



By: Joel Broida

Ryan Iverson's (69) recovery of a fourth quarter muffed punt was a special teams highlight Sunday.

Brooks: KO/Punt Coverage Due Especially Close Look

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By: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER – Colorado special teams coordinator

Toby Neinas observed his 42nd birthday last Sunday. He celebrated it with a sigh.

Neinas knows, of course, how close his coverage teams came to turning a sunny afternoon sour for the Buffaloes. CU gave up 482 yards – 390 on kickoffs, 92 on punts – in its 41-27 season-opening win over Colorado State. Rams punt returner Joe Hansley took a punt back 74 yards for a touchdown, while kick returner Thomas Coffman supplied another momentum-altering play with an 84-yard kickoff return that set up CSU's go-ahead score late in the third quarter.

"If that game had not gone our way, there's no doubt in my mind as to what would have caused it – there's no doubt in anybody's mind," Neinas said following a Tuesday morning practice that, yes, included work on both punt and kick coverage.

He continued: "You have such enormous swings of momentum on plays like that. We're about ready to knock them out – then we give them the punt return. We're kind of getting ready to knock them out again – then we give them to kick return . . . we have to avoid that. I have to have them better than that."

That ranks among Neinas' and the Buffs' chief tasks this week as they prepare for Saturday's home opener against the University of Central Arkansas (6 p.m., Folsom Field). The Bears, members of the Southland Conference and ranked fifth in the FCS, feature freshman Jatavious Wilson as their primary return specialist.

Neinas says Wilson can match the straight-ahead speed of CSU's Hansley and Coffman, but is quicker laterally. And Wilson showed it in UCA's 58-7 opening win against Incarnate Word, returning a kickoff 93 yards for a score and adding 17 more yards on punt returns. Wilson also had 105 receiving yards, giving him 215 all-purpose yards for the night and earning him Southland Conference Special Teams Player of The Week on Monday.

To fix the Buffs' coverage woes, coach Mike MacIntyre said there have been some personnel tweaks: "We've moved some guys around in different spots we thought they'd fit better in." He also said, "I think about seven of those kids, that was their first time to ever run down on a kickoff. So that happens sometimes. We'll improve on that and bounce back from it."

Both MacIntyre and Neinas shouldered the blame for the coverage lapses. MacIntyre said Hansley – CSU's No. 25 – didn't catch him by surprise: "No. 25 for them – I knew him going in the game because we had played against them the year before. I thought he was really quick and athletic."

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On his 74-yard TD return, said MacIntyre, “We had him right there at the point of attack, two people right there, and they both missed him. Then we had another guy and another guy miss him. So, he’s on scholarship and he made a good play. Do we need to not let that happen? Of course . . . we’ve got to improve that.”

Of Coffman’s 84-yard kickoff return that set up a 16-yard, three-play scoring drive, MacIntyre said, “. . . my fault. We just didn’t do a good enough job. We practiced it a lot, worked at it tremendously. We just didn’t do a good enough job of getting off blocks or understanding our leverage on kickoff. You get so spread out. On both of those kickoff returns (Tyree Simmons had another for 30 yards) we’re down inside the 20 before the kid gets out of the end zone – which is good. You’re running down there. Then they made some good blocks and he made a couple of guys miss and we kind of went in on some bad angles.”

Neinas, however, said CSU made early adjustments in its return games and he didn’t match those fixes: “I didn’t do a good job helping them understand exactly what their assignment was. We got in the game and saw something we had not prepared for, I didn’t adjust well and they (Buffs) had a hard time with what they saw.”

Aside from the personnel “tweaks” – or adjustments in lining up – MacIntyre mentioned, Neinas wants to refine the coverage schemes instead of starting over. He said coverage assignments would be “really boiled down and made cleaner, simpler – just one task. If (opponents) do this, you do this – and that’s it.

In Tuesday’s practice, 15 minutes of a 20-minute period were spent on coverage. Neinas said if more work on coverage was required on Wednesday, so be it. “But we will get that absolutely fixed. I think we’ll be so much better this weekend; if we aren’t you’ll see wholesale changes in schemes. But I don’t think we need to do that; we’re not ready for that yet.”

