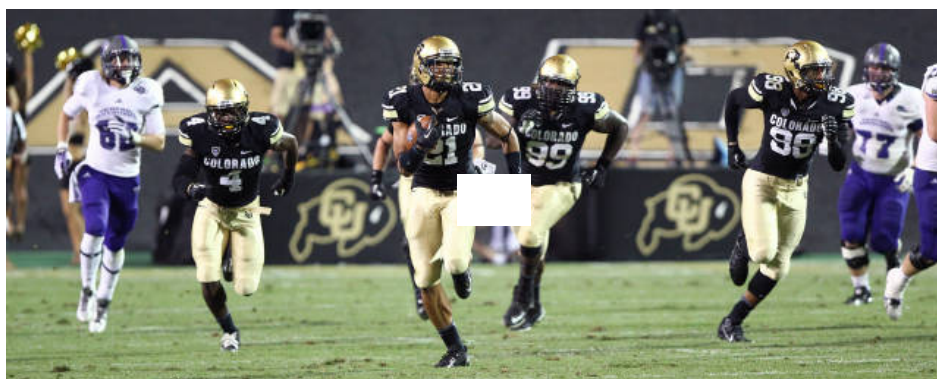




By: CUBuffs.com

Jered Bell (21) says the Buffs defensive backs need to go after the ball more aggressively.



Brooks: It's Not Oregon, But Same Offenses Await CU

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By: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

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BOULDER – Not to oversimplify, but from now through Thanksgiving weekend game-planning for Colorado's defensive staff should be eight pieces of cake. Maybe that's an over-the-top simplification.

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But personnel aside, the offenses lined up to face CU in its final eight games – including plug-in Charleston Southern next week and seven Pac-12 Conference foes starting with Arizona State on Saturday night – are of a similar breed (with a wrinkle or three, of course).

The spread option is to college football what the smartphone is to the cellular world. Almost everybody uses one – or a variation thereof.

"From here on out, a lot of teams are going to do similar things," said CU junior safety Jered Bell. Those "things" begin with no huddle, a quickened pace and a skilled option quarterback, in other words, most of what the Buffs experienced last Saturday against No. 2 Oregon.

The big difference will be in the players; CU won't have to contend with Oregon's overall speed or another Marcus Mariota. But the drop-off in QB play won't be that dramatic. The manner in which the Buffs' 'D' is preparing for Taylor Kelly and the Sun Devils offense sound suspiciously like the prepping for Mariota and the Ducks.

Observed Bell: "They're going to go at a high pace, they're going to do a lot of zone-read option and quick passes. Arizona State lines up fast. They'll try to trick you with their personnel; they'll have their tight ends in, but it's their '11' personnel. Our job will be to get aligned and communicate; that's our biggest key right now."

CU coach Mike MacIntyre said the Sun Devils' speed at lining up and running plays can match the Ducks' on occasion: "Not all of the time but they can sometimes. They have some plays where they're on the line just as quick or quicker. Every team kind of has little phases that they do a little different . . . I think that Oregon's offensive line was excellent at also moving fast. Sometimes that's what everything orchestrates really well. Some teams that go fast, their offensive line doesn't move as fast as the receivers and the running backs, so the holes aren't really there. Whereas Oregon has it synchronized pretty good and I think Arizona State does that, too."

Mariota was a monster against Bell and the Buffs, accounting for 398 total yards (355 passing, 43 running) and seven touchdowns (five passing, two running). Kelly and his offense might not be at the same level, but they're not too shabby. The Sun Devils are third in the Pac-12 in scoring (42.2 points a game), fourth in passing offense (359.4 yards a game) and fifth in total offense (489.4).

Kelly, a redshirt junior from Scottsdale, has thrown for 300-plus yards in all five of ASU's games this season. He's completed 63.3 percent of his passes (138-of-218) for 1,732 yards and 14 TDs, with six

interceptions. Receiver Jaelen Strong, a 6-3 redshirt sophomore, is averaging 113.8 yards and has three TD catches, but senior tailback Marion Grice has a team-high five scoring receptions.

