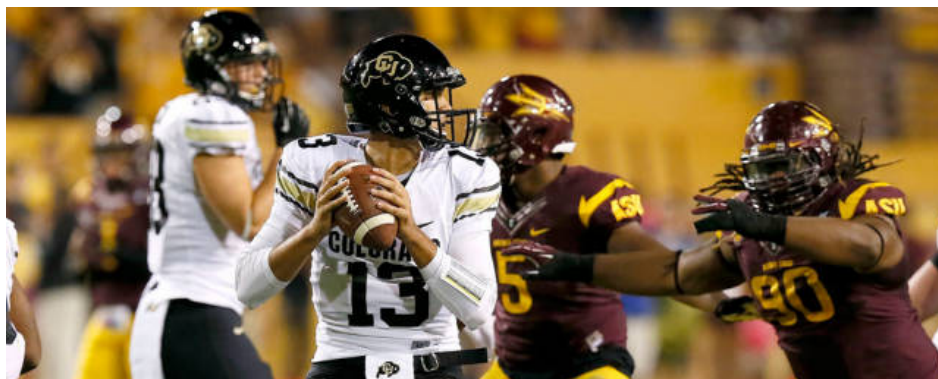




By: Associated Press

Sefo Liufau led CU on its only two scoring drives against Arizona State.

Brooks: Liufau Stays Humble, Expects Much Of Himself

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By: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER – After the obligatory break-in period of two or three plays, Sefo Liufau settled in, settled down and experienced a bit of déjà vu last Saturday night in Tempe, Ariz.

“It felt like high school football to me . . . it felt like the game I love to play,” said Liufau – he prefers a pronunciation of “Loo-fow – of his first taste of college football as Colorado’s quarterback. “It was just football. It was really fun to play and didn’t feel any different. Of course, guys were faster (but) I didn’t feel like something way out of my league or way out of control.”

That’s more of a testament to Liufau’s maturity and budding athleticism than a critique of the offense he will be expected to direct for the next seven games or the league he now plays in.

The Pac-12 Conference, as he discovered in his 31/2 quarters against Arizona State, is slightly more competitive and populated by bigger, stronger, faster types than the Narrows League in the Tacoma, Wash. area.

Yet for Liufau, high school football at Bellarmine Prep in Tacoma, was played at a pretty high level. Bellarmine won the Narrows League 4A championship in 2011 and 2012, advancing to the state championship game last season before losing to Skyline (49-24). In the last game of his high school career, Liufau passed for a career-high 373 yards (33-of-45, three TDs, two interceptions).

Against ASU, in relief of four-game starter Connor Wood, Liufau led CU on its only two scoring drives in a 54-13 loss. His debut stat line: 18-of-26 passing for 169 yards, one touchdown and two interceptions; four carries for 10 yards.

Liufau was excited to shed his redshirt and play, but not too thrilled about the pair of picks or a handful of misreads or missteps in his first crack at operating CU’s offense. At his weekly Tuesday media conference, coach Mike MacIntyre acknowledged that Liufau’s expected first-game blend of talent and inexperience was evident before he detailed the characteristics he believes will bring Liufau success.

MacIntyre called Liufau, who will make his first college start on Saturday against Charleston Southern (noon, Folsom Field) “very athletic, cerebral, calm, mature, puts others first and is extremely tough.” A comparison was made to former Stanford QB/Heisman Trophy winner Andrew Luck in this context: Luck developed into a stellar pocket passer who also can run. Liufau has that potential.

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Throw in a strong accurate arm, good pocket sense, the ability to determine the correct places to deliver the ball (good field sense), and the general “it” factor that all good QBs have and it’s not difficult to see why MacIntyre is happy that CU’s former staff made the recruitment of Liufau a priority.

Of course, it was up to MacIntyre and his guys to hold on to Liufau when several other Pac-12 schools came sniffing after last winter’s coaching change. But Liufau remained undeterred and solidly committed, mainly because “Colorado felt like home to me,” he said. “I felt like I was back home with my family, and family is a key aspect in my life . . . I didn’t feel like I needed to go around fishing for more offers.”