Neinas said the message CU’s coverage teams sent in the opener was straightforward: We’re a work in progress and we’re vulnerable.

“We cannot do that in major college football,” he said. “We can’t have what we saw (Sunday). Give credit to the Rams. (Coach Jim McElwain) identified what we were doing early, went right to it and adjusted very well. We thought we had it in practice, we thought we had it in drill work – and obviously I didn’t have it. Because we were bad, we were bad.

“And the terrible part about that is, when you start that way in the first game, people see that. Once that’s out there, it’s a bad sign. We have to illustrate that we’re sound in coverage on Saturday night. We have to do that, absolutely have to.”

NOTABLE: How long did MacIntyre and his staff celebrate their debut win at CU? Not very . . . maybe on the bus ride from Denver to Boulder. He said he and his coaches were in their offices at the Dal Ward Athletic Center until 5:45 a.m. on Monday getting an early preview of Central Arkansas. Said MacIntyre: “You watch them on tape and you forget about everything else.” That’s known as “staying grounded,” he added . . . Junior receiver Tyler McCulloch wore a protective boot on Tuesday as a precautionary measure. He’s taking it easy after a foot injury suffered in preseason camp but is expected to be ready for Saturday . . . CU quarterback Connor Wood wasn’t sacked once – he’s not counting the statistical sack given on an intentional grounding call – and not hit very often. Wood said his O-line was terrific, MacIntyre said the big guys were passable for a first game: “They never look as good on tape (but) I’m not taking anything from way they played . . . the eye in the sky doesn’t lie.” . . . CU’s run game accounted for 113 yards in the opener, not the total MacIntyre was hoping for but a justifiable amount considering Wood and his offense finished with 513 total. CSU, said MacIntyre, “was stacking up against the run, which enabled us to throw. You take what the defense gives you.” . . . CU’s leading rusher was Christian Powell (13 carries, 42 yards). He came out of the game briefly with a thigh bruise, but returned. Tony Jones carried 13 times for 27 yards against the Rams. MacIntyre said Donta Abron (two carries, five yards) would likely get a few more attempts this week . . . Outside linebacker/senior captain Paul Vigo saw limited duty Sunday because of what MacIntyre described as “a stinger” suffered near the end of preseason camp. MacIntyre said while Vigo had been cleared to play in the opener, it wasn’t certain how much repeated hitting Vigo’s shoulder would take . . . Freshman receivers Devin Ross and Jeff Thomas (suspended) did not play against CSU, and MacIntyre said “depending on the flow” of the home opener both could play this weekend. Each player, he said, has practiced well and Thomas’ hamstring injury appears to be improving . . . Senior quarterback Jordan Webb is back in full gear and is practicing – a fast turnaround after his spring knee injury. However, MacIntyre said he is still unsure of Webb’s playing status. He told Webb he wouldn’t start or compete for the starting job and that if “everything is going smooth (at the position)” he wouldn’t change it. If injuries occur, MacIntyre said, so might Webb’s status.

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Ottewill: CU has the right man for the job

If Dan Hawkins thought the cupboard was bare when he took over for Gary Barnett, I wonder what he'd have said about the group of kids Mike MacIntyre coached to an impressive win on Sunday night?

Hawkins took over a roster that had just won the Big 12 North. MacIntyre assumed a team that had posted just one win a year ago, a group that had been beaten up in every way imaginable. Hawkins lost his first encounter with the CSU Rams, an in-state no-no that should have been a sign. MacIntyre won 41-27.



Talent schmalent.

To some extent, every Division I program has "talent." Some schools just have more than others. And although it's not a popular thing to say in these parts, a Big 12 or Pac-12 school should, in theory, amass more talent – on average – than a Mountain West school. But it takes a coach to get the most out of what he's got, no matter what conference he's coaching in or against.

Barnett was exceptional at getting the most out of his teams, some of which were less talented than others. It appears that MacIntyre might be cut from a similar cloth; Sunday, he certainly got the most out of what many considered the very worst team in Division I football by the end of 2012.

