good D-line can basically win any game," Henington said. "If a D-line dominates an O-line, then that team has a great chance of winning. We've got to come out and we've got to play like we know how to. We'll see what happens."

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Football: CU Buffs' Fernandez ready to make impact at TE

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Senior tight end Scott Fernandez has two nicknames, which is one more than the number of catches he has during his Colorado career.

But, if the hard work he's put in and the praise he's receiving are any indication, Fernandez has a great opportunity to change that this season.

CU head coach Mike MacIntyre has listed Fernandez, a former walk-on from Legacy High School, as the Buffs' starting tight end going into Sunday's season opener against Colorado State. The Buffs and Rams will kick off at 4 p.m. at Sports Authority Field at Mile High in Denver.

"I've been really, really pleased," MacIntyre said. "I would say he's been one of the most pleasant surprises -- if it's a surprise. He's played good here, but he's blocking, he's catching the ball well and he's doing a really good job at tight end."

Always known as Scooter, Fernandez has earned another nickname from MacIntyre.

"I've nicknamed him Wolverine, because he looks like the Wolverine," MacIntyre said of the Marvel Comics character. "I'm just waiting for those claws to pop out."

Fernandez may not have claws, but his hands are improving, and he's excited about the possibilities ahead.

"Coming from walking on to this and changing positions, it's fun," he said of being a starter. "It takes a lot of hard work, but it's definitely been worth it."

Recruited out of high school as a defensive lineman, Fernandez was invited by former head coach Dan Hawkins to walk on to the team. During his first camp at CU in 2009 Fernandez shifted to the offensive line.

A year later, he was moved to fullback, and then to tight end. Prior to last season, former head coach Jon Embree placed Fernandez on scholarship for the year. MacIntyre did the same this year.

Although he has just one career catch -- a 71-yard touchdown at Arizona last season -- Fernandez said he's prepared to be a bigger part of the offense this year.

"The first go-round, first coaches, it was a little uncomfortable playing tight end and I never really caught a ball," said Fernandez, who is expected to graduate in December with a sociology degree. "Now at this point I'm pretty comfortable with it and I like it."

Fernandez is part of an unheralded group of tight ends. Junior Kyle Slavin, who is recovering from breaking a bone in his hand two weeks ago, and senior Alex Wood are also solid there. Redshirt freshman Sean Irwin is developing into a weapon, too.

"We'll all play and make big contributions," Fernandez said. "Everyone is going to get a lot of playing time."

Wood is more of a utility back, who will line up at fullback and tight end, but MacIntyre said the Buffs have three "end line" tight ends that are ready to play -- Fernandez, Slavin and Irwin.

"Before Slavin got hurt, I thought they were doing really well," MacIntyre said of his tight ends. "The positive side of Slavin getting hurt a little bit is that Irwin got to do a lot more and he really accelerated and he can really run."

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Football: CU Buffs' Will Oliver confident on kickoffs

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

With senior Justin Castor out for the season with a major hip injury, junior place kicker Will Oliver will handle kickoff duties this season.

Castor, Oliver and Zach Grossnickle split those duties last year, without a great deal of success. Of Oliver's seven kickoff attempts, just one was deep enough for a touchback. He expects to be better and more consistent in that area this year.

"I'm more confident than I think I've ever been," he said. "This camp and summer I've been hitting the ball way better than I ever have been."

MacIntyre said Oliver has consistently kicked the ball into the end zone during camp.

"We'll see how that goes when the jitters set in, but he's been kicking really well," MacIntyre said. "We've rested his leg to make sure we're good on that. I feel good about Will's stroke and his strength and everything."

Castor suffered an avulsion on Aug. 21 and faces a long road to recovery. He is set to graduate in May, but does have a redshirt year to use if he wants to try to come back and play next year.

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CU Buffs freshman Addison Gillam has talent to start vs. CSU Rams

By Terry Frei The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — Addison Gillam, who didn't even play high school football until his junior year in northern California, has been able to walk in, enroll at Colorado for the winter semester, participate in spring drills and now claim a starting spot at middle linebacker for the Buffaloes as a true freshman.

The questions are: Is that a good sign? Or an indication of how bare the cupboard was?

"One side of it is good, in that he's 6-3½," CU coach Mike MacIntyre said after practice Wednesday. "He's 235 pounds, he runs a low 4.5, he's very smart, he's very tough, he's very athletic, and I think he's a heck of a football player. On that side of it, I think it's good.

"But you'd like to have five of him standing there. Eventually, I hope we do."

Gillam is from Palo Cedro, near Redding, and signed a letter of intent in 2012 to play for MacIntyre and his staff at San Jose State. In part because of June 2012 shoulder surgery, he didn't enroll at San Jose State that fall, and the plan was for him to grayshirt and join the Spartans' program in the spring of 2013.

But when MacIntyre landed the Colorado job, Gillam decided to follow him to Boulder, and obtained a release from the Spartans.

"I got ahold of him," Gillam said. "I just loved his coaching staff. They did great things at San Jose, and I wanted to stay with them if I could. I talked to the new San Jose coach, Ron Caragher. He signed the release, and he was cool about it. I did feel bad. I hadn't met him before, so it wasn't as bad as it might have been, but it was tough."

Gillam was extensively honored in his prep career, and his late start at the game probably had something to do with West Coast Pac-12 schools, for example, not chasing after him.

But he has ended up in the Pac-12, anyway. Because of the unusual circumstances, he didn't take a recruiting trip to Boulder.

"My first day here was two days before classes started last January," he said with a laugh. "It was a rough transition, but I love it here. It's an amazing place."

