



CU's Geer ready to return to practice

Junior tight end missed two weeks due to surgery

By Kyle Ringo

Wednesday, September 10, 2008

The first two outings of the season have been an adventure for the Colorado offense, but the unit is about to get an infusion of experience and playmaking.

Junior tight end Riar Geer said he is about 95 percent healthy after undergoing minor knee surgery two weeks ago, and he expects to begin practicing Sunday in advance of the Buffs game against West Virginia four days later.

Geer led the team in receiving two years ago before an injury plagued 2007 campaign.

"He brings another dimension to what we can do because he can know everything and he has the ability to make some plays but also hold up against some bigger players blocking," tight ends coach Kent Riddle said.

Geer missed the entire spring dealing with a suspension earned from his involvement in an off-campus fight in March. Despite not being able to participate on the field, Geer made is a point to attend all film study sessions for tight ends and fullbacks and did his best to help fellow junior Patrick Devenny.

"I think the reason why I did that is because the tight ends that were ahead of me always did that for me," Geer said. "It's something that has been passed down from all the tight ends."

Devenny credited Geer for his improvement. Devenny has come through in a big way for the Buffs in the first twogames. He has five catches, and has been a go-to guy in critical situations. Four of his catches have come on either third or fourth downs and all four produced first downs.

With Geer back, Riddle once again has three players in which he is confident at the tight end position. Add fullbacks Maurice Cantrell and Jake Behrens to the mix and the number is really five.

But the important part of getting Geer back is that he is the one player in the group versatile enough to do it all. Geer said he expects to be used in multiple ways and at various positions. He said he will line up as a wide receiver, at fullback and as a traditional tight end.

"I just want to get out there and prove myself again," he said. "With all the stuff that has happened to me in the offseason and then with this knee surgery, I want to get out there and prove that I'm 100 percent and a good football player."

Geer said he has been impressed with Devenny and true freshman Patrick Deehan, who became the first true freshman tight end in 25 years to catch a touchdown pass at CU last week. Riddle said Deehan had

to first overcome some nerves early in the game against Eastern Washington that caused him to "invent stuff" and lose track of some of his assignments.

"High and lows," Riddle said. "He has some really good plays and some really bad ones. That's not out of what you would expect from a true freshman.

"He's going to be a very good player. We just have to get him dialed in what he's doing."

Sore

A stout heart is one of the traits CU coaches liked in linebacker Shaun Mohler when they recruited him from the junior college ranks in California. It's showing up for the first time in his CU career this week.

Mohler was back on the practice fields Tuesday as the Buffs returned to work to begin preparations for their Sept. 18 encounter with No. 25 West Virginia at what is expected to be a sold-out Folsom Field.

Mohler participated on a limited basis, but the fact that he participated at all was good news throughout the program. Just three days earlier Mohler had been taken to a Boulder hospital to be examined for what team athletic trainers thought to be a broken collarbone suffered during CU's win over Eastern Washington.

Mohler said at first he was told by hospital personnel that he had broken his clavicle. He found out later from linebackers coach Brian Cabral that the diagnosis was wrong and he only suffered a serious shoulder bruise.

"I'll be able to play by next week," he said. "It's loosening up."

That news is sweet to the ears of defensive coaches. In the first two games of the year, Mohler has proven to be an integral cog in the unit. He's tied with cornerbacks Cha'pelle Brown and Jalil Brown with the third-most tackles at 12, and he's versatile enough to play in every situation.

Losing Mohler would have affected more than just the defense. He is third on the team in special teams points earned with four. Walk-on safety Travis Sandersfeld and true freshman safety Patrick Mahnke are first and second with seven and five points respectively.

From the trenches

Offensive lineman Devin Head was suspended for last week's game and was forced to watch for updates on the Internet from home. Head had started the first game of the season at one guard spot while coaches rotated Max Tuioti-Mariner and Blake Behrens at the other spot.

Those two players played every snap with Head out. In fact, the same five linemen played every snap in the Eastern Washington game. There were a total of 72 snaps. Head wears No. 72. Hmmm.

