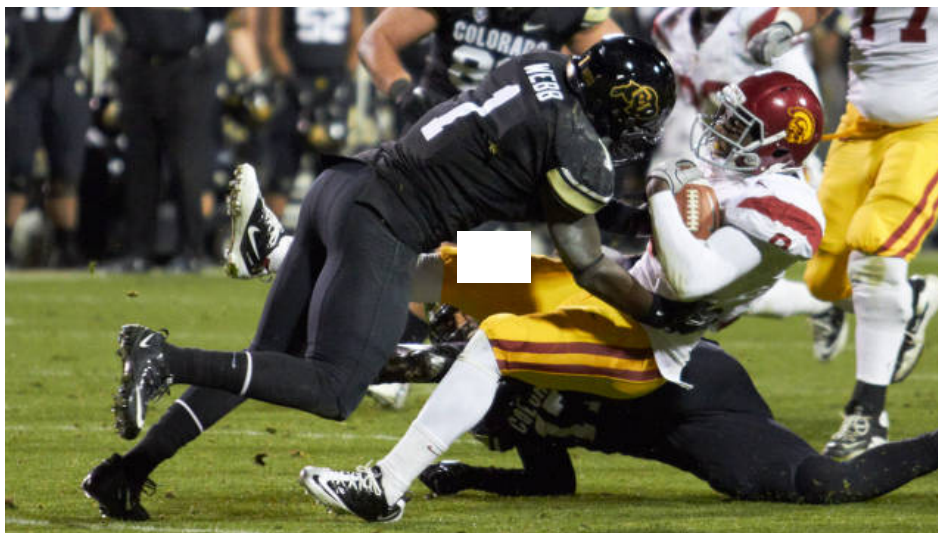




By: CUBuffs.com
Linebacker Derrick Webb (1) sees hope for CU's downtrodden defense.

Brooks: Webb Sees Chance For Improved 'D'

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By: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER – Derrick Webb is having a hard time keeping his optimism in check, which for a member of one of college football's most downtrodden defenses seems pretty peculiar. When those belly laughs subside, hear him out.

Webb plays inside linebacker for Colorado, last season's Pac-12 Conference punching bag and the target for a season's worth of unflattering one-liners on the national scene.

In 2012, Colorado became Colora_o – the school that inexplicably dropped its 'D.' The Buffaloes gave up points (46 per game, No. 120 of 120 FBS

schools) and total yards (488.5 a game, No. 117) at a dizzying rate. Heads not only spun, they rolled. Second-year coach Jon Embree and his staff were let go at the conclusion of a degrading 1-11 season.

In December, CU hired Mike MacIntyre, and MacIntyre promptly hired his veteran defensive coordinator from San Jose State – Kent Baer, who also coaches Webb and his fellow linebackers. Baer has no appetite for nonsense, shoddy workmanship and Saturday afternoons littered with mistakes. Players addicted to any of those simply won't play.

Webb's new position coach is stern, demanding and successful over the long haul. Over a combined 28 seasons he's been the defensive coordinator at nine FBS schools, and if there's one intangible he values more than any other it is effort.

Said Baer: "I want these guys to understand how hard you have to play every snap to win in this league. I don't think we're there yet."

Still, after a spring under Baer, Webb can see the beleaguered Buffs' 'D' getting there, even moving beyond those low outside expectations that project another poor fall in Boulder. (In a media poll last month, CU was a near-unanimous choice to finish sixth in the Pac-12 South.) Webb conceded that his unit's points and yards allowed last season "truly is amazing, especially when you know how good you can be. No reason we shouldn't be one of the best defenses in the Pac-12."

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Asked how much better CU's defense can be statistically, Webb offered this: "Realistically, top three – and that's very realistic. When you think about the small differences that accumulate during a game – one turnover, a missed tackle – we probably move up to near the middle, just off a couple of simple things we have to fix. You have to fix them or be exploited in this conference. It's going to be challenging but there's not that far to go."

Skeptics will say whoa, or something more colorful. A statistical point of reference from last season's final Pac-12 defensive standings: Stanford led the conference in both scoring defense (17.2 points) and total defense (336.2 yards), followed in scoring 'D' by Oregon State (20.6) and Oregon (21.6) and in total 'D' by Arizona State (350.8) and Oregon State (354.).

So if the Buffs match Webb's optimism and rise from the depths to the finish among the Pac-12's top three defensive teams, Boulder will be home to one of college football's epic turnarounds. But who's to say it's impossible?

