



By: Joel Broida

Daniel Munyer, Jack Harris and their coach believe their plates are too full to focus on a QB change.

Brooks: Buffs' O-line Wants To Keep Liufau 'Clean'

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By: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

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BOULDER – The way Daniel Munyer, Jack Harris and their position coach see it, their plates are full enough without focusing too much on the week's top story in Colorado football.

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Or, as Munyer so succinctly summarized the Buffs' change in starting quarterbacks for Saturday's out-of-conference encounter with Charleston Southern, "Everyone's flying around the same; it's just a different voice back there at the line."

That has to be the approach for Munyer, Harris, the rest their O-line mates and their coach, Gary Bernardi. But beyond that group, the CU staff is hopeful that last weekend's switch from junior Connor Wood to true freshman Sefo Liufau produces more of a noticeable change than in mere cadence.

If all eyes Saturday will be on Liufau in his first college start, some eyes – particularly Bernardi's – also will be trained on what's happening in front of the freshman. Bernardi has told his guys they must communicate better, ratchet up their productivity and, in turn, help CU's run game do the same. And, oh yes, let's protect the young guy throughout his first full college game.

"Each week they've improved," Bernardi said of his line, "but last week I thought they improved in the second half (at Arizona State). I thought they stayed the same in the first half. I tried to point out that we want to go in this direction (up). That's the number one thing this week: get better as individuals and as a group. That's each week, and up until the first half last week I thought that they had done that in terms of the little statistics we keep in our room."

But this was the problem in showing second-half improvement in Tempe, Ariz.: By intermission, the Sun Devils were up 47-6. The first-quarter call to Liufau to replace Wood went out with CU trailing 25-0. By then, a call to Johnny Unitas, Joe Montana or Peyton Manning likely wouldn't have made much difference in a 54-13 Buffs loss.

What CU coach Mike MacIntyre and offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach Brian Lindgren want to see this Saturday is whether the offense can improve its consistency and productivity under Liufau. He engineered the Buffs' two scoring drives at ASU and finished his shedding-the-redshirt night 18-of-26 for 169 yards and a touchdown, with two interceptions. He also was charged with a fumble and a safety taken after an intentional grounding call in the end zone.

As debuts go, the reviews were mixed. But MacIntyre didn't waffle on the switch; Liufau will remain the starter as long as he and the offense are efficient.

The Buffs don't view the change as going back to square one at the position, and neither do they see their running game in that light. But they've scored only one rushing touchdown in five games and are No. 10 in the Pac-12 in rushing offense (108.0 yards a game). Their lone rushing TD is the league's

lowest total.

Munyer, the starting right guard, believes "we're real close" to a ground game upgrade. "We just have to stay on our guys, and blocking at the second level is crucial. I think it's the whole offensive unit – receivers staying on blocks and running backs have got to make a play at the end of the day."

Harris, the starting left tackle, said the Buffs are "not where we want to be" in the running game and that has been a topic of discussion in the O-line meeting room. "It's something we've talked about and I think we can continue to improve in the next few weeks."

The Buffs' top rushing effort this season has been 154 yards in a 44-17 loss at Oregon State. In the two games since, they've totaled 94 yards against Oregon and 99 against ASU. True freshman Michael Adkins II has received more carries in the past three games, with his 98 yards on 14 attempts at OSU the high mark for a CU back this season.

Charleston Southern is allowing 146.4 ground yards a game against an FCS lineup that might send anyone west of the Mississippi to MapQuest. Still, the Buccaneers are unbeaten (7-0) and Bernardi says that speaks for itself.

"They didn't play ASU or Oregon State, but they're 7-0," he said. "Whoever they've played they've won. Whoever you play against, you win and you feel good about yourself – as a coach and a player . . . I've showed our guys film and told them it didn't make any difference what color helmets they wear, watch how they're coached. You have to play at a high level. If a team is playing at a '10' and you're at a '7,' you're going to get your ass beat. It doesn't make any difference. You've got to get better and you've got to play."