Offensive line coach Jeff Grimes graded the film of the EWU game and only senior center Daniel Sanders fared better in the second outing than the season opener. Sophomore Ryan Miller leads the group with 15 knockdown blocks. Fellow sophomore Nate Solder has allowed six quarterback pressures and Tuioti-Mariner has allowed seven. No other member of the unit has allowed more than two.

Notable

Coach Dan Hawkins said the team immediately began preparation for West Virginia on Tuesday instead of taking a day or two to work without the game plan involved. ... Hawkins was as vague as possible when asked what he gained from film study of East Carolina's upset of the Mountaineers, saying he has better understanding of WVU tendencies out of certain formations.



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Linebacker's return relieves Buffs

Mohler fills big hole in defensive unit

By Patrick Ridgell

Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Shaun Mohler says he'll play Sept. 18 when Colorado hosts West Virginia (6:30 p.m., ESPN). And, yes, the Buffaloes are relieved.

Mohler, one of CU's starting middle linebackers, hurt his right shoulder early in the third quarter of Saturday's defeat of Eastern Washington. Trainers first feared he had fractured his clavicle, but X-rays revealed only a severe bruise. Despite playing a little more than half the game, Mohler finished with nine tackles, matching Jalil Brown for team high.

Mohler's climb up the depth chart is critical in CU's effort to replace All-American Jordon Dizon in 2008.

"One of four guys had to show up for me this year," CU linebacker coach Brian Cabral said Tuesday. "I would have preferred more. ... He's more physical, more mature than the other three. The game means a lot more to him than I think it does an incoming freshman."

The other three to whom Cabral referred are freshman linebackers Jon Major, Lynn Katoa and Doug Rippey. Major tore his ACL in camp, and Katoa's legal problems last spring cost him a semester of classes, forcing 2008 to be a redshirt year. Coaches want to redshirt Rippey to allow him to develop.

Mohler is filling an important spot despite not arriving in Boulder until late summer. The transfer from Orange Coast College in California was named a starter the week before the season opener. His climb has been one of the defense's better stories.

Cabral, citing Mohler's diligence in completing eight courses at OCC over the winter and summer terms just to gain admittance to CU, said he is not surprised.

"He personally invests a lot of time learning, asking questions, studying," Cabral said. "His success has always been because of how hard of a worker he is."

Said Mohler: "There are still moments (of confusion). There's so much new stuff and different teams. It's a learning process every day."

Mohler said his shoulder remains sore. He took a helmet to his collarbone, prompting fears of a break.

"I feel very fortunate," Mohler said. "I thought it was broken and I'd be out four weeks."

CSU SCHEDULING: Colorado State announced Tuesday it has scheduled Northern Colorado for a game in 2011. That piece of news should have no bearing on CU's efforts to extend its series with the Rams.

CU opens 2011 at Hawaii on Sept. 3 and hosts California on Sept. 10. CU is holding Sept. 17 of that year open to play

First Look

A quick glimpse at CU's next opponent:

Who: West Virginia (1-1)

Where: Boulder, Folsom Field

When: Thursday, Sept. 18, 6:30 p.m., ESPN

Notes: West Virginia fell to No. 25 this week after losing Saturday at East Carolina, 24-3. ... The two programs have never met. CU returns the game next September at West Virginia. ... Mountaineer senior quarterback Pat White is a dual threat like other Big 12 quarterbacks who'll be a challenge. Against East Carolina, West Virginia totaled only 251 yards and was held without a touchdown for the first time since 2001.

the Rams.

The CU-CSU football series has no dates scheduled beyond 2010. CU athletic director Mike Bohn has said he wants to have a new deal in place by Oct. 1. CU is expected to start seeking other teams to fill out its future schedules if nothing is set by that date.

EXTRA POINTS: CU resumed practice Tuesday after taking Monday off. It'll hold closed practices through Friday and take Saturday off. ... CU has outscored its two opponents, 41-6, in the second half. Coach Dan Hawkins said the players' conditioning has a lot to do with that. "The guys are in great shape and are able to finish up strong," he said. "It's also their confidence level."

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