MacIntyre called Grice, who averages 61.4 rushing yards (eight TDs) and 43.8 receiving yards, "extremely fast out of the backfield." Strong, a junior college (Pierce College in Puyallup, Wash.) transfer, offers "a big huge target and it seems like everything that is thrown it to him . . . he's like flypaper. It just sticks to him. He's really good," MacIntyre said.

Bell, who has one of the Buffs' six interceptions (corner Greg Henderson is tied for the league lead with four), said from here on out execution of the game plan is key: "The coaches have it all dialed up and will have a good game plan going in, so we just have to execute."

That's been an on-going dilemma in consecutive lopsided Pac-12 losses. In the 44-17 opening loss at Oregon State, the Buffs yielded 414 passing yards and six TDs to Beavers quarterback Sean Mannion. Coupled with Mariota's stats last weekend, that's 769 passing yards and 11 TD passes allowed by CU in the first two conference games. The Buffs' two-game Pac-12 point yield is 101.

Not surprisingly, the Buffs have settled into an undesirable but familiar position in the Pac-12 – last in pass defense (78th in the FBS) at 326.8 yards a game and a league-worst 13 TD passes allowed.

Bell contended the 11 TD passes allowed in the two league games is not indicative of the defense's capabilities. "Definitely not," he said. "We're a lot better than that. I know the stats may not show it, but we are improving as a team and as a defense. We're getting better; we just have to learn from it and move on."

The key to improvement, he added, is "competing more and going and getting (the ball). "We have to play through the hands of the receiver and find a way to get the ball out. (And) we have to communicate with our assignments. Last week there were a lot of mental errors on our part in the secondary. It just comes with studying, knowing our assignments, then competing on the play."

MacIntyre said CU's secondary was "just off a little bit on a few coverages where it happened fast and quick." As much as his guys being fractionally off, MacIntyre credited the difference to Mariota's quickness, speed and accuracy. "There were three (plays) that I can remember where if we had just a little bit more leverage all three of them would have not been plays but all three were touchdowns," MacIntyre said.

"Those are big plays and it really is that small of a difference. It's that big of a difference when it happens and that small of a difference if you make the play because they ran the exact same plays later on and we covered them like a blanket . . . I think that helped us understand."

Generating a pass rush against spread option offenses and QBs who "get the ball out" quickly is difficult, but it's something the Buffs need to do better. With six sacks in four games, CU is tied for 10th in the Pac-12 with Arizona, one ahead of last-place Cal (5).

Senior defensive end Chidera Uzo-Diribe, who led CU in sacks last season with seven, has one of the Buffs' six sacks so far. The key to getting more pressure on Kelly this week, he said, is "we have to win our one-on-ones . . . the front four, when we have that opportunity, need to take advantage of it."

Uzo-Diribe and Bell contended the Buffs' consecutive Pac-12 losses haven't affected them like last season's string of defeats. "Guys aren't letting up," Uzo-Diribe said. "We still have a lot of football left to be played. We are just learning from all of these games and we're going to make those experiences to always be learning, which will work in our favor."

Bell said unlike the feeling that began to permeate the team in 2012, there is no sense in the locker room that the slide has begun: "It may look like that, but we're a lot better defensively. It's unfortunate, the outcome of those games, but we are getting better. It's hard to see that from the outside, but from the inside we're definitely getting better.

"It's a different team from last year. Coaches are instilling in us a motivation; we're more motivated now. We're not getting down in our spirits. We're good to go. We care a lot about this team. We're not getting up on this season. We just still have a lot of work to do."

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Colorado football: Buffs' Addison Gillam continues to fly under radar

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera
Posted:

Buffzone.com

Addison Gillam says he is not being recognized on the Colorado campus these days any more than he was when the fall semester began back in August.