It ended up being pretty close to a Liufau love fest: “I loved the old staff, then I met the new staff and fell in love again.”

Liufau’s family is all-important to him. He credits some of his maturity and leadership ability to his father, Joe, taking him to Fort Lewis-Madigan, an Army base outside Tacoma, as a fourth- or fifth-grader and allowing him to play football with “the Army guys . . . it helped me grow a lot. A lot of leadership came from that, just learning from those guys. They all took me under their wing. It’s just been with me my whole life; it’s not something that I’m faking . . . I’m just trying to show it.”

He talks to his parents at least once or twice a week and says their weekly advice from long distance is just as it was when he was under their roof: “Stay humble, stay grounded, don’t take anyone (or team) for granted.”

And he’s following that advice as he prepares for a rare mid-season, out-of-conference game on Saturday against Charleston Southern. Liufau’s (and MacIntyre’s) hope is that mistakes made against the Sun Devils were held onto briefly for learning purposes then discarded.

That, said Liufau, is how he normally rolls: “I forgot the mistakes during the game (but) I remembered them as a teaching point for myself, things I could have done better. But I have a short memory.”

One of MacIntyre’s points of emphasis during August camp and every week since has been ball security. This is how he likes to emphasize it: “When you’re carrying the football, you’re carrying our hopes and dreams.”

For quarterbacks, it’s the same with their passes – don’t throw our hopes and dreams to the other guys. Liufau did it twice, as well as fumbling a snap. Among his goal for his first start is taking better care of the ball, and if carelessness persists he won’t cut himself any slack because he is a freshman.

“It’s just how I am,” he said. “I hold myself to high standards, even being a freshman. There’s just simple reads I could have (made) to take away those interceptions that I threw. The fumble (snap) hit me in the hands. I’m going to be hard on myself being a freshman . . . I just need to do a better job of taking care of the ball. I’ll always be hard on myself.”

CU’s offense is in great need of consistency, with the running game having accounted for one touchdown in five games and the passing game’s productivity slipping over 100 yards a game since conference play began. Liufau believes his work with the first unit as a backup already has established some chemistry among his receiving corps, but adds, “The chemistry is definitely not perfect.”

Synching up with Paul Richardson, he said, “is difficult on some of the deeper routes . . . trying to gauge his speed because sometimes I don’t think I know actually how fast he is, the way he turns it into another gear.”

Liufau’s pedigree includes an uncle – Jack Thompson, the “Throwin’ Samoan” at Washington State – who was a quarterback in the Pac-10. But his parents’ advice on staying humble obviously has registered with Liufau.

Asked Tuesday about playing his position in a conference that has become famous for its QBs, Liufau said he was “very honored. It means a lot to me. I don’t want to compare myself with other quarterbacks though. I want to compare myself to my best self and continue to grow and get better every week, every practice I get.

“I always look at (mistakes) as my fault, but if we do very well it’s not just me. I’m not the one out there catching the ball, I’m not the one out there blocking 300-pound guys. It’s a team sport. If I wanted to be all by myself I’d go play tennis or golf or something. I love the camaraderie, the teamwork that football has.”

NOTABLE: MacIntyre said Liufau’s athleticism and running ability could mean more designed runs for his new starting QB, particularly on zone-read option plays: “If he sees it and reads it” he can run it. CU’s ground game is at 108.0 yards a game – No. 10 in the conference . . . Unbeaten (7-0) Charleston Southern is ranked No. 24 in the weekly FCS poll. MacIntyre called the Buccaneers “better