Webb, a senior and one of the team's six captains, sees hope in an interior defensive line that – on strict orders from MacIntyre – reported to Tuesday's first practice of August camp slimmed down to the man. Said Webb: "We had some 300-pounders who knew they had to lose weight and they've done it. They knew they had to be quicker and they've worked hard all summer."

Webb, who led the Buffs in tackles last season (88, 61 solo), also likes the experience gained last season by a secondary that was among the youngest in the nation but is undeniably talented and is growing up after allowing an FBS-worst 39 touchdown passes last season. "They learned a lot last year, sometimes the hard way," Webb said. "I like what I've seen from them."

And at his position, Webb sees "so much potential. I'm just excited to be one of the leaders of this group." Among the returning linebackers, Webb said Woodson Greer and Brady Daigh "are learning what it takes to succeed; I'm seeing it in how they've worked out. We had a couple of guys who had to change some habits. Once I saw that change happen I could tell guys were getting ready to play their best football."

CU's summer work, overseen by director of sports performance Dave Forman, produced "my best summer yet for conditioning and focus," said Webb. "I'm feeling the urgency of my senior year. When you see the end it just makes you want to take it one day at a time, one practice at a time, one rep at a time. That's been my focus all summer."

But he went into the summer with his focus narrowed on becoming a better tackler. "I could always hit; I'm always flying around and getting to the ball," said Webb, who was included on the Butkus Award's preseason watch list. "But I've had form issues with tackling – moving my feet, not leaving my feet, keeping my head up, not lunging but running. I feel like I got better in the spring and coach Baer said I did."

If Webb is better in that area, Baer still wants across-the-board improvement from his defense in tackling. "We keep emphasizing that," he said. "We worked on it in the spring and we will in the fall. We're just not where we need to be. Those are things that sound little, but they're huge things to all of us."

Added Webb: "We needed that last year and we're definitely going to need it this year. We've taken the right steps, but it all starts with the 'want to.' Once you get somebody who actually wants to do it, then you can teach them techniques. But it starts with the player."

Another area of improvement that Baer sees as a "must-do" if the Buffs are to abandon the NCAA's statistical basement is consistency. CU's defensive trademark last season was a decent play (although not many) followed by two or three damaging downs that led to the bottom dropping out.

"The whole defense needs consistency . . . we're just not consistent in a lot of things we do," Baer said. "We'll be harping on that all camp. It can't be one good play, two bad. You see how many good ones you can get before you have a bad one – and we're not even close to that."

If they inch closer to Baer's mark, the Buffs have a chance – say what you will, it's still a chance – at inching closer to Webb's. The guy is aiming high and in early August there's nothing wrong with that.

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Football: CU Buffs' Christian Powell looking for more this season

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

DailyCamera.com

Positive storylines were few and far between in the 2012 college football season at Colorado, but running back Christian Powell was one of them.

Powell led the Buffs in rushing as a true freshman with 158 carries for 691 yards and seven touchdowns. Not bad numbers for a player who was recruited as a fullback.

His longest run of the year went for 64 yards and a touchdown and he had 19 runs of 10 yards or more.

Powell had a shot at surpassing the freshman rushing record at CU late in the year, but a concussion prevented him from playing in the season finale against Utah. That game and missing another game earlier in the season against Arizona State still frustrates him as the Buffs open preparations for the 2013 season with the start of fall camp.

"I'm still kind of upset that I missed it, but all I can do now is just build off it and stay healthy this season," Powell said.

Powell played in 10 games and made eight starts and there is no doubt who the starter is in the minds of a new coaching staff at the beginning of preseason practices.

"He goes into fall camp as the starting tailback and a guy who is a weapon and can do a lot of different things," CU running backs and tight ends coach Klayton Adams said. "He's just like everybody else in the group. He has some things he needs to work on and improve a lot for us to be really good, but he is a guy who can be a real weapon for us."

Powell reflects on the player he was a year ago at this time after a standout prep career in Upland, Calif., and he marvels at the difference. He's 6-foot and a solid 235 pounds, stronger and in better shape than ever. But the biggest changes are mental. He has loads of confidence now and believes he is capable of much bigger seasons to come.

"When you first come through it, you're a freshman," Powell said. "You're wide-eyed. You're like, 'Wow, this something completely new and completely different.' Now that I've been through it, you kind of know what to expect and you know how it's going to be, how your body is going to feel, how you're going to feel. It's always good to know what you're getting into instead of going into it learning as you go along."

