



Buff lineman leans toward new mission

Tuioti-Mariner considers taking off for 18-24 months

By Kyle Ringo
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BOULDER, Colo. — Max Tuioti-Mariner faces a big decision.

The Colorado offensive lineman has suffered torn anterior cruciate ligaments in both his knees in the past 10 months causing him to miss most of last season and all of spring football this year.

Now those injuries could lead to an even longer leave of absence from the team.

Tuioti-Mariner is deeply religious and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Part of his commitment to his faith calls for him to devote his life to helping others, and in doing so, Tuioti-Mariner hopes to go on a church mission at some point. It would require a commitment of 18 months to two years.

Tuioti-Mariner said Thursday nothing has been decided in regard to when he will take his mission, but he acknowledged this might be the perfect time for it considering his body could benefit from the time away from the game.

"I'm pretty sure I'm going to take this season off," Tuioti-Mariner said. "It's just cause two ACLs in one year, that's a lot. We've got a lot of incredible players and our O-line is going to be strong."

Tuioti-Mariner has suffered the injury three times in just more than two years, with the first torn ligament occurring in the spring before his senior year in high school.

He recovered from that and signed with Colorado despite missing his entire senior season.

He wowed CU coaches in fall camp last year and earned 37 snaps at guard in the season opener against Colorado State as a true freshman.

He made his first collegiate start the next week against Eastern Washington and played 56 snaps against West Virginia in Week 3. During practice for the Florida State game the following week, he suffered another torn ACL, ending what was shaping up as a memorable first year in the program.

"They're coming along well," Tuioti-Mariner said of his knees. "The trainers are on my butt. I'm on a hard schedule right now. I've been doing rehab over at the (recreation) center. I've been swimming a lot. It's really good."

Rehabilitation exercises have become second nature to Tuioti-Mariner. He worked hard to recover quickly last fall and appeared to be on track to return to the field this summer when he suffered the third

tear during a winter agility workout.

Tuioti-Mariner said CU doctors and team athletic trainer, Miguel Rueda, have told him there is a possibility he could be ready to play by the beginning of the conference season in early October at Texas.

He could push himself and return to the team in time to help the Buffs this fall. But it might be difficult for him to return to the starting lineup immediately considering he will likely miss all or most of the nonconference portion of the season.

Tuioti-Mariner appears to be leaning toward taking the year off, but he remains unsure of whether he will remain in Boulder or leave to share his religion.

"We're still trying to see what is going on right now," Tuioti-Mariner said. "I'm still trying to discuss stuff with my family. That's pretty much all I can say right now."



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Woelk: Money main reason for BCS exclusivity

It has become an annual rite: a representative or senator from a state whose college football team feels mistreated by the Bowl Championship Series demands a congressional hearing.

This week, it was Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch. In years past, it's been representatives from Georgia and Texas, among others.

And every year, testimony is taken, stern words are issued -- and nothing is done.

It was no different this year. The Mountain West, that wonderful little conference that believes it belongs with the big boys, did its best to make its case. The conference came armed with all kinds of proposals, including one for a playoff, as well as a lawyer who suggested the BCS is in violation of federal antitrust laws.

Hatch naturally agreed. He's still miffed that the Utah Utes ran the table last year and didn't get so much as a sniff of the national title game. While the Utes went on to prove their point with a dismantling of Alabama in the Sugar Bowl, it was Oklahoma and Florida playing for the national title.

Thus, Hatch demanded a hearing. He even suggested that the Justice Department should look into the BCS (as if the Justice Department doesn't have more important issues on the table).

And, when Hatch finished huffing and puffing and the hearing was over, nobody's house was blown down.

Instead, the MWC meekly signed on to the current BCS agreement, the one with ESPN that will be finalized this week and will be worth a cool \$125 million per year through 2014.

As Utah president Michael Young duly noted, "If a conference wishes to compete at the highest levels of college football, and the only postseason system in place for that is the BCS, no one conference can afford to drop out and penalize its football programs and student-athletes."

Yes, the MWC could have chosen not to sign the new BCS agreement, something it kept threatening to do. Of course, that would have meant forfeiting millions of dollars for its member schools, and as the MWC well knows, a small piece of the pie is still a lot better than an empty plate.

Which all means it will be business as usual in the future. There will be no playoff, no small conference inclusion in the championship game and lots and lots of money for the big conferences.

Is it fair? Of course not -- but business ain't fair, and Division I college football is a business.

What the Mountain Wests of the world don't want to admit is what Nebraska chancellor Harvey Perlman tried delicately to make clear at the hearings:

It's not that Utah -- or TCU or BYU or Colorado State -- don't belong in the BCS.

It's that not enough people want to watch them on television.

In his testimony at the hearing, Perlman said the BCS simply recognizes that the public wants to watch powerhouse college football teams. Teams such as Alabama, Michigan, Texas and Southern Cal draw bigger television audiences -- and thus more revenue.

Look at it this way: take the best MWC game of the year, say BYU vs. Utah, and put it in front of a national television audience. Put it up against a similar SEC (Florida vs. Georgia), Big 12 (Texas vs. Oklahoma) or Big Ten (Ohio State vs. Michigan) matchup.

Wanna bet which game has the bigger ratings? And which game would produce more advertising revenue? No contest.

As Perlman noted, the non-BCS conferences get money from the BCS, but produce almost no revenue for the entity.

And that, more than anything else, is the reason the BCS remains an exclusive club. It is money -- and those who make it want to keep it, not give it away.



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