than Central Arkansas,” the No. 20-ranked FCS team that CU defeated 38-24 in week two. He said CSU (not the in-state team) ran an option offense out of the pistol formation that features “a lot of detail” and is a “Navy-Nevada mixture.” . . . MacIntyre said his defense, which is ahead of only California in the four major categories (scoring, total, pass/rush), victimized itself with dropped interceptions in the Pac-12 opener at Oregon State, then simply didn’t play well against Oregon and ASU. “We’ve learned a lot about what we can and can’t do,” he said. “It helps us reevaluate ourselves.” He said there would be no defensive lineup changes this week . . . CU has been outscored 155-46 in its first three Pac-12 games. MacIntyre’s pitch to recruits: “We tell them to come and help us get better.” He said San Jose State was No. 120 out of 120 FBS schools when he took that job. The Spartans were a Top 25 program (No. 20) last season when he was hired by CU. “It didn’t happen overnight,” MacIntyre said. “You just have to keep going.” . . . The Buffs haven’t quit, MacIntyre said, noting he would detect that in his players during practice instead of on game day. “To me, they’re investing . . . right now I have great hope.” . . . The scoreboard says times are tough, but MacIntyre and his staff haven’t turned up their volume in practice. He used this analogy: “If I went home and my wife yelled at me, I wouldn’t want to come home at night.” He said it was the same with his players and daily practice. “I think they trust us.”

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Colorado Buffaloes Football

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Colorado football: Buffs not quitting this season

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

The scores may look similar, but the feeling inside the Colorado football locker room is not.

As the Buffaloes (2-3, 0-3 Pac-12) try to regroup from three consecutive blowout losses, they haven't been practicing -- or talking -- like a team ready to throw in the towel.

"I don't see no quit in these guys," senior captain Paul Vigo said. "We've played hard. It's not a lack of effort in our team. It's just that we've got to be more disciplined and we've got to continue to bring it every play."

CU's losing streak -- against Oregon State, Oregon and Arizona State -- has come by a combined score of 155-46, bringing back memories of the dreadful 2012 season.

There was a general vibe that some players had given up on the season last year, and some of those players have since expressed publicly that the Buffs did, indeed, give up at one point.

That's not happening with this year's team, though. The Buffs have continued to hold solid practices, which is a good sign for coach Mike MacIntyre.

"Really, you don't quit on game day; you quit during the week," MacIntyre said.

"As long as they keep (working hard and practicing well), I'll have great hope. If that stops, I won't have great hope. I'll have to find a way."

For now, though, the Buffs continue to be in good spirits.

"Our coaches do a great job of continuing to motivate us and not putting so much blame on us," Vigo said.

With Charleston Southern (7-0, ranked No. 24 in FCS) coming to Boulder on Saturday, the Buffs have put the three Pac-12 losses behind them and turned their focus toward getting their third win of the season.

"You can't have that losing mentality," safety Parker Orms said. "We have to keep our heads high and move forward and correct our mistakes."

"Guys are mad, they're pissed off at what's going on."

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Colorado football: Sefo Liufau ready to step in as Buffs' starter

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Sefo Liufau might as well have been a fifth-year senior sitting there in front of reporters and television cameras Tuesday at the Colorado football program's weekly press conference.

There wasn't a hint of nervousness as he answered questions about taking over as the Buffs' new starting quarterback this week. If he shows this kind of poise on the football field on future Saturdays, the program might have found a man to lead it out of the basement of the Pac-12 Conference.

"Honestly, I don't know if it's actually hit me yet that I'm starting," he said. "I'm just preparing like any other week. Probably the only difference is that I'm getting more reps this week, but other than that, it's another work week.

CU (2-3 overall, 0-3 Pac-12 play) will play host to Charleston Southern (7-0) on Saturday (12:07 p.m., Pac-12 Network). The game is a replacement contest for the Sept. 14 home game against Fresno State that was cancelled because of historic flooding in and around Boulder.

CU is honoring tickets for the Fresno State game at this week's game. If fans with tickets to the Fresno State game are not able to attend this weekend, they can contact the CU ticket office to exchange tickets for seats to another CU home game this season.

Liufau (pronounced Loo-fow) will be the 10th freshman -- and just the sixth true freshman -- to start a game at quarterback for the Buffs when he takes the first snap this week. Tyler Hansen was the last true freshman to start a game for the Buffs at quarterback against Missouri in 2008. The Buffs lost that game 58-0.

The other true freshman starters from CU's past are Craig Ochs (2000), Koy Detmer (1992), Marc Walters (1986) and Randy Essington (1980).