Powell believes he can be an every-down running back in the CU offense this season, but he isn't sure coaches will use one player in that manner, with plenty of depth and divergent running styles among the available running backs.

He is competing to keep his starting job this month with Josh Ford, Tony Jones, Donta Abron, Malcolm Creer, Terrence Crowder, Phillip Lindsay and Michael Adkins. With that much talent at

their disposal, why wouldn't coaches try to share the workload and try to prevent any of the running backs from getting too beaten up?

Powell caught only seven passes in 2012 and hopes to improve on that number as well, but that could be a role that goes to one of his teammates.

He is excited to see what he can do in the new offense that will feature the Pistol formation frequently. The Pistol gives the offense and running backs an advantage because it keeps defenders guessing as to which side the ball might be going.

"He is really intelligent," Adams said. "He's more explosive than he probably seems because he's a big guy and he doesn't seem like he's covering that much ground and sometimes people take bad angles on him.

"He's a tough runner. He's really smart and humble. He has a lot of different good attributes. It's not just one thing you point to with a lot of other guys in the conference and say, 'This guy is special or that guy is special because of that.' He is a bring-your-lunch-pail guy who shows up and works hard all the time. He's just really steady."

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Football: CU Buffs feel comfortable on first day

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

DailyCamera.com

The first practice of fall camp brought the usual excitement and a fresh-start feel to the Colorado Buffaloes football team.

Tuesday's opening session also brought a measure of comfort to the returning Buffs.

Despite having a first-year coaching staff, the Buffs put in so much work during the spring and summer that they felt like they hit the ground running Tuesday.

"That was the best first day I've seen in the three years that I've been here, so that was really encouraging," junior wide receiver Tyler McCulloch said. "That's really because of putting in all that work this summer."

With the exception of the true freshmen, most of the team went through spring drills with new head coach Mike MacIntyre and his staff. Then, the group went through scripted, structured player-run practices all summer.

"It was definitely a big help to be working on it all summer and staying fresh with the plays, signals and just getting in and out of breaks," McCulloch said.

Senior defensive lineman Chidera Uzo-Diribe felt the same level of comfort on defense, too.

"A lot of the guys knew what to expect and what their assignments were coming into the first day," Uzo-Diribe said.

Tuesday was the first opportunity MacIntyre and the coaches had to see the players on the field since spring practices ended in mid-April, and he was pleased with what he saw.

"We were improved from the last day of spring," he said. "For us to get as many repetitions as we got without as many miscues I thought was good. It showed they worked this summer and their player-led practices that they did really paid off because we haven't gone backwards. We were able to move forward, because we installed some more stuff today."

Adding the true freshmen to the mix gives CU 105 players, and that led to the Buffs getting a lot more done Tuesday than they did in the spring.

"We had a period there where we got a ton of reps done, the most we've ever gotten, even at the end of spring," MacIntyre said.

That made for a longer day than the players are used to (their player-led practices went about 50 minutes), but Uzo-Diribe said it was a good first day.

"We ran a lot of plays today, a lot more than we ran during our player-run practices," he said. "This coaching staff, they want us well-conditioned going into the fourth quarter, so running all these plays out here in practice is definitely going to benefit us."

While there was a lot of comfort going into the first day, McCulloch said practice had a different feel to it, as the Buffs gear up for the 2013 season.

"It's definitely a really, really exciting day," he said. "I've been waiting on this for a while. Summer stuff is fun, but at the end of the day, you just want to be playing football again. There's a lot of excitement in the air."

Parker returns

Defensive lineman Juda Parker got his first chance to practice with the new coaching staff Tuesday. The 6-foot-2, 255-pound junior missed all of spring drills while recovering from a Nov. 30 surgery on his shoulder.

"It was a really great opportunity to come back on this field and play," he said. "I've been anxious for a while to get to play for these coaches."

Parker was cleared to return to the field after spring ball, so he spent all summer practicing with his teammates, but Tuesday was different.

"Just to have the coaches teaching you and prepping you for the season, that's always a different experience," he said. "I was kind of like a sponge. I was soaking it all up, really getting to learn from a great coach, (defensive line coach) Jim Jeffcoat. And just to play alongside some my buddies was a really great feeling."

Parker played in all 12 games last season, posting 19 tackles and three quarterback pressures in 241 snaps.

"He's looking great," Uzo-Diribe said. "He's taken the next step and I'm expecting big things from Juda this year."

