



By: Joel Broida
CU receiver Paul Richardson (6) would rather win than hit personal highs.

Brooks: 'P-Rich' Focused On 'W's – Not Stats Or NFL

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BOULDER – Rather than big-headed, Paul Richardson is level-headed. He's about as well-grounded as anyone – fellow students, professors, coaches – strolling about the University of Colorado campus. Most who knew "P-Rich" and his work ethic were fairly certain that after sitting out last year with a knee injury, he would be a player to watch this season in the Pac-12 Conference.

An audience that goes well beyond the league has taken notice, but Richardson has barely noticed. He's second in the FBS in receiving yards per game (155.3) and seventh in total receiving yards (621, five touchdowns). A fully extended, one-handed catch last weekend against Oregon was nearly as big a personal thrill as throwing his first career pass, which happened to go for a 75-yard first-quarter touchdown to D.D. Goodson.

All is well and good on "P-Rich's" personal side, but there's much more to him than himself. His football team is 2-2 overall, winless (0-2) in the Pac-12 and goes to Arizona State this weekend perceived as a no-chance-in-hell underdog against the Sun Devils. ASU is a 25-point favorite, which could change by kickoff (8 p.m. MDT, Pac-12 Network) but was on par with CU's status among the oddsmakers before its first two conference games.

Richardson isn't paying attention. Asked earlier this week if the Buffaloes "taking the next step" depended on winning a game that no one expects them to, he answered, "If that's the case then we need to win all of our games because no one expects us to win any of them." But, yes, he said, upsetting Arizona State would be a start: "They beat Wisconsin, they beat USC, so for us to go in and beat that caliber of an opponent would be great for our team as far as self-esteem, as far as energy and hype and just continuing on our goal which is to get to a bowl game this season."

"P-Rich" is keeping the faith. One of the Buffs' six captains, he takes his responsibility to his teammates seriously and puts himself second. "I've got to get my team ready each and every week," he said. "I came off a 200-yard game (vs. Central Arkansas) then I had a 70-yard game (vs. Oregon State). It wasn't in my control, but if you have a game like that you can't go into the next one like, 'I only had 70 yards' and feel bad about yourself. There's highs and lows, you have to be able to play the next week. You have to keep a level head and stay balanced."

If every Saturday produced a 200-yard receiving day, that probably would mean the Buffs had won. That's what matters; the personal stats and momentary personal highs don't resonate with Richardson.

"I never hold onto things like that," he said. "Since my freshman year when I had those big games, I had no idea I was breaking records. When it's presented to me I appreciate it and it's an honor to be in record books for Colorado. But that's all in the past. I'll live that when I'm done with college and then it'll be like, 'Oh, look at these memories.'"

As a freshman in 2010, Richardson set school marks for most receiving yards (514) and touchdowns (six) by a freshman. In 2011, he tied six other performances – including his own at Kansas the previous season – by catching 11 passes against California. But his 284 receiving yards in that game left him all alone as CU's single-game leader.

His performances thus far in his junior season already have outsiders looking ahead and trying to project his future – specifically, whether he will return for his senior year or declare his eligibility for next spring's NFL draft. Richardson admits the prospect of playing in the NFL “has been a big deal since my sophomore year” and says he relishes the critiques of his game he hears from NFL analysts and draft watchers.

“But,” he adds, “as far as taking that step, I worry about this season. The next step for me is the next practice, that next game.”

Richardson's level-headed approach to what happens on the field took shape in high school (Serra, Los Angeles), when he and pal Robert Woods – now a receiver with Buffalo Bills – competed. “I knew you couldn't get too excited or too down,” Richardson said. “You can't be down on yourself, you have to encourage teammates to keep on being productive. That's what I learned before coming to college. I had a great humbling experience.”

It continued at CU when he suffered the knee injury two springs ago that sidelined him last season. But he's come back from that stronger and more determined. It didn't take new receivers coach Troy Walters long to see what Richardson was made of and how he conducted himself.

“He has all the tools and abilities to be the best out there,” Walters said. “I mean, he can run. He's got another gear that I haven't seen in college football. He's got hands and he's hungry.”

