

Players, coaches voice support for CU's new starting QB

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Colorado quarterback Connor Wood knew going into Saturday's game at Arizona State that his hold on the starting job was tenuous.

Wood, a junior, had struggled in two straight games, and knew that true freshman Sefo Liufau was looking over his shoulder.

"We thought about (making a change) if it didn't go as well as we liked," CU head coach Mike MacIntyre said. "We talked to both quarterbacks (last week). They understood that going into the game."

After Wood started 0-for-4 with an interception, the change came. Liufau took over in the first quarter of the 54-13 loss and will remain the starter, as long as he plays well.

Players at CU (2-3, 0-3 Pac-12) are ready to support their new quarterback.

"I think Sefo is ready to step in and I think he'll do fine," junior receiver Paul Richardson said. "Guys were motivated (when Liufau came into the game). They wanted to help him get the ball into the end zone to build his confidence and we did that."

MacIntyre said the change appears to have gone over well with the team, including Wood.

"I thought his attitude on the sidelines at the game was phenomenal, and his attitude out here (on Sunday night), he practiced hard," MacIntyre said. "The way our game is, he'll get another chance again, somehow. It always seems like it works out that way."

Until then, this is Liufau's offense, and the Buffs will do their best to help him out.

"We just have to play as hard as we can for him and support him out there and keep him off his back," senior left tackle Jack Harris said. "We didn't do a great job of that last night and we need to do a better job of keeping him stable in there and not rattled."

Harris said that first-team offense got a lot of repetitions with Liufau during preseason camp, so there isn't much of an adjustment in that regard. Harris has been impressed with Liufau.

"He really has a good pocket presence," Harris said. "For a freshman, he really has a sense about him. He knows what's going on. He's not flustered and he really commands us well out there."

Harris and Richardson both said, however, that it wouldn't really matter who was under center for the Buffs. Everybody else on the team still needs to make sure they do their jobs.

"We just have to do everything we can in our different position groups on offense to make Sefo's job that much easier," Richardson said. "As his confidence builds, it's going to be good for the duration of this season and his future as the quarterback here."

Liufau, who went 18-for-26 for 169 yards with a touchdown and two interceptions against ASU, will get his first career start on Saturday when Charleston Southern (7-0) visits Boulder.

Colorado football: Buffs using Orms ejection as teaching tool

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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During the first half of Saturday's game, Colorado safety Parker Orms was ejected for leading with his helmet. He is the first CU player to be ejected under the new targeting rule.

MacIntyre said he stands by the referee's decision, because it's a judgment call, but added, "(Orms) didn't catapult himself with the crown of his head.

"We definitely use it as a teaching tool, but I honestly don't know what else I could tell him to do."

Notable

Freshman Devin Ross handled kick return duties on Saturday because fellow freshman Ryan Severson was out with a hamstring injury. MacIntyre said he expects Severson back in that role this week, but that Ross would get some opportunities, as well. ... Tight end Alex Wood was "knocked silly" during the game, MacIntyre said, and will go through concussion tests this week. His status for Saturday is not known at this point. ... Charleston Southern is 7-0, but the combined record of the Buccaneers opponents is 11-32. The only winning team they've beaten is Division II North Greenville.

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CU Buffs to start true freshman Sefo Liufau at QB vs. Charleston So.

By John Henderson The Denver Post The Denver Post
Posted:

DenverPost.com

TEMPE, Ariz. — This Saturday at noon, Colorado's Sefo Liufau will become the fifth true freshman in school history to start at quarterback. Whether he keeps the job will help determine when Mike MacIntyre's program gets off the Pac-12 mat.

The first-year CU coach has more issues than wins with his 2-3 (0-3 Pac-12) team. The defense has become defenseless. No go-to tailback has stepped up. The Buffaloes go entire halves without getting the ball to their best player, junior wide receiver Paul Richardson.

But no issue is bigger than finding a dynamic quarterback.

Connor Wood erased his superb start to the season with erratic performances in three Pac-12 blowout losses. Midway through the first quarter of Saturday night's 54-13 loss to Arizona State at Sun Devil Stadium, MacIntyre finally decided the future is now.

In came Liufau. And one sharp, heady, 80-yard touchdown drive later, CU had a new starting quarterback.

"It's just like high school football to me," Liufau said after the game. "After the first couple of plays, everything slowed down. It was fun to play."

Liufau committed to CU when Jon Embree was coaching the Buffs. MacIntyre liked Liufau so much, he did more than honor his commitment. He saw the future in the 6-foot-4, 210-pounder who threw for 7,297 yards and 68 touchdowns and led Bellarmine Prep in Tacoma, Wash., to a 34-5 record.

Liufau's accuracy and calm demeanor impressed the new CU coaching staff from the first day of August camp. Against the Sun Devils, on that first drive, he did it for real.

"He handled himself really well," said Nelson Spruce, who caught Liufau's 10-yard touchdown pass to cap the drive. "That first drive, he was calm, making all the throws that we needed. He kept his composure really well for his first time."

MacIntyre could hook his future on Liufau's right arm, but he said after the game that he hasn't given up on Wood, a junior. While Liufau is CU's new starter, the coach added, "He's got to play good, though."

It's clear that MacIntyre lost patience with Wood, whose leash in the Arizona State game lasted all of three series and four incompletions, including an interception. In Pac-12 games, Wood has been mediocre, completing just 25-of-71 (.352) passes for 351 yards, two touchdowns and five picks. In the past two games, he was 0-for-18 on third down.

Even with Liufau's 169 yards on 18-of-26 passing, CU is last in the Pac-12 in total offense, averaging 375.2 yards per game.

And remember, the Buffs will be led by a true freshman who will play like it on occasion. In the second half against the Sun Devils' backups, Liufau threw two interceptions, lost a fumble and had an intentional grounding call result in a safety.

"He had a couple mistakes," MacIntyre said. "But to me, he looked pretty calm. He made some good third-down plays. He made some good throws. It didn't look like it was too big for him. From the naked eye, I thought it was good. But he had a couple turnovers that we don't need to have."

CU's season is far from lost. Next up is Charleston Southern, a 7-0 team — but an FCS team that has never defeated an FBS (formerly Division I-A) opponent in 13 tries.

"If we can beat them and be 3-3, it'd be nice to be 3-3 at the end of October," MacIntyre said. "You keep moving and improving. You never know."

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Eye on...The Buccaneers

Charleston Southern at Colorado, noon Saturday, Pac-12 Networks

For the record: Charleston Southern is 7-0 after beating Virginia Military Institute 25-17 on the road to open Big South Conference play.

Streaking: The Buccaneers have won seven consecutive games for the first time since starting the 2006 season 9-0.

Who's hot: Redshirt freshman quarterback Danny Croghan III has started two games in place of injured senior Malcolm Dixon and is 31-of-50 passing for 396 yards, three touchdowns and no interceptions.

Who's not: Christian Reyes, with 684 yards in six games and needing 94 more to top Vinson Blain's school season rushing record of 777 yards set in 1998, gained only 45 yards on 11 carries against VMI.

Key stat: Charleston Southern has lost all 13 games it has played against FBS (formerly Division I-A) teams. The average score of the losses: 55-9.

FYI: First-year Buccaneers coach Jamey Chadwell returned to Charleston Southern after four years as head coach at Delta State and North Greenville, both Division II programs. His career record is 32-21. He previously served as an assistant for five years at Charleston Southern, which started football in 1991 as a Division III independent.

John Henderson, The Denver Post