CSU – the Carolina version – is ranked No. 24 in this week's FCS poll and starts six seniors on defense. "Much like Central Arkansas, they're a team that has experience in their front seven," Bernardi said. "They've got the ability to do a lot of things because those guys up front are experienced . . . they're well-coached the way they run their twists and they play hard."

Of CU's 11 sacks allowed this season, the highest number (four) was registered by Central Arkansas on Wood in the Buffs' 38-24 win. Liufau was sacked once by the Sun Devils, and being a first-time starter he undoubtedly expects the Buccaneers to target him with those D-line twists and whatever else. CSU's seven-game sack total is 23, with senior defensive end Will Hunt (6-5, 253) accounting for six sacks and eight tackles for loss.

"They use a lot of field and boundary blitzes," Munyer said. "We've got to handle whatever they throw at us and keep the quarterback clean."

Protecting the freshman will receive the same priority as protecting whoever plays the position. If there is a difference between Wood and Liufau, said Harris, it might be in their pocket presence: "Every quarterback has a little different pocket presence. It's not whether that's good or bad, it's just different. (Liufau) likes stepping up in the pocket a lot. He'll take a five-step drop, then step up . . . that's a little different, especially for tackles."

Predictably, Harris' and Munyer's jobs haven't changed with the QB change, or as Bernardi put it, "Same plays . . . they've got 11, we've got 11." Added Harris: "We can't even worry about what's going around us. We just have to focus on what we're doing and get better at that. We can't let anything get to us."

Liufau has impressed the upperclassmen with his poise. "He carries himself as a fifth-year guy," Harris said. And Munyer noted, "I've been in the huddle with him; nothing's changed. He has good composure. When he went in there (at ASU) he didn't seem rattled to me, he just seemed confident. He was ready for his opportunity and that's good to see in a freshman quarterback. I'm looking forward to seeing him play (Saturday)."

Obviously, Munyer is not alone.

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Freshman QB Sefo Liufau makes first start for Colorado against Charleston Southern

By Associated Press, Published: October 18

BOULDER, Colo. — Freshman quarterback Sefo Liufau makes his first start Saturday when the Colorado Buffaloes get a break from the Pac-12 opponents that have been blowing them out.

That's not to say Charleston Southern (7-0, 1-0 Big South) will be a pushover.

The Buccaneers are one of the better lower-tier teams in the country, and the Buffaloes (2-3, 0-3 Pac-12) are only 2-2 all-time against FCS schools, including a 38-24 win over Central Arkansas this season.

Colorado coach Mike MacIntyre said the Buccaneers are better than Central Arkansas, "so, I'm pretty sure that Charleston Southern will definitely come in and feel like they can win the football game."

This game was added after Colorado's Sept. 14 game against Fresno State was canceled because of record rainfall and flooding.

If Colorado beats the Buccaneers, they'll need just three more wins to become bowl eligible. The NCAA granted the Buffs a waiver allowing them to count two wins over FCS teams toward the minimum six-victory standard instead of just one.

The additional game for Charleston Southern gives the Buccaneers 13 regular-season games, the most in FCS history.

Five things to keep in mind Saturday:

LIAFAU ERA: MacIntyre wanted to redshirt Liufau but that changed when junior Connor Wood got off to another bad start and the Buffaloes fell behind 25-0 late in the first quarter at Arizona State last week. Liufau promptly led the Buffaloes on an 80-yard touchdown drive but committed some turnovers after that in a 54-13 loss. "Great first drive, went down and we had that touchdown, but I had too many turnovers," Liufau said. "I don't care if I am a freshman, coming off the bench or starting, it doesn't matter. I can't have those turnovers in any game, especially if we are trying to look to win some games." Liufau said, however, that he felt as comfortable as he did in high school. "Of course the guys are faster, I am not trying to say that they are as slow as high school kids, but it just felt like playing football," he said. "It didn't feel like something that was way out of my league or out of control."