Liufau, like the others on the list, seems uniquely qualified to handle the pressure of the situation because he is mature beyond his years, as coach Mike MacIntyre said Tuesday. Liufau said he didn't watch a lot of college or professional football growing up. He said he preferred to spend time with his family or playing FIFA, a soccer video game.

"It's my getaway," he said. "It's what I do. I'd rather play football than watch football."

Liufau credits his maturity to his parents who raised him in a tight-knit family environment and some of his dad's old army buddies. His dad was stationed at Fort Carson in Colorado Springs for a time in the late 1980s. Liufau also has a younger brother and sister who have autism, and Liufau has always put spending time with them above the concerns or desires of an average teenager.

"His mentality is all about teammates and the people around him," his father, Joe, a native of American Samoa told the Daily Camera in the spring. "And it's also about his brother and sister that have autism. When they're happy, he's happy. If the team is happy, then he is happy."

Liufau said he tries to talk to his parents at least once or twice a week and often more. He was asked what advice his dad gave him for his new role with the Buffs.

"This week my dad just told me stay humble, stay grounded, watch your film, just get ready to play and you can't take anyone lightly," Liufau said.

Liufau actually made his debut in relief of Connor Wood last week at Arizona State. He led an 80-yard touchdown drive and threw his first college touchdown on the first series he played, but it went downhill from there.

He completed 18 of 26 passes for 169 yards, but he threw two interceptions, lost a fumble and was flagged for intentional grounding in the end zone resulting in a safety.

"I don't care if I'm a freshman, coming off the bench, starting," Liufau said. "It doesn't matter. I can't have those turnovers in any game."

Liufau threw for 7,297 yards, 68 touchdowns and 20 interceptions during his high school career in Tacoma, Wash., at Bellarmine Prep. He also ran for more than 600 yards and 18 touchdowns.

He led his team to the state championship game last season but lost. He said he was able to put the loss behind him fairly quickly and he plans to take the same approach, win or lose, with the Buffs.

MacIntyre said it's possible the role of the quarterback in the running game could increase with Liufau playing. He said Liufau has shown an ability in practice to read when to keep the ball on read-option plays.

"That's something he's done real well in practice, being able to see that, feel that, understand that," MacIntyre said. "It's kind of like an option guy sometimes making the pitch at the last second. He's able to do that. So that will relate to him having more carries."

MacIntyre said he has been on teams with true freshmen starting at quarterback in the past. The first time was at Georgia in 1991 where Eric Zeier started as a true freshman. MacIntyre said he doesn't necessarily feel like he needs to treat Liufau any differently than he would a more experienced quarterback such as Wood or Jordan Webb.

"It's a situation where he just needs to keep improving and doing what he's doing and not try to do too much," MacIntyre said. "I don't think he will cause he has the ability to kind of adapt to situations and make some plays."

On the Pac-12 coaches teleconference Tuesday morning, MacIntyre compared Liufau to Andrew Luck, in that his running ability is not the primary part of his game but can be

underappreciated at times the way some people are surprised by Luck's athleticism. He was not trying to say Liufau is as good as Luck.

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CU Buffs QB Sefo Liufau not afraid of pressure in starting role

By John Henderson The Denver Post The Denver Post
Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — To Tyler Hansen, the best move Colorado football coach Mike MacIntyre made Saturday didn't come in the second quarter when he threw true freshman quarterback Sefo Liufau to the wolves of Arizona State. It came after the game. That's when MacIntyre named the 18-year-old Liufau his new starting quarterback.

Hansen, back in 2008, was the last true freshman to start at quarterback for Colorado. It was part of a yo-yo quarterback shuffle that not only burned Hansen's redshirt year but helped burn the Buffs. Then-CU coach Dan Hawkins never settled on a starter, and his son Cody swapped headsets with Hansen through three consecutive losing seasons. For now, Liufau doesn't have any strings attached, yo-yo or otherwise. He's the guy.

