



Bufs kicker Goodman doing the two-step

CU place-kicker has changed his approach

By Kyle Ringo
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BOULDER, Colo. — A perfect stranger took an interest in the plight of Aric Goodman last fall on the football field, and might have solved the Colorado place-kicker's accuracy and confidence problem.

Goodman suffered through a nightmarish first season as the Buffs' primary field goal and extra-point specialist, making just five of 14 field goals and missing eight in a row at one point. He was replaced by true freshman Jameson Davis for one game late in the season, but Davis missed two kicks and was battling a knee injury and Goodman was back under the microscope.

He was booed multiple times by the home crowd at Folsom Field for missing kicks against Texas, Kansas State and Oklahoma State before finally regrouping to make two straight to end the season.

In the months since, he has changed his approach -- literally.

Goodman always had been a three-step-approach kicker but he has made the switch to a two-step approach this winter and says he has reached the point where it now feels natural and comfortable.

"I just thought the first step sometimes was maybe taking me too far forward or too far outside of where I needed to be," Goodman said. "Getting rid of the step, ultimately, puts me in the spot every time where I feel my foot should be.

"I feel like I'm a lot more consistent recently. I haven't lost any distance or anything. So I feel like I'm kicking a lot better."

Goodman said he doesn't know if his previous approach was the problem last season. He said he has looked at film repeatedly to try to find errors in his mechanics, but the game-day film generally is shot from too far a distance to pick up most of the subtleties involved.

It figures to be a busy spring for Goodman, who will be the only healthy place-kicker on the roster when spring drills start in two weeks. Davis is still recovering from knee surgery and is still getting around on crutches.

Goodman said he is looking forward to the added workload and views this spring as an opportunity to begin to prove himself once again to fans. He's not worried about having to prove anything to teammates, coaches and his family, whom he credits for getting him through the tough times last fall.

Coach Dan Hawkins awarded him with a scholarship after he kicked a game-winner in overtime at home against West Virginia, but that kick marked the high point of the year and it came in Week 3.

"I don't know if I could have gotten through it without them," Goodman said. "It definitely helped out a lot having them behind my back. The whole time nobody said anything negative. Everybody just kept lifting me up and keeping my spirits up."

Goodman also found support from unknown faces.

Late last fall Matt Thompson, who runs Elite Kicking Academy in Lafayette, e-mailed Goodman about his struggles. Thompson offered to spend some time with Goodman to find out what was causing problems.

It was difficult to pinpoint because most of Goodman's missed attempts were wide by a matter of inches and not feet. In fact, Goodman had five balls bounce off the uprights in 2008 after rarely experiencing it at any point earlier in his career.

Thompson suggested Goodman experiment with changing his steps. He knew another kicking coach who once worked with Indianapolis Colts' kicker Adam Vinatieri on the very same issue. Vinatieri was an average kicker in college at South Dakota State, making only a few more kicks during his career (1991-1994) than he missed. When Vinatieri switched to a two-step approach, he went on to one of the most well-known careers for a place-kicker in NFL history, including two game-winning kicks in the Super Bowl.

That was enough to sell Goodman, who was looking for anything to right the ship, so to speak, after an unthinkable stretch of misses last fall.

"It just kind of seemed like every opportunity I had to kind of get out of the streak or whatever, it just kind of kept bouncing off the wrong way," Goodman said. "This season was the first time I had ever hit an upright and it just kind of seemed to keep happening."

The low point for Goodman came in the second quarter of a Nov. 1 game at Texas A&M when he connected perfectly with a ball on a 46-yard field goal attempt. The ball appeared to be on the right track until the last second when it plunked high off the right upright. It was one of several times during the season when he was forced to simply shake his head at the circumstances and continue to plow ahead.

"I don't know if I could have hit it better," Goodman said. "I mean, it hit probably two feet off the top of the upright."

Goodman has spent the offseason training in the strength and conditioning program with his teammates and kicking four times a week in the practice bubble and at Boulder High School. He focuses on keeping his timing, leg speed and mechanics down. A kicker's mechanics are a lot like a golf swing. When one little thing is off, bad results generally follow.

Goodman says he kicks 20-30 field goals in each session depending on what day of the week it is. He also practices kick offs. He expects punter Matt DiLallo will take some of the kickoff load off his plate this spring while Davis heals.

Goodman said he is excited to get back on the football field and into pressure situations coaches concoct to simulate the real deal on autumn Saturdays.

"I just want to go out there and make some kicks," Goodman said. "You know, last season is over with. Unfortunately it didn't go the way I wanted it to, but fortunately I have spring ball to get back on track,

be consistent again and have some fun."



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