LIUFAU LOYALTY: Liufau committed to Colorado while Jon Embree was still coach and when he was fired, several schools made a run at him, but he wouldn't change his mind. "Thank goodness we were able to hold onto him because he had a few Pac-12 schools come after him hard," MacIntyre said. They needed haven't bothered. Liufau, who's from Tacoma, Wash., felt at home in Boulder and "I love the old coaching staff and once I met the new coaching staff I fell in love again."

MUTUAL ADMIRATION: Asked what he likes about his new quarterback, MacIntyre didn't hold back. "I think he's very athletic. I think he's very cerebral. I think he's very calm," MacIntyre said. "He's been calm in practice and he was very calm in the game the other night. He competed but he was calm. He's also a guy, to me, that puts others first instead of himself. I've noticed that so much and I think that's part of his maturity. I think he has a good arm. I think he's very accurate and also the thing that I noticed the other night is, I think he's extremely tough."

SO, HOW'S CONNOR? Wood has lost his grip on the starting job for the second straight season. "I think Connor has handled it well," MacIntyre said. Liufau said Wood has been helping him. "People don't see it often on the sidelines or in practice because no one's there, but Connor is an amazing leader," Liufau said. "He has the 'C' on his chest for a reason."

TOUGH MATCHUP: The Buccaneers run the option offense out of the pistol formation. "It's a mixture of Navy and Nevada so it's a very difficult offense," MacIntyre said. The Buccaneers lost their starting QB, senior Malcolm Dixon, to a knee injury last month but haven't missed a beat behind Danny Croghan.

Follow Arnie Melendrez Stapleton on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/arniestapleton>

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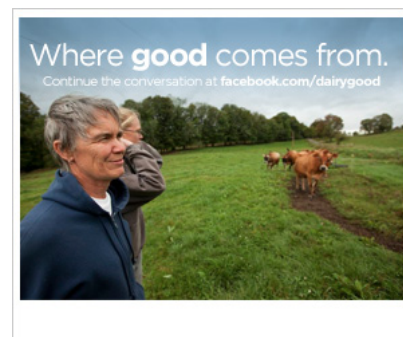


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Liufau will make first start against FCS Charleston Southern

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

For three straight weeks the Colorado football team has played the role of badly overmatched underdog in games against Pac-12 Conference foes Oregon State, Oregon and Arizona State.

CU was overwhelmed as expected in each of those games with the closest final margin being a 27-point loss on the road to the Beavers.

The Buffs return to Folsom Field on Saturday where they get a break from their 11-game losing streak in Pac-12 play to be on the opposite end of pre-game expectations. CU plays host to undefeated Charleston Southern (7-0 overall, 1-0 Big South) from the Football Championship Subdivision, a step down from major college football.

It is the Buffs' second FCS opponent of the year. CU previously beat Central Arkansas in September. It also looks like a must-win if the Buffs hope to snap their five-year bowl drought.

It should be a nice way for true freshman quarterback Sefo Liufau to break in as the Buffs' new starter. He saw the first playing time of his career last week at Arizona State when coaches called on him to replace Connor Wood, who was struggling badly for the third straight game.

Liufau led the Buffs to two scores but he also committed three turnovers and was flagged for intentional grounding in the end zone resulting in a safety. He said the game slowed down the more he played against the Sun Devils and he hopes to be much sharper in his second opportunity and first college start this week.

"They are a very good team -- very athletic, very fast," Liufau said of Charleston Southern. "They run a bunch of different coverages, different blitzes, so we have to be very prepared and very sound. Especially, we have to be very consistent, unlike last week."

The Buccaneers come to town as a fill-in for Fresno State. The Bulldogs were supposed to visit Boulder on Sept. 14, but the game was canceled because of historic flooding in the area.

