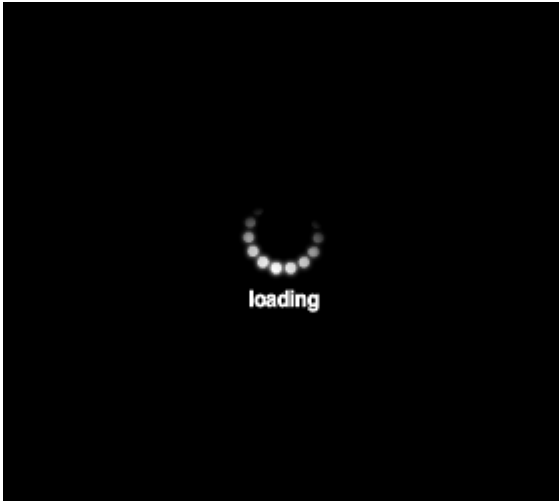


CU Buffs suffer Homedrubbing in 36-17 loss to Missouri

CU falls behind 33-0 in first half, unable to recover

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 10/31/2009 02:57:18 PM MDT



[Click on any photo to see full gallery.](#)

Dan Hawkins can save his breath.

There is no need for another marathon press conference about the state of the Colorado football program.

The team leaders don't need to bother with more players-only meetings, either.

It's time for the Buffs to stop talking and start winning.

There's just not much left for this team to say after a hideous 36-17 Homecoming loss to Missouri on Saturday at Folsom Field that dropped CU's record to 2-6.

"It ain't no joke anymore," Benjamin Burney said after the Buffs put themselves on the brink of bowl extinction with another lopsided loss against a Missouri team they circled on the schedule before the season began. "No more speeches from captains or from coaches. We've got to play now. It's on us. We have the pads on. It ain't the coaches, it's us."

But the reality of major college football is that the buck usually stops with the head coach. That's the person who gets paid seven figures to produce a product the alumni and fans can be proud of and excited about.

Hawkins declared last week that he's going to be here for a long time. If the Buffs continue to play as uninspired as they did in the first half Saturday in front of 45,634 unhappy witnesses, the fourth-year head coach might have to buy season tickets and watch from the stands.

Missouri built a 33-0 lead that extended the Tigers' scoring streak against CU to 139 unanswered points before CU showed any signs of life.

Now even the Buffs players are longing for the good old days at Boise State.

"I think definitely the things you point out -- height, speed and all that type of stuff -- in that regard, yeah, they're more talented," CU linebacker Marcus Burton said when asked if the Buffs measured up physically to their Big 12 opponents. "But those aren't always the teams that have won. Look at Boise State. They don't really have the talent to beat a lot of the guys they're beating, but they execute and they play dedicated football. We're just not doing that."

At the intermission, CU had four net yards of rushing on 13 attempts and 55 yards of total offense. Missouri had 306 yards after running 18 more plays than the home team and possessing the ball for 19:36 of the 30 minutes.

The Buffs won the opening coin toss and deferred to the second half. Bad move. Missouri marched 80 yards in 11 plays and took a 7-0 lead on a 1-yard touchdown by Derrick Washington.

After forcing CU to punt on its first possession, the Tigers took a 14-0 lead with a simple short pass by Blaine Gabbert to Danario Alexander for a 73-yard touchdown.

"A lot of it is a momentum thing and guys making more plays," is how Hawkins explained the flat start by the Buffs. "We always start practice with a start-fast period. But again, I think it is part of them growing up and learning."

On the next snap, CU's offensive line started getting pushed around -- a trend that would continue all afternoon -- allowing Tyler Hansen to

get hammered by Will Ebner, who forced a fumble recovered by Missouri at the Buffs' 6-yard line. Hansen was sacked eight times.

CU's defense was able to make an impressive goal-line stand, but the momentum didn't last long when Matt DiLallo's punt from the back of the end zone was returned to the 33. After a 31-yard run by De'Vion Moore, Gabbert tossed a 2-yard touchdown to Alexander to make the score 21-0 with 2:40 remaining in the first quarter.

Missouri had the ball for 9:51 of the first 15 minutes with a 7-2 edge in first downs and a 179-38 edge in total offense.

"I think we made a lot of mistakes on defense and gave up a lot of points in that first half. That's on us," Burton said. "Missouri, my hat's off to them for executing their plays. But that's on us."

The second quarter was even uglier as the students began a "Fire Hawkins" chant behind the CU bench loud enough to be heard in Nederland.

Jimmy Smith intercepted a Gabbert pass to stop a drive at the CU 10. Hansen, however, fumbled on the next play to give the ball right back to the Tigers, who settled for a short field goal.

After an illegal block penalty on the ensuing kickoff pinned the Buffs back at their 7, Hansen was sacked in the end zone by Jarre Harrison. The safety made the score 26-0.