If Gillam has his way, that won't change, despite being one of the most successful freshmen college football players in the nation. He likes being just another face in the crowd when he's not on the football field.

But if he continues to perform at the level at which he has started his career, he is going to have to get used to notoriety.

Gillam is leading the Pac-12 Conference in tackles and ranks fourth nationally. He is one of only two freshmen ranked among the top 50 in tackles in the nation and the other freshman, Steve Longa from Rutgers, is a redshirt freshman. Gillam already set a freshman school record with 18 total stops in a loss to Oregon last week.

Fellow students might not be doing double takes in lecture halls or the dormitories but Gillam can't hide from the fact he has quickly become one of the most sought after interviews when CU practices end each day. It's the price of making plays.

"I just keep thinking to myself, 'Don't let it get to your head,' " Gillam said. "It can be over at any moment. So I just got to keep playing through every game and not look ahead. Just keep playing as hard as I can."

Gillam's maturity and focus are no surprise to the men who coach him now, the men who coached him in high school, the man he calls his best friend and the man who raised him.

"He's almost too good to be true," CU coach Mike MacIntyre said this week. "He does everything right and works at it and very humble."

MacIntyre and his coaching staff were the only Football Bowl Subdivision coaches to offer Gillam a scholarship when they were coaching at San Jose State in 2011.

The story of Gillam's recruitment actually starts at Sacramento State where CU running backs coach Klayton Adams used to coach before joining MacIntyre at San Jose State.

Adams first saw Gillam play as a sophomore at Foothills High School in Palo Cedro, Calif., near Redding, and made a note to keep tabs on him.

"You see a big, old 6-3, 215-pound dude returning punts and running the football and you go, 'Whoa,' " Adams said.

Even though Adams and MacIntyre were the only major college coaches to offer Gillam a scholarship, he almost declined the offer after attending a camp at San Jose State the summer before his senior season.

"He left that camp basically saying, 'There is no way we're going to San Jose,' " Gillam's father, Brian Gillam, said. "Nothing clicked really."

But Adams and MacIntyre persisted and eventually developed rock solid trust with Gillam and his family. He signed with San Jose State as part of the 2012 recruiting class but agreed to delay his enrollment until January of this year, a practice known as greyshirting.

That decision ultimately benefited the Buffs who hired MacIntyre and his staff in December. And now it's benefiting Colorado fans who are watching a budding star make an unmistakable impact on the Buffs' defense at middle linebacker.

"I'm always trying to run to the ball and get to everywhere, be part of the tackle or part of the play or anything," Gillam said explaining his approach to the game. "I think that is just the biggest part."

MacIntyre's move to Colorado was fortuitous in other ways for Gillam. The Boulder area couldn't be better suited to Gillam's interests off the field. He loves spending time outdoors hiking, bike riding, snowboarding, backpacking and fishing. He tried fly fishing for the first time when he came to CU this summer.

Sitting out last season might be playing a part in how well Gillam is doing now. It made him hungry for the game. He's also a year older than he would have been right out of high school and he spent last fall training hard with his best friend, Andrew Boetjer, a 26-year-old personal trainer who works with dozens of athletes in Northern California.

"I've trained a lot of athletes in the past," Boetjer said. "I mean hundreds and hundreds of athletes and I train a lot of them pretty much the exact same way, really hardcore training and pushing them to the max, but Addison has always had this really self-determined drive. He's always had this really deep desire to outperform his own best. He's always kind of competing against himself to be better each game

"Any time he does something whether it be great or not, he always finds the small kinks in it that he could have done better. That always helps him improve."

Coach Bryan Hamilton always recognized Gillam's talent as being above average while he coached Gillam in high school. But he realized Gillam was special during a crucial rivalry game against Shasta High School in Gillam's junior season.

