

Football: CU Buffs' Connor Wood feels calm as camps starts

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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There is probably more pressure on Colorado quarterback Connor Wood to perform at a high level as fall camp opens Tuesday than at any time before in his college career.

And Wood finally seems at ease when it comes to dealing with the expectations.

Wood is the first to say there have been times in his previous three years when he has put too much pressure on himself to win a starting job and earn the respect of coaches, teammates and fans. He hasn't handled it well in the past, but he believes those days are behind him.

"I think I'm just a much more mature quarterback," Wood said Monday in a busy Dal Ward Center as players reported for the first team meetings of the 2013 season. "I don't worry about the competition as much as I used to. I used to say I don't worry about this and that, but sometimes it can get to you. But there is just a huge difference from spring to summer in how I have moved on from that mentality and just worry about being the best I can be. It's cliché, but it's true."

The depth chart at quarterback has changed significantly since spring practices ended at CU in April and that likely helped put Wood at ease to some extent. His strong performance during the spring also played a part.

Three of Wood's fellow quarterbacks in the spring have left the program and the future of a fourth is in doubt because of a major knee injury and legal problems.

That leaves Wood exactly where he finished in the spring, at the top of the depth chart. However, with his primary challengers for the starting role all out of the picture, Wood enters camp in a different mode than at any time in his career. Instead of looking to win the starting job, he will be trying to hold on to it.

It's essentially his job to lose with sophomores Jordan Gehrke and true freshman Sefo Liufau chasing him. Gehrke and Liufau weren't even on the roster in the spring. So Wood has a big head start on them.

"Personally I've thought of myself as the starter even before spring ball started," Wood said. "When this new coaching staff came you have to have the attitude that you're the guy and have the mentality that, 'I own this. I own this offense. This is going to be mine to take.' That should be the mentality for the rest of the guys in the room. That's the only way for everyone to get better with the open-competition thing is to say, 'I'm going to be the guy.' And work like it."

Coach Mike MacIntyre says the first few days of camp will be used to see who truly belongs in the quarterback competition, but because of the way he runs his practices, all the quarterbacks on the roster can plan on getting plenty of reps in the next two weeks.

Wood played in parts of seven games last year completing 21 of 42 passes with one touchdown and four interceptions. But those numbers came in an entirely different offense in which almost

none of the Buffs were playing with confidence. He looked like a new man in March and April in MacIntyre's scheme, which focuses on simplifying things for the quarterback and allowing him to get the ball out of his hands quickly.

Wood, who was named a team captain in June by MacIntyre after two rounds of voting by the team, says he's a much different player now than he was at this time last year or in 2011 at Texas because he is focused on the things he should be.

"The more anybody worries about their competition, the more it takes away from their own game," Wood said. "No matter what happens with any changes on the roster, I keep just plowing ahead."

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CU Buffs' defensive linemen makes gains by losing pounds

By John Henderson The Denver Post The Denver Post

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DenverPost.com

BOULDER — It's difficult to know what was tougher for Colorado's defensive line: going up the hill or giving up Cosmo's Pizza on the Hill.

The hill is a cement path that leads upward at about a 20 percent grade from Boulder Creek near the practice fields to the Dal Ward Center. Cosmo's is the campus pizzeria where the late-night hours are as fattening as the cheese is yummy.

The line, however, is conquering both. The group is nearing a goal first-year coach Mike MacIntyre set almost the first time he laid eyes on the big guys.

Lose a collective 100 pounds. Or else.

When fall camp starts Tuesday at 3:50 p.m., the line will be about 80 percent home. They have until the Sept. 1 opener against Colorado State to drop the other 20 pounds.

"It's very encouraging," MacIntyre said. "That shows you they're buying in."

It's not the entire defensive line, mind you. It's six players. When Colorado hired MacIntyre and he turned on game film from the 1-11 season, problems were obvious beyond the ugly stat sheet.

The Buffaloes' defense finished 119th out of 120 teams in yards allowed per rush (5.9), 115th in rush defense (226.0 yards per game) and 117th in total defense (488.5 ypg).

"They could play, like, two plays hard and the rest they're just getting through the play," MacIntyre said. "(In) today's football, you don't have time to huddle up anymore. You can't do that."

Dave Forman, the strength-and-conditioning coach MacIntyre brought with him from San Jose State, held team conditioning drills four days a week for eight weeks in June and July. Mondays and Fridays were the Longs Peaks of conditioning.

Sometimes the Buffs ran the hill 20 times in a 20-minute period. Other times they did 300-yard shuttle runs in which they ran 25 yards and back seemingly forever.

"It changes every day," Forman said. "There was very little straight-ahead stuff. When you start talking about the big bodies involved and how much force it takes to stop and then start again, you're adding to the load to what they're actually doing."

When the line's conditioning began to improve, Forman had them wear a 20-pound weight vest to simulate helmet and pads. On July 26, they all passed the team conditioning test.

"It was hard, but Coach Forman and the coaching staff did a good job of pushing us and just getting ourselves better," sophomore tackle Josh Tupou said.

Some of the transformations have been striking. Tupou weighed 335 pounds in January. Now

he's at 312. Senior tackle Nate Bonsu has gone from 314 pounds in the spring of 2012 to 285 pounds. End Kirk Poston has vastly improved his flexibility.

"We started in the Big 12, and when it was the Big 12 styles weren't that much different," Bonsu said. "You had offenses like Texas, but a lot of people still tried to run the ball. But in the Pac-12, almost every offense is running some kind of spread. They're running 60, 70, almost 80 plays.

"So being in the best shape you can be as a defensive player just makes everything better."

If any player doesn't meet his target weight by the CSU game, he will get acquainted with a certain treadmill and a fat-burning run. But as camp opens, they're already ahead of last spring.

"I have some good hope for them," MacIntyre said. "We'll definitely be better."

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