CU (2-3 overall, 0-3 Pac-12 play) is honoring tickets and parking passes for the Fresno State game Saturday and the NCAA has given the Buffs a waiver to count this game toward bowl eligibility in addition to the Buffs' first FCS win against Central Arkansas.

While Charleston Southern is undefeated and ranked No. 23 in the FCS, it has beaten only one team with a winning record this season and that team -- North Greenville University -- plays at the Division II level. The combined record of Charleston Southern opponents is 11-28.

That hasn't stopped CU coach Mike MacIntyre from talking up the Buccaneers. MacIntyre said he believes Charleston Southern is better than Central Arkansas, which is not exactly a comforting thought for CU fans considering UCA led in the fourth quarter before the Buffs rallied to win.

"I'm pretty sure that Charleston Southern will come in and feel like they can win the football game," MacIntyre said. "It's going to be a tough battle. They run the option offense out of the pistol. ... So, it's a lot of detail and work in trying to get ready for that."

MacIntyre said the team has responded positively to the change at quarterback. He said having been around teams with true freshmen starting quarterbacks in the past and because of Liufau's maturity, he doesn't expect to have to simplify the offense much, if at all.

MacIntyre also feels like he can deal with Liufau in the same way he would a veteran.

"I've been around it a couple other times but it's a situation where he needs to just keep improving and to keep doing what he's doing and not try to do much and I don't think he will," MacIntyre said. "He has the ability to kind of adapt in certain situations and he did that a little bit the other night, too."

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CU Buffs hosting Charleston Southern in first start for QB Sefo Liufau

By John Henderson The Denver Post The Denver Post
Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — Sefo Liufau's father is a career Army man who made his son as comfortable on military bases as he was on football fields.

When he combined the two, you have what you will see at noon Saturday at Folsom Field: the beginning of the Sefo Liufau era.

In grade school, Sefo would go with his dad to Fort Lewis near their home in Tacoma, Wash., and play football with the Army guys. He learned a lot more than the proper grip for maximum spiral velocity.

"A lot of my leadership came from that and just learning from all of those guys as they all took me under their wing, it has just been with me my whole life," Liufau said. "It's not something that I am faking or just trying to show."

Colorado (2-3, 0-3 Pac-12) needs someone to reverse a tailspin in which the Buffaloes have lost their three conference games by a combined 106 points. Providing what's perceived as the perfect trampoline for a rebound is Charleston Southern, an FCS team that dropped its bye week for a paycheck from a Pac-12 school.

However, hidden in Charleston Southern's relative anonymity is a 7-0 record, a No. 24 national ranking in FCS and the confidence of a team that is having a season for the ages. This is a better team than Sacramento State, which beat the Buffaloes in Boulder a year ago.

First-year CU coach Mike MacIntyre said it's a better team than the Central Arkansas team that led the Buffs in the fourth quarter Sept. 7 before losing 38-24.

To prep for a demanding Pac-12 schedule, not to mention avoiding national humiliation Saturday, Mac-Intyre has turned to a true freshman quarterback. Leadership is not a problem. Three of Liufau's uncles played college football — including Jack Thompson, the "Throwin' Samoan" from Washington State.

Liufau (pronounced LEW-fow) has impressed MacIntyre with his maturity as much as his accuracy.

"It's pretty rare," Mac-Intyre said. "It really is. He said his family means everything to him and that's why he is as mature as he is. He has great parents and he has a great brother and a great sister that he cares about deeply so he's kind of a little bit ahead of his time I would say, maturity wise."

The question is, can he excel at the Pac-12 level? He's probably CU's fastest quarterback and has shown he can rip off big yardage in the read option in practices.

He showed signs of an arrival last week at Arizona State, when he debuted off the bench with an 80-yard TD drive. But he also had two interceptions, a lost fumble and an intentional grounding for a safety.

"I have definitely forgotten my mistakes in the game," Liufau said. "I still remember them as a teaching point for myself on what I could have done better. But I have a short memory. I threw a pick. Think about it for a second for what I could have done better then move on to the next play."

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