The biggest hunger is for a season like the Buffs haven't experienced since Richardson has been on campus. CU hasn't been in a postseason game since the 2007 Independence Bowl. Richardson wants to end that streak as much as he wants the Buffs' initial Pac-12 win this season. Getting it Saturday night would make the kind of statement he insists the Buffs are capable of.

“Guys are ready, guys are looking forward to this game,” he said. “This is a good test for us overall. And I think we're going to meet the challenge.”

It will be a huge one. ASU is exiting a four-game stretch – Wisconsin, Stanford, USC, Notre Dame – that coach Todd Graham said at Pac-12 Media Day defined the Sun Devils' “Any Challenge” mantra. His team finished those four games with a 2-2 record, losing to Notre Dame 37-34 last weekend in Arlington, Texas, in a game that stayed close despite three ASU turnovers. The last error was devastating: Sun Devils QB Taylor Kelly threw an interception that was returned for a touchdown with just 1:08 to play.

The Sun Devils' only previous loss had been to No. 5 Stanford, and after losing last weekend, ASU dropped from both of this week's Top 25 polls. The Sun Devils are 3-2 overall, 1-1 in the Pac-12. Their blowout win over USC (62-41) preceded the firing of Trojans coach Lane Kiffin and pushed ASU to Nos. 22 and 24 in the next week's polls. Saturday night undoubtedly will find Graham's team seeking a rebound ‘W’ that will hoist them back into Top 25 consideration.

Meanwhile, Richardson is certain that a pair of lopsided Pac-12 losses (44-17, 57-16) have not damaged the Buffs' resolve. The spark remains, he said, but it needs to be apparent earlier in games such as Saturday night's. “We just have to show attitude out the gate more and fight earlier and I think that's the thing we will benefit from the most,” he said. “We show it in spurts and we show it sporadically, but if we do that from start to finish we'll be a hard team to compete with.”

More oomph in the third quarter wouldn't be a bad idea either. After halftime in their first four games, the Buffs have been outscored 52-6. Their fourth quarters have been more productive – a 53-16 edge – but in their two Pac-12 games the end was in sight at the beginning of the fourth quarter.

Coach Mike MacIntyre offered a simple solution for fixing that third-quarter discrepancy: “We need to score more points and keep the other team from scoring . . . we need to just keep working on it.”

MacIntyre is Richardson's third head coach at CU. He identifies well with him because their approaches are similar. MacIntyre, said Richardson, “just tries to keep the poise for the entire team and he just tries to stay level for the entire team.”

“Staying level” to Richardson or his coach means dismissing either being a huge underdog or a heavy favorite. Said MacIntyre: “I don't think you approach games differently. You're still trying to win no matter if you're an underdog or you're favored. But I do think it's human nature to have a little bit more of a chip on your shoulder, a little bit more of that ‘I'll show you’ type attitude . . .

“Either way, you better not be uptight because that’s when you play bad . . . if you’re worried about losing because you’re favored or if you’re worried not winning because you’re not favored, you better just go play. And I think our kids are starting to learn to just go play. Just go play.”

Paul Richardson would add, just go win. It’s a habit the Buffs need to reacquire before another season trickles away.

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Colorado Buffaloes Football

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Colorado football: Mike MacIntyre's firm, but level-headed philosophy has Buffs still feeling positive

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

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The Colorado football team has been beaten up on the football field the past two weeks in Pac-12 Conference losses to Oregon State and Oregon, but the Buffs haven't been beaten down in meetings or on the practice fields by their coaches.

It's not that Mike MacIntyre and his staff don't point out mistakes and blown assignments. They do -- relentlessly. In fact, this coaching staff is more exacting and detail-oriented than any to coach in Boulder in years. But they handle their business with a "firm, but positive" mantra that players appreciate, especially at times like these when the last victory celebration the team enjoyed was more than a month ago.

"I've had the best of both worlds," said wide receiver Paul Richardson, who is playing for his third coaching staff in Boulder. "My first coaching staff was very hands off. The second coaching staff was very hands on. The coaching staff we have currently, they let us do our thing. They let us make mistakes but then they make corrections within letting us be comfortable. I think that has been why we are successful when we are."