How else does one explain Connor Wood's 33-of-46, 400-yard, three-touchdown performance? It's not like Wood was some kind of world-beater under the Buffs' most recent former coach, Jon Embree. Hell, Wood barely played. Sure, the junior quarterback probably did some growing up over the last year, but without having played a real game since last November, when his stat line read 3-of-6, 11 yards, no touchdowns and two interceptions against Washington (good for a -1.3 quarterback rating), how did he get so darn good? On Sunday night, he looked like the blue-chip quarterback that was being recruited by everyone from Mack Brown to Nick Saban out of high school.

How?

Coaching. That's how.

Wood has all the tools. He's big. He's athletic. And he's got a solid arm. But somehow, Embree either didn't recognize it, or he couldn't ever get those qualities to surface.

With just one summer, and presumably a bunch of pats on the back, MacIntyre gave his quarterback one more tool – confidence. For the first time in years, the coach at CU confidently stepped up and named his starting quarterback – long before the season opener. Instead of leaning on the old "competition is good" cliché, MacIntyre opted instead to give his starter a boost like he'd never received before at the college level. In essence, MacIntyre helped Wood play like the player everyone originally thought he could be.

Under the "new" Mac, the Buffs have simplified their offense – going away from the pro-style offense employed by Embree and Eric Bieniemy – and for the first time in a long time, CU appeared as if they knew what they were doing on the field. Wood made the right reads and made plenty of excellent throws. He was poised and

confident.

And while everyone knew about Paul Richardson, nobody – especially CSU – knew much about slot receiver D.D. Goodson. And that's understandable, because Goodson wasn't a receiver at all last year, much less a starting receiver.

Last season, Goodson, who hauled in five catches for 44 yards and a touchdown against the Rams on Sunday, didn't catch a single pass. In fact, last season he only touched the ball five times for 18 measly yards on offense – as a running back. The year before that, he was a defensive back. MacIntyre decided to switch Goodson to the slot receiver. Funny how a new coach can come in and spot talent, even if it was previously misplaced.

MacIntyre also had the guts to start a true freshman at middle linebacker, a position generally reserved for a seasoned upper-classman. Addison Gillam, who was inked originally by MacIntyre to play at San Jose State, returned the favor and gave his new coach and his new school 14 tackles, including one smashing hit on fourth-and-short, a turnover on downs that proved to be a key juncture in the game. Again, talent recognized, production returned.

Talk to anyone near CU football and the message is consistent: MacIntyre has simplified things in Boulder. He coaches who he's got, not who he might get two years from now with a few more wins or better facilities. He's only got one game on the books – so it's still early – but MacIntyre appears disinterested in excuses, something his two predecessors seemed to master.

In the process of coaching to his players' strengths, MacIntyre has brought both confidence and fun to the sidelines. Anyone who watched the Buffs last season never saw either one.

During Sunday's game, which was actually closer than the final score indicated, MacIntyre was under complete control. Unlike Hawkins, MacIntyre made the right calls at the right times. Unlike Embree, MacIntyre was calm, cool and collected 100 percent of the time, even when he was the victim of a bad call or when one of his players made a fundamental error.

Kids feed off of the actions of their coach, and the Buffs are eating up what MacIntyre is all about.

It's still far too early to say for sure, and the Pac-12 will generally offer a far more formidable opponent than CSU, but if Sunday's game is any indication, MacIntyre appears to be the right man for the job at CU. For the first time in a long time, the Buffs have something to smile about.

Imagine what might happen when that cupboard fills back up.

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CU Buffs can walk proud after opening season by beating CSU Rams

By John Henderson *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — It won't be hard to recognize Colorado football players this week. They're wearing black and gold again. Some may even have a Colorado football T-shirt. Their chests are out. Their heads are high.

"They don't have to go to class hiding under their hood or under a cap," receiver Paul Richardson said Tuesday.

One win. At Colorado, that's all it takes to change a player's perspective on the future, or a student body's view of the present. The Buffaloes' resplendent 41-27 victory over Colorado State on Sunday seemed to reverse an entire program after a 1-11 season.

