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Wood's Leadership Runs Beyond Captain Title

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By: Josh Casey, CU Sports Information

Note: This is the first of six captain profiles that will be run throughout Fall Camp.

BOULDER--It is one of the highest honors that could ever be bestowed upon a player by his teammates, yet as a quarterback, Connor Wood had accepted the role long before it ever became official.

Being named a team captain by his fellow Buffs this summer may have been newsworthy to the media, but it is a position Wood had already naturally assumed from the moment he took his first snap under center. So when he was officially awarded the title, along with five of his teammates, it was met with almost no surprise from anyone within the program.

"Quarterback is naturally a position of leadership so I understand the responsibility that comes with that title," said Wood. "With the way the spring and summer have progressed I was already able to fully establish my role as a leader both vocally and through my play but I am very honored to be actually picked as a captain."

It is expected of quarterbacks at every level to assume the role of leader and after more than seven years of playing the position, it is a task that Wood has long understood and embraced. As the de facto starter heading into fall camp and therefore the most visible player on the team, he realizes his duties as a captain go far beyond what happens on the field. New head coach, Mike MacIntyre has wasted little time attempting to further instill the obligations of the part.

"Coach MacIntyre has really stressed to (all six team captains) that it's not just about what happens at Dal Ward and on the field but also what happens on the weekends and at night," said Wood.

"Ultimately, our teammates look up to us because they voted for us. It wasn't something that was selected on by the coaches, it was voted on by the players so as captains we have the responsibility to take care of our business and stay out of trouble in order to set a good example."

During his nearly two years within the program, Wood has constantly exemplified himself as the consummate teammate, student, leader and

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CU Football will feature six team posters this year, one for each of the captains.

citizen. As he has risen up the depth chart, he has also gradually grown into arguably the team's foremost authority on the field.

"I've been even more comfortable this year," said Wood. "I've been able to call guys out that need to be pushed more. I've been a lot more vocal since I've been here for almost two years now. I look at my time so far as a growing process and I have more confidence (than before) so I'm ready to use my leadership ability and my playing ability ultimately to help this team be back where it was in the 90's and back to elite status."

Wood's leadership qualities derive from growing up directly in the shadow of an athlete whose success on the field and characteristics off it, served as the blueprint for which he has patterned himself. His elder brother, Jeff II, a star quarterback at Houston's Second Baptist high school who later played at Texas A&M, gave Connor the privilege of learning firsthand what

it's like to be both a quarterback and a leader.

"My brother taught me all I know about the quarterback position growing up and starting out," said Wood. "Up till I was nine years old, it was always about basketball for me. I had never even played football. Seeing him and his success in high school made me want to be a quarterback too. He helped me to understand what a cover two is and what a cover three is and about the attitude you have to have as a quarterback and the leadership qualities and the lessons that he learned, he taught me. I ended up starting as a freshman in high school and had the opportunity to lead the team and the rest is history."

In 2006, Wood too attended Second Baptist, but instead of attempting to equal his brother's legacy at the school, in many ways he surpassed it. In four years, he won a litany of awards, set numerous records and led the school to two district championships.

In 2010, Wood chose to attend the University of Texas only to redshirt, then transfer after only one season. After a slew of offers and a great deal of deliberation, he saw a great opportunity to come to Boulder and reenergize a proud program.

"It was a tough decision," said Wood. "I was transferring and there were other places I was choosing from and Colorado was amongst them. It came down to a gut feeling I had and that I felt that God was calling me to be a quarterback here and I just felt that I loved the challenge of coming here. I understand that the program has been down in the past and I wanted to be a part of something special, a rebuilding program."

After sitting out the 2011 season due to NCAA transfer rules, Wood played sparingly behind junior starter, Jordan Webb in 2012. An ACL injury to Webb during spring camp thrust Wood into the starting role and despite some stiff competition, he has held tightly onto the top spot. After three years of waiting, he now seems destined to finally get the chance to compete on a consistent basis at the college level.

"I look back and, especially going into training camp, I'm seeing the growth I've made personally as a football player," said Wood. "I'm using everything that has gotten me to this point as a growing process for me. That experience helped me get better as a player. This offense is very quarterback friendly and I'm confident I can compete with the best."

Wood will lead an offense that struggled last year in the midst of an overwhelming influx of injuries and inexperience. The team was without lead receiver, Paul Richardson for all of the 2012 season. His return and the development of a group of young and talented receivers will undoubtedly boost the likelihood of success with Wood at the helm.

"I like how our receiving corps has improved from last year," said Wood. "We have much more mature guys coming into this season. We threw some younger guys into the fire last year. I think that with the experience they have and with guys returning from injuries, I think all that adds depth but it also adds talent and speed and maturity to the position."