The Buffs (2-2 overall, 0-2 Pac-12) are on the road Saturday at Arizona State trying to snap a 10-game losing streak against Pac-12 opponents. The last conference victory the program enjoyed came more than a year ago on the road at Washington State and most of the losses have been lopsided affairs.

Once again this week, the Buffs must find ways to tackle and contain one of the most explosive offenses in the nation while trying to keep up with it when they have the ball. Arizona State (3-2, 1-1) is battled tested to be sure, having played Wisconsin, USC, Stanford and Notre Dame in consecutive games.

Coach Todd Graham has emerged from that stretch with his own mantra, telling his team it can still win the Pac-12 South and the conference title by winning the rest of its games.

Graham has two of the elite offensive playmakers in the conference at his disposal in quarterback Taylor Kelly, who is second in the Pac-12 in total offense and running back Marion Grice, who leads the nation in scoring, averaging more than two touchdowns per game. Graham also has last season's Defensive Player of the Year in the conference in defensive tackle Will Sutton, who hasn't been the same wrecking ball this season that he was a year ago.

Colorado quarterback Connor Wood is hoping not to see much of Sutton. Wood has been a target for criticism the past two weeks after completing fewer than 50 percent of his passes in both games, throwing a total of four interceptions and converting on just two of 30 third-down opportunities.

MacIntyre has been patient with Wood because the junior has limited experience with five college starts under his belt. MacIntyre also has had to be patient with Wood to some degree because until this week he hasn't had an alternative quarterback with any experience.

If Wood struggles again against the Sun Devils, it's possible coaches could turn to 2012 starter Jordan Webb, who has been cleared to play after a torn ACL in his knee in the spring and serving a one-game suspension for his arrest for assault in the spring.

Webb has played in 31 games in his career, throwing for 4,513 yards with 28 touchdowns but also 28 interceptions.

But considering MacIntyre's generally positive way of handling players, it still might be premature to see Webb on the field Saturday.

"I'm a firm believer that, especially when you're dealing with young people, if you're always a roller coaster then your team's always going to be a roller coaster," MacIntyre said this week. "You need to be as consistent as you can. Now, I'm not perfect at all times. I do get upset sometimes. I do get mad there's no doubt about that but I think you're never going to achieve any goal if you just choose negativity, mood swings and that type of thing. You need to be positive and firm and be who you are."

Regardless of who is under center Saturday for the Buffs, they must score more than the 16.5 points they are averaging in Pac-12 play. Arizona is tied for 16th in the nation averaging more than 42 points a game. Given the opponents the Sun Devils have faced, the production is impressive.

Running game production would take pressure off Wood and the faltering CU passing game, and the Sun Devils have been susceptible to the run, allowing 183 yards a game on the ground and nine rushing touchdowns.

"We've got to harass their quarterback, protect ours, get the ball out and make plays on special teams, and just have intense focus throughout the game," defensive end Chidera Uzo-Diribe said. "I feel like if we can complete all four of those things this Saturday, we can get a win."

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Howell: Buffs looking to take the next step

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

In building up the football program at San Jose State, Mike MacIntyre slowly watched his Spartans take steps forward.

San Jose State won just once in MacIntyre's first season, 2010. It took four games in season No. 2 to get the next win. That snapped a 13-game losing streak. The next week, he took his Spartans to Fort Collins and led them to a 38-31 win against Colorado State that broke a 16-game road losing streak.

An ecstatic MacIntyre stood outside of the visiting locker room at Hughes Stadium that day in 2011 and said, "We're taking steps in the right way. We broke the dam down, we're driving the boat now, and we're seeing some success."

Now four games into his tenure at Colorado, MacIntyre is still waiting to break the dam down. His team is taking steps in the right direction, however, and looking for that next one.

CU (2-2, 0-2 Pac-12) will visit Arizona State (3-2, 1-1) today. The Buffs opened the season by snapping an eight-game losing streak. They followed that up with a second win -- their first winning streak in nearly three years.

Coming off of two straight blowout losses against superior opponents, the Buffs are once again trying to move forward. Beating a team they aren't supposed to beat would accomplish that feat.

"If that's the case, then we need to win all of our games because no one expects us to win any of them," junior receiver Paul Richardson said this week.