Notable

MacIntyre announced that seniors Scott Fernandez (tight end), Josh Ford (running back) and Alex Wood (tight end) have been placed on scholarship for this season. All three were given one-year scholarship at the start of 2012 camp, also. "Those young men have done really well in the classroom, have done well on the football field and they're really well respected," MacIntyre said. ... CU now has 84 players on scholarship, one less than the NCAA maximum. "We'll figure out what we're going to do with it," MacIntyre said of the final scholarship. ... Ten minutes into a rainy start to Tuesday's practices, the Buffs fled the field because of lightning. That caused a delay of about 20 minutes before they returned.

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CU Buffs open practice, will adhere to regulations limiting contact

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

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER —Colorado opened a fall camp that will have a different feel this month. Oh, Tuesday's first day was no different. It was more than 100 players in shorts and helmets showing off their new fitness from summer workouts.

But once the pads go on Saturday, the feel will be lighter than normal this month. It always has been first-year coach Mike MacIntyre's philosophy. Now it is the Pac-12's.

The conference became the only league besides the Ivy to restrict contact this season.

"These guidelines have been shaped by input from our coaches who support our progressive agenda and have helped author it," commissioner Larry Scott said in his state-of-the-conference address on media day last month. "Our conversations with the student-athletes and coaches reinforced the need to design a rule that struck a fine balance between staying healthy and staying sharp."

According to the new guidelines, if a Pac-12 team has full contact in the first practice of two-a-days, the second practice must be in only helmets and shoulder pads. If a morning practice of a two-a-day is full contact, the preceding one-a-day practice can be no more than 50 percent full contact.

During the season, Pac-12 teams are limited to two full-contact days per week. The NCAA allows four.

Most coaches don't hit more than two days a week during the season, and many limit hitting in August to avoid injury. However, some hit more than others.

"I think it's good, because it'll reduce injury and keep us more healthy," sophomore tailback Christian Powell said Tuesday. "More toward the middle (of last year's camp), we were doing hitting drills every day."

The Pac-12 has done extensive head trauma research through a head trauma task force. In 2014, the Pac-12 will appoint a blue-ribbon panel of doctors and researchers who will share research and joint initiatives. The league will commit \$3.5 million in research grants for projects to improve safety at conference schools.

The league is having some teams experiment with special chips in their helmets and shoulder pads to monitor safety.

"All of our coaches in our conference — and we all talked long and hard about this — do a good job of taking care of their kids," MacIntyre said. "They understand you have to work them but can't hit too much. It's not too much different from what I did in the past."

MacIntyre said in lieu of full contact, the Buffaloes will "thud" — which is making contact without taking a player to the ground.

"We're trying to make sure we stay ahead of the curve and do what we're supposed to and show we're protecting the kids," MacIntyre said. "And that we, as coaches, know what we're doing."

Not all players, however, are for lighter practices. Then again, linebackers hit something when they wake up in the morning.

"Less hitting?" senior linebacker Derrick Webb said. "I guess it'll be good for our bodies, but we like to go out and be physical and really push each other out there. As a linebacker, I like the extra contact. We'll see how it goes."

Webb and Powell have been lucky — so far. Powell suffered a concussion last year against Washington. Webb never has.

"I pray a lot out here," Webb said. "I pray before every practice. I don't really worry about health issues. I leave it up to God."

- The Field House - <http://blogs.denverpost.com/colleges> -

QB Connor Wood loving Colorado's new pistol formation

Posted By [John Henderson](#) On August 6, 2013 @ 10:00 pm In [College Sports, Football, Pac-12, University of Colorado](#) | [No Comments](#)



Connor Wood (Daily Camera)

BOULDER — Connor Wood, who went from co-No. 1 quarterback to No. 1 at the end of spring when chief rival Nick Hirschman transferred to Akron, looked as sharp as he did in the spring in Tuesday's opening of fall camp. He loves working out of new coach Mike MacIntyre's pistol formation in which the quarterback is a couple steps closer to center than in the shotgun.

"At Texas I did some of it with (quarterbacks coach) Bryan Harsin," Wood said. "He came from Boise so he had a pistol, multiple formations. I like it. You play real fast. That no-huddle tempo is great."

The added speed at wide receiver and the quicker release fostered by the pistol will help him this year as Colorado gave up 4.17 sacks per game last season, second most in the nation.

"I want to forget last year," Wood said with a laugh. "You never want to forget. You want to learn from it. But we're moving on from there."

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