After the game, Richardson talked with his roommate, junior safety Jered Bell, about what the players will face around town. One victory didn't mean a parade down Broadway Street, but the Buffs didn't get the silent treatment, either.

"I told him it's going to be different on campus, not having to worry about people judging you in a negative way because of what happened that past weekend," Richardson said. "I'm happy for the young guys, because I know it'd be really hard on them. We helped them make it that much easier.

"And especially for the seniors who everyone knows around campus."

Then again, they must take it for what it is. One win. Colorado State is not Ohio State.

And, if first-year coach Mike MacIntyre needs to poke holes in any inflated egos, he need not point out this past weekend. Sure, eight lower-division FCS schools upset FBS opponents, three from power conferences.

But the Buffaloes can look back to this same time last year. That's when CSU, also under a first-year coach, seemed to turn its program around in the season opener with a 22-17 upset of Colorado. The next week, CSU got thumped 22-7 at home by North Dakota State, the FCS national champion.

Up next for Colorado at 6 p.m. Saturday is Central Arkansas (1-0), a fifth-ranked FCS school.

"I was well-grounded," MacIntyre said. "I was at the office at 5:45 the next morning working on Central Arkansas. So it didn't last very long."

The players are echoing their coach. Quarterback Connor Wood, who threw for 400 yards and three touchdowns, merely went back to his place with family in from Houston on Sunday night and watched "SportsCenter."

Richardson saw his family, then later that night watched film of Central Arkansas' defense.

"We've got to expect to win," senior offensive tackle Jack Harris said. "Our fans have to start expecting to win too." **Footnote.** Jordan Webb, last year's starting quarterback, is back in pads practicing after blowing out his knee last spring. However, when he heals, he faces a one-game suspension, MacIntyre said, due to his guilty plea last week to third-degree assault. The plea stemmed from an on-campus fight involving former teammate Alex Lewis and an Air Force Academy cadet. Webb said he has been cleared for everything but live contact. His sentencing is Friday. He faces six to 24 months in jail or a \$500 to \$5,000 fine. ... Central Arkansas suspended four players for the game, but only one starter, offensive lineman C.J. Simon.

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Football: Mike MacIntyre says Buffs might have experienced 'defining moment' against CSU

By Kyle Ringo *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Mike MacIntyre can be unconventional. He doesn't always follow the plan in the heat of the moment and isn't afraid to trust his gut.

CU fans are learning as much about their new head football coach in the wake of his season-opening victory over Colorado State, and they are eager for more of MacIntyre with Central Arkansas coming to town this week.

Quarterback Connor Wood had a great game in the opener. Ditto for Paul Richardson. Defenders Chidera Uzo-Diribe and Greg Henderson combined for the play of the game in the second half when Uzo-Diribe caused a fumble and Henderson scooped it up and scored.

But MacIntyre might be most responsible for what he said might have been a defining moment in how this team handles adversity.

CU players had grown used to their old coaches yelling at them on the sidelines after mistakes during games the past two years. They generally didn't respond well to that style of coaching and the 1-11 record they produced in 2012 reflected that.

When CSU rallied from a double-digit deficit to take the lead from the Buffs in the second half with a punt return for a touchdown and a long kickoff return, MacIntyre didn't berate his kickoff coverage unit as it came off the field or the defense when it gave up the go-ahead score moments later.

Instead, he walked over and found the offense.

"I think sometimes when you're an athlete, or even anything you do in life, you don't enjoy the moment," MacIntyre said. "And if you can enjoy the moment, then you can play well or perform well in it. If you're tight and worried about everything, you can't perform, you don't enjoy the moment and you don't play well."

"So I went over and told the offense, 'Wasn't that an unbelievable return? We screwed up.' I said, 'But hey, we've got great players. Let's go out there and take it back and enjoy the moment. We said this was going to happen. They're on scholarship. You're on scholarship. They're a good football team, We're a good football team. Go play.'"

Instead of being overwhelmed by the change in momentum and falling apart, the Buffs rallied and recaptured the lead with a field goal from Will Oliver. Not long after, Uzo-Diribe and Henderson made the biggest plays of their careers so far and the Buffs were back in charge.