"It's really important, not only for Sefo as he develops into the player he becomes but it's important to the program," Hansen said in a phone interview from Scottsdale, Ariz., where he's in Enterprise Rent-A-Car's management training program. "When you're flip-flopping, especially with a true freshman, it hurts. It's important to have an identity: This is our guy.

"It'll only help his development."

The timing also appears right.

Liufau's first start is at noon Saturday against Charleston Southern, 7-0 and 24th at the FCS level but an FCS school nonetheless. Hansen's first start came against 16th-ranked Missouri. On the road.

Missouri won 58-0.

The next week, Hawkins started at Texas A&M, but Hansen came in off the bench. Hansen started the following week against Iowa State in a 28-24 win but got yanked at halftime. He didn't play against Oklahoma State and took only three snaps in the season finale at Nebraska.

Hansen was still trying to figure out where the library was, let alone when he would play next. Liufau knows.

"It helps so much for his confidence if they go with him," Hansen said. "Let him make his mistakes and live with it. Next year he'll be 10 times better. That'll be a world of difference. You see that right now at Utah with Travis Wilson. They played him as a true freshman. He struggled, but now he's playing real well. It speaks volumes.

"In the future, it's going to speak wonders."

At Arizona State Liufau showed the wonders of his potential and the frustration of his youth. He opened with an 80-yard drive and a touchdown pass. He ended with two interceptions, a lost fumbled snap and an intentional-grounding call for a safety.

After the game, he beat up himself more than ASU's defensive line did.

"I'm always going to be hard on myself, being a freshman," Liufau (pronounced LEW-fow) said. "Coach always tells us the ball is very vital to the team, and I'm giving away the hopes and dreams."

MacIntyre isn't just building for the future. His Buffs are 2-3, 0-3 in the Pac-12, and a victory Saturday would put them only three wins from their first bowl bid since 2007.

MacIntyre has been around this before. In 1991, in his second season as a graduate assistant under Ray Goff at Georgia, the Bulldogs turned to a frosh quarterback named Eric Zeier. He beat Clemson in his first start and Georgia went on to a 9-3 record. Zeier went on to become the Southeastern Conference's all-time leading passer.

"We just let him play," MacIntyre said of Zeier. "If you're good you're good. And he got going. He was able to come in in the spring which helped him. (This is) a situation where (Liufau) needs to keep improving and not try to do too much. I don't think he will.

"He has the ability to adapt to situations and make some plays."

Hansen wound up playing in five games as a freshman, going 34-of-65 for 280 yards with a touchdown and four interceptions.

Hansen, who saw the Arizona State game, liked what he saw of the 6-foot-4, 215-pound Liufau. "For a freshman he had a really good, calm demeanor."

Asked what advice he'd give him, Hansen said, "Prepare as much as you can. You can't watch enough film. As a freshman, the amount of preparation from high school to college isn't comparable.

"My freshman year I had to learn that the hard way."

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Colorado's Sefo Liufau to make starting debut vs. Charleston Southern

By John Henderson The Denver Post The Denver Post
Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER —Sefo Liufau said Tuesday that he won't cut himself any slack because he's a true freshman starting at quarterback in the Pac-12.

"It's just how I am," Liufau said at his first media conference at Colorado. "I hold myself to high standards, even being a freshman."

Liufau made his college debut in the second quarter of Saturday night's 54-13 loss at Arizona State. He started by directing an 80-yard touchdown drive but later threw two interceptions, lost a fumbled snap and had an intentional grounding call for a safety.

"They are just simple reads I could've done to take away those interceptions that I threw," he said. "That fumble just hit me in the hands. That's something I can always take away. I'm always going to be hard on myself, being a freshman because coach always tells us the ball is very vital to the team.

"And I'm giving away the hopes and dreams."

Liufau wound up 18-of-26 for 169 yards and a touchdown. He will start in Saturday's noon home game against Charleston Southern (7-0).

"He did some really good things," first-year coach Mike MacIntyre said. "Everybody has different mistakes they make, but I thought he did a good job. He went to the right places with the ball. I expect him to be more improved this week with one game under his belt."

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