Gillam's team rallied from 28 points down with Gillam leading the effort to get over the top. He made a crucial stop on third down in the fourth quarter playing linebacker and then returned the punt giving his team good field position to start the game winning drive. At running back, he made a key run on fourth down to keep the drive alive and finally capped the comeback with the go-ahead touchdown run. Hamilton said it all happened in less than 2 minutes of game time.

"That's all three phases of the game right there in crunch time in a huge game against a cross town rival in a conference championship game," said Hamilton, who is now the offensive coordinator and associate head coach at Shasta College. "I wish we had a ton of him. He was a joy to coach and we sure are proud of him."

While MacIntyre was the only FBS coach to offer him a chance to play at the highest level of college football, he wasn't the only coach to spend time with Gillam in the recruiting process. Gillam admits he has a chip on his shoulder when it comes to playing against some of those coaches who passed him up. Some of them are in the Pac-12 Conference.

"It's always nice going into games knowing a coach who gave you a little bit of interest or something but then didn't talk to you any more," he said.

Brian Gillam describes his son as quiet, humble and loyal. He said watching his son succeed so early in his career and make a name for himself nationally has been surreal for him, his wife and Addison's two sisters. He confesses he has been the epitome of a proud father lately around the propane business he owns and operates.

"I'm sure everyone around here is getting sick of it, but we're really proud of him," Brian Gillam said.

Brian Gillam said his son was forced to miss time during his high school career because of foot and shoulder injuries and not being able to play in those situations has taught him to enjoy every moment when he is healthy and playing. Addison Gillam is playing like football means everything to him.

"You've probably heard this a lot, but you can hit people and it's legal," said when asked why he loves the sport. "It's a good stress relief, you know? I just like having a team cause it's like they're all your family and everybody is close and knowing they will always have my back."

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Colorado football: Buffs need more production at receiver

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Paul Richardson is among the leading receivers in the country, and Nelson Spruce is having a solid season.

Beyond that, however, the Colorado football team has seen limited production from its receiving corps.

Aside from Richardson (31 catches for 621 yards) and Spruce (16 for 206), CU receivers have just 18 catches for 234 yards. Of those 18 catches, 14 came during the first two games of the season.

Receivers coach Troy Walters said the Buffs (2-2, 0-2 Pac-12) need to see more balance in those numbers as the season goes along.

"Ideally you'd like all of them to have more catches, but sometimes the game doesn't dictate it, sometimes we're in different personnel groupings and those guys don't get on the field," Walters said. "You'd like the ball to be spread around so that defenses can't clue on one guy."

Right now, that one guy is Richardson. He has been productive in every game this season, and as long as he's healthy, will continue to be the top target for quarterback Connor Wood.

CU is not getting the ball to D.D. Goodson (two catches in the past three weeks) or Tyler McCulloch (two catches in Pac-12 play), however. Keenan Canty and Devin Ross have just two catches for 15 yards between them -- both of those coming against Central Arkansas on Sept. 7.

Even Spruce has slowed down. He had eight catches for 99 yards in the season opener, but just eight catches for 107 yards since.

"We've got the guys, we've just got to continue to work and spread the ball around," he said. "As an offense you want to be balanced and you want to be balanced as a receiving corps and make sure that if defenses want to key on Paul we've got other options and other guys are comfortable and confident that they can make the plays in crunch time. That'll come."

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Colorado football: Buffs' Kenneth Crawley still a work in progress

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Sophomore cornerback Kenneth Crawley has given up some big plays in the past two weeks, but said he hasn't lost any confidence.

"I just have to keep going hard at it, keep contesting the balls and trying to get more knock-downs and picks," he said.

Crawley started as a true freshman in 2012 and took his lumps. He's had an up-and-down season so far in CU's new defensive scheme. But, Crawley is encouraged by what he's learning as he matures and said that playing in the pass-happy Pac-12 can only help him get better.

"Every day, I learn something new," he said. "These coaches, they help us a lot."

Junior Greg Henderson is helping out, too. Henderson has had a great season to this point and already has four interceptions.