MacIntyre said he learned something about his entire program watching it celebrate that play in particular.

"If you watch our sidelines, I don't know that I've ever seen a sideline react like that. Coaches, players, managers, trainers, I mean they were all going crazy. I think that kind of showed you the passion and the investment that they have made. I think it's going to be hard for them to say give so to speak. The more they keep investing and the more we keep trying to improve, I think that will be a tell-tale sign for this team."

MacIntyre followed up Tuesday with another somewhat unusual move for a college football coach. He took responsibility for the mistakes made by the kickoff coverage unit and said he has tweaked it both by adding new players and moving others around. He gave credit to CSU punt returner Joe Hansley for making a great play but said coaches will fix CU's problems there.

MacIntyre will coach his first game in Folsom Field on Saturday night against Central Arkansas, a team ranked No. 5 in the nation in the Football Championship Subdivision. The Buffs didn't win a home game last season for the first time in the history of Folsom Field.

"I'm really looking forward to playing here," MacIntyre said. "I can't imagine what it's going to be like to have a packed house and just really Colorado faithful cause it was fun playing at Denver's stadium there with just half the place us."

MacIntyre made it clear his team will have its hands full with an opponent that is lead by quarterback Wynrick Smothers, a 6-foot-1, 208-pound playmaker who was the Southland Conference Player of the Year in 2012.

"I coached FCS for six years of my life and enjoyed every moment of it," MacIntyre said. "To me, there was no difference. I felt no different when we beat Murray State than when we beat Colorado State. ...You put the same amount of time, the same heart and all the kids are giving all they have. There are just not as many people watching. You get between those white lines, it's game on and it's a passionate awesome time."

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Howell: After beating Rams, CU Buffs are hungry for more

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

On Sunday night, just hours after he racked up 208 receiving yards and two touchdowns in a 41-27 win over Colorado State, Colorado receiver Paul Richardson sat down to watch film.

The explosive junior didn't spend his time reviewing his outstanding plays against the Rams. Instead, he was already looking ahead to the Central Arkansas Bears, a team the Buffs will face Saturday at 6 p.m. at Folsom Field.

"You can't get hung up on the week before, man," Richardson said. "The week before means absolutely nothing after it passes, whether it's a win or a loss."

Colorado knows all about losing streaks. The Buffs snapped an eight-game skid on Sunday. But, it's been a few years since the Buffs have been on a winning streak.

In fact, the last time CU won back-to-back games, Brian Cabral was the interim head coach, in November of 2010.

Getting another win this week won't be easy, considering Central Arkansas is one of the top five teams in the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS). CU, however, has to find a way to seize the momentum from Sunday and take advantage of the opportunity ahead.

"I think it's a very big opportunity," Richardson said. "We need it. We need every win, though. This program needs a lot of wins. We understand that and we're up for the challenge."

Richardson wasn't the only Buff watching film on Sunday night. Monday was an off day, but there's no doubt the players spent their alone time studying the Bears that day, too.

By 5:45 on Monday morning, head coach Mike MacIntyre was in his office at the Dal Ward Center, putting all his energy into getting win No. 2.

"I was well grounded," he said. "Once you watch (UCA) on tape, you forget about everything else."

Sunday was a fun night for the Buffs. It was a feeling they had been waiting a long to feel. But MacIntyre and many of his players are making sure the Buffs don't have to go so long in between wins.

It's time to move on.

"We take every game as a season within itself," MacIntyre said. "We've got our next season this week."

CU got back onto the practice field Tuesday morning. If anybody was basking in the glow of being 1-0, it didn't show.

"Real winners, it doesn't faze them if they win a bunch of games and if the media says a lot of good things about you," quarterback Connor Wood said. "You don't let that get to your head and you stay hungry."

"Just stay hungry and never be satisfied about where we are."

MacIntyre and Wood both said they received a bunch of congratulatory texts after the win on Sunday. Richardson said that players wouldn't have to walk around campus hiding under hoods and hats like they have in the past.

MacIntyre talked about the importance of enjoying the moment, and CU has certainly enjoyed beating the Rams.

