



Spring game goal for Buffaloes: stay healthy

Bufs play spring finale today at Folsom Field

By Kyle Ringo
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BOULDER, Colo. — Colorado football coaches already have determined that no matter what happens today in the annual spring game, a starting quarterback won't be named until fall camp.

Most of the competition at other positions will continue into August as well, and in some areas, defensive line and wide receiver in particular, position battles are likely to grow even hotter when a new group of talented recruits is added to the roster.

So the best possible outcome on the grass at Folsom Field this afternoon would be for the Buffs to perform reasonably well in all three phases of the game, and to come out of the game relatively healthy.

That didn't happen much last season, on either count.

Spring ball this year began with its latest start date since the 1980s in Boulder in order to give the Buffs as much time as possible to heal from a brutal 5-7 season last fall. Twenty-five players have now missed significant practice and playing time since the beginning of fall camp last year because of serious injuries or illnesses.

The last thing this team needs now as it heads into 3½ months of summer workouts and player organized seven-on-seven drills is more bodies on the shelf unable to improve.

Coach Dan Hawkins mentioned staying healthy as one of his primary objectives for today earlier this week, when he said the team turned in two of its best practices since he has been at the helm of the program.

"Guys are getting to that next level of figuring things out and knowing where to go and what to do," he said. "You start getting a little chemistry and things start happening and then you can get to that next level of coaching."

It will be interesting to see how many people show up today for the 1 p.m. kickoff a year after the program attracted a record crowd of nearly 18,000 to the 2008 spring game.

While a decision at quarterback is still months away, fans will surely be eager to judge for themselves today whether the competition between junior Cody Hawkins and sophomore Tyler Hansen really is as close as coaches say. Both have moved the club effectively for the most part during the previous two scrimmages, with Hawkins posting slightly better overall statistics.

The first depth chart of 2009 was released Friday with no major surprises listed. Many key positions

were listed with multiple players sharing the starting role or in position groupings, including quarterback.

The only name fans might be surprised to find on the first team is sophomore offensive lineman Ethan Adkins listed as the first-team left guard. Adkins has played in a total of three games and 41 plays so far in his career, with all of that action coming as a redshirt freshman last fall.

He moved ahead of senior Devin Head this spring but will face a stiffer test in the fall when fellow sophomores Blake Behrens and Shawn Daniels return from injuries that kept both out of spring ball. Behrens played in all 12 games for a total of 769 snaps last season.

Defensive coaches would like to see some turnovers today after going through two scrimmages with just one to their credit, and that came on a fumbled quarterback-center exchange.

Turnovers have been emphasized throughout spring ball on both sides of the ball. The Buffs finished minus-7 in turnover ratio last season, including 14 interceptions thrown by Hawkins and Hansen combined.

Today will also be the first opportunity for place-kicker Aric Goodman to begin proving he has put a nightmare season behind him. Goodman has been solid this spring, but today he kicks in front a significant crowd once again, which has been when he has struggled.

Goodman made just five of 14 field goals last season, including going 0-for-6 from 40 yards or more.



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