Wood will throw to those receivers under the protection of an offensive line blended with seasoned veterans and talented youth. Although they struggled as a unit last year, Wood thinks the group will help

keep the offense afloat this season.

"I'm proud of them and how they've been working this summer especially with new guys coming in," said Wood. "The older guys have done a good job with the new freshman so I'm confident in them. I trust in what they're doing up front and that I won't have to worry about the rush as much as I did last year."

After three years of playing the part of leader on the field only sparingly, Wood will likely get a chance to lead a team on a regular basis this fall. If the leadership qualities he has already displayed are any indication, the team couldn't be in better hands.

Colorado Buffaloes Football

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Former CU coach says facilities haven't changed much since his tenure

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

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Former Colorado football coach Rick Neuheisel believes the program he coached from 1995 to 1998 can return to national prominence within four years if university leadership truly gets behind it.

Neuheisel returned to the practice fields in Boulder on Thursday in his role as an analyst for the Pac-12 Network, which had CU defensive line coach Jim Jeffcoat mic'd up for a 30-minute inside training camp look at the Buffs that will air Sunday at 8 p.m. (MDT).

Neuheisel spent 25 minutes taking questions from reporters at the start of practice and said he believes Colorado hired the right man to turn around the program in coach Mike MacIntyre, but the school also needs to invest in new facilities to catch up to the competition in the Pac-12 and around the nation.

And CU needs to do it quickly because most of its competitors in the conference have either recently completed major facilities improvements or have them underway.

"It can happen fast, but what has to happen quickly is shovels got to get into the ground," Neuheisel said. "A commitment to a renovation, a commitment to an indoor facility, the things that big time programs have and exhibit, that has to get done to have recruits come back here.

"If they can get that done, terrific. ... All I know is that has to happen for this place to take the next quantum step, but it can happen in four years."

Colorado officials have taken some baby steps toward major renovations at Folsom Field and building a permanent indoor practice facility, but the athletic department is attempting to raise at least \$50 million of the estimated cost of \$170 million for the project.

CU went public with the project in February but has not given any updates on how much it has raised to date. Former athletic director Mike Bohn was fired in May, in part, because his bosses were dissatisfied with the lack of major fundraising gains.

The school hired Rick George as its sixth full-time athletic director in July. His first day is Monday and the top items on his agenda are meeting with potential donors.

Neuheisel showed some of his colleagues with the Pac-12 Network around campus during his visit and said the Boulder campus remains one of the most beautiful in the nation and a major selling point. But he also said the football facilities haven't changed a great deal beyond the club seats and suites that were added to the east side of Folsom Field 10 years ago.

He said only subtle changes have been made to the Dal Ward Center since he coached in the program as the head coach and as an assistant under Bill McCartney. He said what CU has now was good enough at one point but the fact that the Buffs are struggling on the field these days is

directly linked to its inability to attract top recruits the way it used to.

"In the '90s that was a phenomenal field," he said. "I remember coming from UCLA and going, 'Oh my goodness, I get to recruit to this now.' Now it's 2013 and they've got to figure out how to take that next wow factor. And not just for wow's sake, but also for the functionality of all the different sports that are here and the betterment of the student-athlete's experience."

Neuheisel surprised many in 1998 with his decision to leave CU to take over as coach at the University of Washington. Some CU fans will never forgive him for it.

Neuheisel spent time on Pearl Street on Wednesday night. It's one of a handful of times he has been back in Boulder since his days coaching the Buffs. He said he was generally well-received by CU fans.

"Well, if you wear your hat low, no one really knows who you are," Neuheisel joked. "Most people are very friendly. Time eases all of that stuff and we won a lot of games while I was here."

Perhaps the most controversial part of Neuheisel's departure from Boulder 15 years ago were his comments about the lack of amenities in the CU program. At the point, the Dal Ward Center, the athletic department's headquarters and home of the football program, was just 8 years old.

"In some ways there were some things that I said about the program that were taken as though I was being critical," he said. "I think people understand now. I made a comment when I left that Colorado has everything that money can't buy. I was treated as this, you know. The truth of the matter is you see the arms race that is taking place around college football and see the benefactors of these proliferations."

"You can see that for Colorado to take the next step, (MacIntyre has) got to do his job on the field, which everyone has full confidence that he will. He's already proven that he can. Now Rick George has to do his job of finding and soliciting the funds that are going to finance the expectations that this program should have. Because once you've won a national championship, you want to compete for those kinds of prizes. You may not get there all the time, but you want to be in the number of schools that can."

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