What could truly define this team, however, is how it builds upon that win. Tuesday was the first step in that direction, as the players put together a great session of practice.

"You have to get yourself motivated and focused during the week to be motivated and focused on Saturday," MacIntyre said.

For the first time in a long time, the Buffaloes seem to have both the motivation and the focus to make the good feelings last a little while.

"I think the guys feel the excitement, the feeling of winning and I think we're hungry for that again, and we want to take those steps to do it again," Wood said.

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Football: CU Buffs' Sefo Liufau happy with his role

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Sefo Liufau came to Boulder on June 2 with the mindset of winning the starting quarterback job with the Colorado Buffaloes.

The true freshman didn't do that, but he's no less focused on helping his team than he was before.

"It's whatever coach wants me to do; I'm here for the team," said Liufau, who was announced last week as the No. 2 quarterback, behind junior Connor Wood. "I'm ready to play if they need me."

The 6-foot-4 Liufau has great athletic ability that has impressed coaches and teammates since his arrival in June.

"I came in and worked hard and I'm happy and I'm proud of the progress I made from the beginning of the summer to the end," he said.

CU had a wide-open quarterback competition and gave Liufau an equal chance to take the job. While Wood won the job, Liufau takes his role as the primary back up seriously.

"(The goal) was definitely to win the starting job and technically it still is, because being No. 2, you never know what is going to happen," he said. "Each week you have to prepare like you're the starter because you never know what's going to happen out there on the field."

During camp, Liufau felt he did a good job of picking up CU's offense and learning how to go through is progressions and reads on the field. He also said he believes he can get a lot better simply by observing the game from the sidelines, as well as continuing to get reps in practice.

"I think I need to work on everything -- mechanics, reading coverages," he said. "I don't like focusing on one single thing. I just want to get better in all aspects of my game."

If he continues to do that, it may not be long before Liufau gets his shot to play. Whether that's this year or not, he doesn't know, but he said, "If they need me to, I'll be out there."

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Football: CU Buffs' Jordan Webb back on field

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Senior quarterback Jordan Webb has returned to the field after being cleared by doctors. Webb tore his right ACL on April 9 and has been battling legal issues since May.

His legal issues are still ongoing, but physically, he's excited to back with his teammates at practice.

"It's awesome," said Webb, who started nine games in 2012. "Like they always say, you never miss something until it's taken away from you. I have a whole new value of being out here, being able to be around these guys, be in meetings and stuff like that."

Webb returned to practice Thursday, he said. Tuesday was his first day in pads. He has not been cleared for live drills, but is participating in 7-on-7s and individual work. He hopes to compete soon for a backup role behind Wood.

"Just making myself available, and being a viable option whenever it's necessary," he said of his goal.

On Wednesday, Webb plead guilty to third-degree assault from an altercation in Boulder on May 11. He is scheduled to appear for sentencing on Friday.

"I'm really anxious to get it over with and move on with my life," he said. "It's been pretty stressful."

Contact staff writer Brian Howell at howellb@dailycamera.com or twitter.com/BrianHowell33.

Football: CU Buffs want to improve ground game

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

CU finished with 113 yards on the ground against Colorado State on Sunday, but just 74 of those came from running backs, on 30 carries.

"They were stacking up against the run some, so that enabled us to be able to throw it," said CU coach Mike MacIntyre, whose team threw for 400 yards. "We're going to basically take what they give us, but we always want to run more. There were a couple of runs that I thought we had a chance to bust and I think we will. If you bust one for 50, all of a sudden you're at 200 yards rushing. I felt good about some of the things we did in the rushing game and we just need to keep improving it."

Christian Powell had 42 yards on 15 carries, despite dealing with a thigh bruise late in the game. Tony Jones had 27 yards on 13 carries and Donta Abron had two carries for five yards. MacIntyre said Abron might get more carries in the near future.