He's not only going to be playing right away, he will start at linebacker in Sunday's Rocky Mountain Showdown against Colorado State — alongside senior Derrick Webb and junior Woodson Greer. Wednesday, Gillam was headed for his noon class, "American Masterpieces."

He had another minor shoulder surgery after spring ball, but has recovered.

"I haven't had any problems," he said.

He came to Boulder in time for spring ball and immediately stood out.

"I think my speed helped a lot, but being tall and fast helped," he said. "I'm still learning the defense, but it was effort too. I'm flying around everywhere, and even if I'm making mistakes, I'm doing it full speed."

Footnote. Redshirt freshman tight end Austin Ray is transferring. He's from Columbia, Mo., and was not listed among the top four on the depth chart.

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Mike MacIntyre feels Colorado is ready for game against CSU

By Terry Frei The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — The first week of the fall semester at the University of Colorado has become known as "Syllabus Week" — the academic pressures are minimal, students still are settling in to living quarters and, in the cases of newcomers, wishing there were GPS devices available to navigate the campus.

Freshmen also still try to decide whether they're being told the truth when an upperclassman says the Alferd E. Packer Restaurant & Grill in the University Memorial Center is named after an infamous cannibal.

A rallying point, though, could be that the start of football season is only four days away.

As the Colorado Buffaloes finished their Wednesday morning practice, and many rushed off to make noon classes, first-year coach Mike MacIntyre said he was convinced his team is ready for Sunday's Rocky Mountain Showdown against Colorado State at Sports Authority Field at Mile High.

"We had a really good practice today, we really did," MacIntyre said of the workout, which was closed to the media, on the Buffs' lower practice fields. "We're doing all the phases and putting everything in, and I thought the special teams phase was the best it's been the whole time. I thought we had a really good practice the other day, but I thought today was sharp in the special teams area, especially."

Assessing CSU as an opponent isn't new for MacIntyre, since his San Jose State Spartans defeated the Rams 38-31 in 2011 in Fort Collins and 40-20 in 2012 in San Jose.

"I think their offensive line is good," he said. "They have big tackles, and their center (Weston Richburg) is a very good player. Their tight ends (Crockett Gillmore and Kivon Cartwright) are exceptional. I think their tight ends have a chance to play on Sundays. They have the size and speed and athleticism."

CU has full morning practices again Thursday and Friday, then a walkthrough Saturday, all on campus, plus a get-acquainted visit to Sports Authority Field later Saturday.

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Speedy Colorado receiver Paul Richardson has Colorado State's attention

Written by Kelly Lyell
Aug. 29, 2013 |

coloradoan.com

Paul Richardson

• **Position:** Wide receiver • **Year:** Junior • **Height:** 6-foot-1 • **Weight:** 170 pounds • **Hometown:** Los Angeles • **High school:** Serra • **Notable:** Caught 11 passes for a school-record 284 yards and two touchdowns in a single game against California in 2011. ... Preseason candidate for Biletnikoff Award as the best receiver in college football caught 73 passes for 1,069 yards and 11 touchdowns in his first two seasons at CU before sitting out last fall with a torn ACL. ... Was a high school teammate of 2012 Biletnikoff winner Robert Woods from Southern California and still works out when he's back home in Los Angeles with current USC receiver Marquise Lee, who he considers his "best friend."

• **Next up:** CU vs. CSU, 4 p.m. Sunday, Sports Authority Field at Mile High, Denver • **TV/radio:** CBS-SN/KJAC (FM 105.5), KOA (AM 850)

CSU RamPage

For complete coverage of CSU's football team, including schedules, rosters, recruiting news, along with videos, photo galleries and archived stories, check out the Coloradoan's RamPage at Coloradoan.com/CSUfootball.

 CSU football coach Jim McElwain hadn't yet started talking about the opponent. He was still talking about his own receivers when it first came up.

"Have you see the guy they have, No. 6?" he asked reporters. "That guy runs really fast. I mean really fast. Wow!"

University of Colorado receiver Paul Richardson, McElwain said, is "faster than any guy we had at Alabama, I guarantee you that."

The coach, no doubt, was overstating the case a bit. There were plenty of speedsters, including Julio Jones, on the Alabama offenses that McElwain directed during his four seasons as the Crimson Tide's offensive coordinator under Nick Saban.

But you get the point. Richardson is the player that stands out when McElwain and his staff study the CU team they'll face in Sunday's season-opener. He warrants special attention, and he's getting it this week from a Colorado State University defense that returns six starters from last season.

Six starters who remember all too well the 429 passing yards and four passing touchdowns the Rams allowed in a 40-20 loss at San Jose State, which was running the same pass-happy spread offense that coach Mike MacIntyre and his staff brought with them to CU last winter.

MacIntyre's offense, run primarily out of a pistol formation with the quarterback 5 yards behind the center and a single running back beside him, was one of the most prolific passing attacks in the nation last season, producing an average of 332.7 yards a game on a team that went 11-2. Four San Jose State receivers had 45 or more catches and more than 600 receiving yards apiece.

Richardson is well aware of those numbers, although he claims otherwise.

"I don't look at them at all," he said. "I know they have an explosive offense, and I'm happy that we got coach Lindgren (Brian, the offensive coordinator last year at San Jose State) and we got coach MacIntyre, and our pass concepts are great. But I don't look at the numbers of guys in the past."

MacIntyre says he's "tweaked" some things in the offense to fit CU's personnel, but it's clear the Buffs plan to open up their offense with the passing game this season. And that just increases the value of Richardson, a 6-foot-1, 170-pound junior from Los Angeles who missed all of last season with a torn ACL.