

Colorado football: Buffs' Darragh O'Neill showing new skills

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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For the past two years, Darragh O'Neill has proven himself to be a very good punter.

Lately, he has started to show he can be more versatile for the Colorado football team.

In Saturday's 43-10 win against Charleston Southern, O'Neill ran the ball on a two-point conversion for the Buffaloes (3-3, 0-3 Pac-12).

"That was the first points in my career," the junior said. "It was a cool feeling knowing that they trusted me to be able to punch that in. We've tried a couple of them now and I'm getting more comfortable with it, so I think it's a weapon we can use down the stretch."

O'Neill, who serves as the holder on extra points and field goals, also tried a two-point conversion pass against Arizona State on Oct. 12, but missed on that throw.

"It's a lot of fun because I never tried any of those things in two years of starting here," said O'Neill, who has been CU's punter since the 2011 season. "To finally be able to do some of that stuff is a lot of fun."

CU coaches have been impressed with the overall athleticism of O'Neill, and might use him in unique situations during the second half of the season.

"He's a good weapon for us and a very good athlete," head coach Mike MacIntyre said. "We've had some things called, it just hasn't always worked out. Hopefully the opportunity presents itself and we'll utilize him."

Some of those opportunities could come on rugby punts. O'Neill has been using the rugby-style punts of late. He said that in previous years, the rugby punt was used simply as another way of kicking the ball down field. This year, however, CU is using it as more of a weapon.

"There have been a few circumstances where we had the opportunity to do some things (out of the rugby punt) and it never panned out," he said.

Overall, O'Neill has been pleased with his season. He is averaging 41.6 yards per punt and has placed 13 of his 37 kicks inside the 20-yard line.

Last year, he tied the program record with 76 punts. He's only pace for 74 punts this year.

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Colorado football: Buffs make return to Pac-12

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After Saturday's win, the Buffs returned their focus to the Pac-12. They will host Arizona on Saturday in the first of six straight conference games to close the season.

Although CU has had a rough time in Pac-12 play this season, MacIntyre said he believes the Buffs can translate some of the good things they did Saturday to their Pac-12 games.

"I've seen it all along," MacIntyre said. "We just have to do it when we get out there and we have to get over that mental barrier. We're improving. We just have to do it against Arizona when they get here Saturday."

Arizona (4-2, 1-2 Pac-12) snapped a two-game losing streak on Saturday with a 35-24 win against Utah.

Notable

MacIntyre was pleased with the performance of freshman quarterback Sefo Liufau after seeing it again on film. "I thought he did a good job taking care of the football," MacIntyre said. "His worst throw was his first throw." ... Tackle Marc Mustoe (broken leg) was the only significant injury from Saturday's game. With him out for the year, starting guards Daniel Munyer and Kaiwi Crabb will serve as backup tackles, along with freshman Sam Kronshage. ... MacIntyre said tight end Alex Wood could return this week. He suffered a concussion at Arizona State on Oct. 12. ... The Buffs held their first workout of the season inside the practice bubble on Sunday night.

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