Notable

Linebacker Paul Vigo was limited against Colorado State because of a stinger he suffered late in camp, MacIntyre said. ... Receiver Tyler McCulloch was limited in practice Tuesday because of a sore foot, but he should be OK for Saturday. ... After giving up 192 yards in kickoff returns against CSU, MacIntyre said, "We tweaked a little bit on our kickoff team. We even kind of moved some guys around in different spots where I felt they'd fit better at." ... Former CU receiver Patrick Williams has been hired by the program as a football operations assistant.

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Kyle Ringo Blog: Central Arkansas coach notices change in Buffs

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Central Arkansas coach Clint Conque brings his No. 5-ranked team in the Football Championship Subdivision to Boulder this week to play Colorado at Folsom Field Saturday night.

Conque discussed the Buffs Tuesday morning during the Southland Conference coaches teleconference and one of the first impressions he shared is the impact he perceives coach Mike MacIntyre has had on the program.

"They look like it's a different culture there, a different team," Conque said. "...They're a good football team. It's a different Colorado than went 1-11. They've got a new staff, a new culture there. Their schemes are completely different. Their players seem to be energized. So they are a very good football team."

MacIntyre has compared Central Arkansas to Oregon offensively. He raved about the athleticism and ability of senior quarterback Wynrick Smothers and said the Bears are fast, athletic team similar to those the Buffs will face in the Pac-12 Conference later this season.

"Very kind," Conque said. "I'm sure that's for their media and their players to get their attention. Certainly there was a tremendous amount of success of FCS schools beating FBS schools last weekend and coming off an emotional win, I'm sure that I would be, and I'm sure he's tried to do everything he can to get the attention with a smaller program coming in. ...

I'm not sure we're Oregon"

Contact staff writer Kyle Ringo at ringok@dailycamera.com or twitter.com/kyleringo.

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Conque, Bears try to prepare for altitude at Colorado

Posted: September 3, 2013 - 2:43pm



University of Central Arkansas football coach Clint Conque said there's not a whole lot his coaches can do about altitude in Colorado but there is a lot they can do about water.

The Bears take on Colorado of the Pac-12 Saturday night in Boulder, which has an elevation of 5,400 feet.

"We're going a day early and we'll have oxygen available but every player handles altitude a little differently," Conque said at Tuesday's Bearbacker luncheon. "If you really wanted to get acclimated, you'd have to leave two weeks early.

"But the word about our place this week is hydration and it's already started. The dry air at that altitude can drain you pretty quickly. Water contains oxygen and you need to keep oxygen in the body."

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community has been 'Colorado, Colorado, Colorado'; It's here," said Conque. "I think FCS football built up itself very well last week. We have a great opportunity to continue to elevate the identity of our subdivision."

In Thursday's 58-7 season-opening victory over the University of Incarnate Word, Conque said he was pleased with several newcomers to the Bears' lineup.

UCA started four true freshman and one of them Jatavious Wilson two touchdown passes and had a 93-yard kickoff return for a touchdown.

Junior Blake Veasley and sophomore Danzel Williams combined for 135 yards rushing in carrying the backfield

load with junior Willie Matthews serving a one-game disciplinary suspension.

Conque said an unsung hero was redshirt freshman receiver Desmond Smith, who had four catches for 77 yards and scored a touchdown after a recovery of a blocked punt in the end zone.

"Desmond Smith (from Bentonville) was a pleasant surprise," Conque said. "He is gonna be a good player here,"

Conque also noted that sophomore Blake Gardner had two receptions last season. He had 10 for 61 yards against Incarnate Word.

The coach had further praise for Wilson, who was the Southland Conference Special Teams Player of the Week.

"He's a tremendous young man, a smart student and one heck of a football player," Conque said. "If he hadn't dropped one sure touchdown pass and he got stopped 1 yard short of the goal, he might have had five TD's in his first game. I'm not ready to ordain him national player of the year, but he can make you miss him in a phone booth."

Against UIW, the UCA coaches played 60 of the 72 players who were dressed out. Conque said eight of the player were only going to play if there was an emergency. The only significant injury was to defensive back Haywood Jeffries, whose shoulder injury will cause him to miss about two games.

"It was a very business-like, efficient and workmanlike effort on our part and we came out relatively injury free," Conque said. "And it's not every game that you can block a punt for a touchdown and return a kickoff for another."

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