He was probably only half-kidding. CU won't be expected to win many of its remaining eight games. But, that means the Buffs will have plenty of opportunities to take that next step, beginning today at ASU.

Already, CU has made good progress this season. The Buffs have doubled their win total from last year. Despite lopsided scores during the past two weeks, they also showed a lot more fight and competitiveness than they did a year ago.

"I feel like we have shown that we can play," senior defensive end Chidera Uzo-Diribe said. "Now, let's go beat a big one. ASU is going to be a big game for us that we all know we can win."

CU's confidence stems from MacIntyre, who has never wavered -- publicly or among his team -- in his belief that they can win.

"I'm a fiery guy at times," he said. "I'm intense. I'm passionate. Sometimes that's to my negative and sometimes I'm too passionate but I do believe in these young men and I do believe it's a process and I do believe we're gaining ground in our process."

Beating CSU on the road two years ago was a big moment for MacIntyre and San Jose State. But, it was just one step forward. The Spartans lost four of their next five games before finally taking off.

CU is still waiting for its launching point.

"Have we gotten close to arriving? No," MacIntyre said. "I sure hope we're closer this Saturday and I expect us to go win."

Win or lose against ASU, MacIntyre's rebuilding project will be nowhere near complete, but it would be the next step in the process. It's a step the Buffs are ready to make.

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CU Buffs need to heat up in the desert to beat ASU in Pac-12 football

By John Henderson The Denver Post The Denver Post
Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — The floods that devastated Boulder last month seemed to also wash away much of the Colorado Buffaloes' offense.

The Buffs (2-2, 0-2 Pac-12) stumbled out of a three-week break and haven't gotten back up.

Now they're in the desert trying to recapture their early-season magic. Arizona State (3-2, 1-1) is a 26-point favorite Saturday night against a CU program that has lost 29 of its last 31 games outside the state of Colorado.

It's not the formula for recovery. Nevertheless, here is what's hanging over the Buffs like an ugly reminder of nightmare seasons past: They were a school-record, 0-for-15 on third downs in last week's 57-16 loss to Oregon. Junior quarterback Connor Wood, after looking sharp in two victories to start the season, has connected on only 37 percent of his passes the past two games. And in nine trips inside the red zone this year, CU has scored only one touchdown.

First-year Buffs coach Mike MacIntyre remains behind Wood, though the clearance of last year's starter, Jordan Webb, from a knee injury makes one wonder how long of a leash Wood has for the game against the Sun Devils.

"He made some good plays early then missed a couple throws," MacIntyre said of Wood's performance in the Oregon game. "He had four drops on him. Two of them were big plays. One was a big third down and one was a long ball. It's not all Connor's fault."

Promise remains. Remember, this is the offense that had gained 318 yards by halftime against Oregon. Never mind that the Ducks' backups held CU to 56 yards in the second half.

Buffs wide receiver Paul Richardson ranks second nationally in yards per game, averaging 155.3. CU's running game is only 111th nationally at 110.3 yards per game, but sophomore Christian Powell (78 yards against Oregon) and freshman Michael Adkins II (98 at Oregon State) have shown signs of effectiveness.

"We've shown a lot of spark as far as attitude," Richardson said. "The thing is, we just have to show attitude out the gate more and fight earlier. I think that's the thing we will benefit from the most. We show it in spurts, but if we do that from start to finish we'll be a hard team to compete with."

The Sun Devils have struggled on defense. They allowed 427 yards in last week's 37-34 loss to Notre Dame and 612 yards in a 62-41 win over Southern California. Wisconsin gained 468 yards against them.

Then again, that's Notre Dame, USC and Wisconsin, not CU. And the Sun Devils have potential NFL draft picks all over their lineup.

Also, they have plenty of offense to make up for any defensive lapses. The Buffs faced a similar fast-paced offense in the Oregon game. The Ducks, after a slumbering start, gained 755 yards last week, the second-most yardage allowed in CU history.

ASU junior QB Taylor Kelly is no Marcus Mariota of Oregon, but he ranks fourth nationally in passing, averaging 346.4 yards.

"We've shown we can play," said CU defensive end Chidera Uzo-Diribe. "Now let's get a big one."

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