"I learn a lot from his playing style and we talk about it," Crawley said. "He's a good inspiration to me."

So, while the results haven't been consistent, Crawley said he does continue to improve. The next step for him?

"Just being a complete corner and making more plays and locking down my side of the field, so they won't take shots to that side," he said.

Notable

Defensive lineman Josh Tupou (ankle) participated in practice on Thursday for the first time this week, albeit on a limited basis. Although he doesn't know if he'll play Saturday against Arizona State, Tupou said, "I feel a lot better. The swelling has gone down and now I'm just still trying to rehab it." ... Spruce has earned a first down on 10 of his 16 catches. ... Wood has a 140.57 quarterback rating on first down throws, but just 71.95 on third/fourth-down throws.

Contact staff writer Brian Howell at howellb@dailycamera.com or twitter.com/BrianHowell33.

Jordan Webb's return to CU Buffs blurs QB picture on depth chart

By John Henderson *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*
Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — Who is No. 2?

Through four games, Colorado's backup quarterback was true freshman Sefo Liufau, easily identified by his accurate arm, unflappable nature and the redshirt.

Now back on the scene comes Jordan Webb. The senior was a starter for most of the 2012 season before suffering a knee injury in spring ball. He earned a clean bill of health three weeks ago.

The return of Webb adds an interesting twist to CU's quarterback situation. If starter Connor Wood gets hurt, or continues to struggle, does first-year Buffs coach Mike MacIntyre insert the seasoned Webb, even though he doesn't have as much practice time in the team's new offense as Liufau? Or does MacIntyre insert Liufau and build for the future while burning his redshirt year?

"It all depends on what exactly we plan on doing the rest of the year," said MacIntyre, who added that he will decide by game time.

Webb will travel to Arizona State for Saturday's 8 p.m. MDT game against a Sun Devils team (3-2, 1-1 Pac-12) that has beaten Wisconsin at home and crushed Southern California.

"He's fired up," CU offensive coordinator Brian Lindgren said of Webb.

Need proof? Webb received clearance to play only five months after a torn ACL. A bigger question is how game ready he might be. Webb has been practicing for only three weeks.

"Timing on routes, he's a little bit rusty," Lindgren said. "But, shoot, he's back from an ACL a lot quicker than anyone I've been around."

A year ago, Webb was a human dartboard for a CU offense that was dysfunctional at best. In 10 games, he threw for 1,434 yards on 54 percent passing, finishing with eight touchdown passes and eight interceptions.

But Webb didn't have star receiver Paul Richardson or the added tailback threat of Michael Adkins II. Or the much improved offensive line the Buffs have this year. He also has a pistol formation that suits his skills.

"He's got the most experience of anyone we've got," Lindgren said. "He's taken a lot of Division I snaps. That's really valuable. I'd feel comfortable putting him in the game, for sure."

Webb would like to put a cherry on a career that has tasted more like last week's chili. While redshirting at Kansas in 2009, the Jayhawks started 5-0 but lost their last seven games.

Charlie Weis took over as coach after the 2011 season and told Webb he wasn't in the new staff's plans.

Webb has never been to a bowl game. In light of that, he's not worried about his knee.

"It doesn't matter what part of me was hurt before because it's not hurt anymore," Webb said. "Now it's just going out and playing ball like my backyard again."

When or if he or Liufau get to play is another story. MacIntyre has steadfastly backed Wood, whose opening two-game brilliance has taken a dip in conference play. The transfer from Texas is 25-of-67 (.373) passing for 351 yards, two TDs and four interceptions in two Pac-12 losses.

MacIntyre thought about pulling him during last weekend's 57-16 loss to No. 2 Oregon, but quickly ruled against it.

"I felt that Connor hasn't played a lot of football," MacIntyre said. "He's played four football games in his life, really. I think he played a quarter (last year) before they jerked him. And he never played at Texas.

"He showed some good signs. There's not an exact science."