Missouri head coach Gary Pinkel, perhaps sensing that the Buffs would still have some fight in them in the second half, called for a holiday trick and holder Forrest Shock and Jacques Smith treated their head coach to a 24-yard touchdown on the fake field goal with 4:03 remaining in the half.

"That was huge. That was something I had been working on for Texas, but we were never in position," said Pinkel, whose team was 0-3 in Big 12 team and coming off a 41-7 loss to the Longhorns. "We were figuring out who we were going to use in that tight end position. We felt that Jacques Smith would do a heck of a job."

Aric Goodman mercifully put and end to Missouri's 139-0 run -- the Tigers won 58-0 last season in Columbia and scored the final 48 points in a 55-10 win at Folsom Field two years ago -- with a 48-yard field goal that cut the deficit to 33-3.

Former Fairview standout Arthur Jaffee returned the opening kickoff of the second half 38 yards out to the CU 42.

Hansen wisely started looking for Scotty McKnight, who had been held to one catch for six yards in the first half, connecting with the reliable receiver four times on an eight-play drive capped with a 3-yard touchdown by Rodney Stewart. It was the first time a CU player had reached the end zone against the Tigers in 151 minutes and 50 seconds of game action dating back to 2007.

Burney was able to get the crowd back in the game and on the Buffs' side by intercepting a Gabbert offering intended for tight end Andrew Jones and returning it 78 yards for a touchdown to make the score 33-17 with 22 minutes and two seconds left in the game.

"We cleaned a few things up, but it wasn't massive," Hawkins said when asked about his halftime adjustments. "Toward the end of the first half we were able to stop them so we went to some of that stuff in the second half."

The comeback fizzled in the fourth quarter when Stewart was stopped for a two-yard loss on a fourth-and-1 at the Missouri 13. The Buffs trailed by only 16 points and had been able to solve Missouri's offense for the most part.

There is not much else to say and really nothing left for the Buffs to lose at this point with four games remaining.

"You work so hard all week to come out here and play the game that you love to play at this school. We came to this school to play football for the most part. So enjoy it," McKnight said. "Sometimes guys get too tensed up and they're worried about making mistakes. Go out there and have fun. We need to find a way to do that."

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Woelk: Solution to CU Buffs' troubles not so difficult

By Neill Woelk Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 11/01/2009 12:04:09 AM MDT

Maddening.

Same script, same problems, same ending. Colorado played a horrible first half, threatened to make a game of it in the second -- and in the end, walked off the field unable to explain what made such a difference in two halves of football Saturday.

"No swagger," said one CU staffer.

Call it swagger, confidence, emotion, passion -- you name it -- whatever it is, it's missing.

The players say it's their fault.

Fans say it's the coaches' fault.

But no matter where the blame may lie, the end result is guaranteed: the outcry for Dan Hawkins' ouster is certain to grow louder. A 2-6 season that as recently as Saturday morning still presented the Buffs with the legitimate opportunity to contend for the Big 12 North has only solidified a growing call for a coaching change.

Now for a dose of the real world. The bet from this corner is the same it's been since the season began: a change isn't in the works. The economic and political realities of the situation still point to Hawkins returning for a fifth season. Feel free to argue whether he should go or stay, but arguments won't change the economics.

So this morning, we're going to work with the realities. With the premise that the head coach is returning, how do you improve the situation? How do you address the problems that have prevented this team from improving

Not as impossible as you might think.

First, make some significant staff changes -- and not just a position coach or two.

I'm talking a significant change. The kind that can alter the emotional makeup of a team, the kind that can present a sweeping transition.

CU must go out and find a former head coach who can come in and be a positive but strong influence on Hawkins. Someone who can look him in the eye and occasionally say, "No." Someone who has the credentials and background that give him immediate credibility, someone who has been around the block a few times at the highest level of college football.

Simply, an associate head coach that Hawkins will listen to and respect.

The answer isn't that tough. Look around the Big 12 and the solution becomes relatively easy.

When Nebraska's athletic department threatened to implode a few years ago, the Huskers turned to a figure they could trust, someone whose loyalty to NU athletics was impeccable. Hello Tom Osborne.

When Kansas State showed signs of dropping back down to the level that made it a college football punch line, the Wildcats turned to the one man who had proven he knew how to win in Manhattan. Welcome back Bill Snyder.

Get the picture?

Sooner or later -- preferably sooner -- Colorado officials need to make the call to Bill McCartney.

Not as the head coach. Not as a coach who will be asked to spend countless hours on the road recruiting and away from his family.

Simply, as a coach who will provide daily guidance to Hawkins and his staff. A coach who knows more than anyone what it takes to win at a university where the landscape and circumstances are different than almost any other Division I school. A hands-on guy who knows how the administration works -- and has an idea about how to work the administration.

Stop laughing long enough to hear me out:

McCartney left CU in 1994 because he needed to devote more time to his family. This kind of position would not require that he give up that family time. Take recruiting out of the equation, and it automatically becomes much more manageable. Set some self-imposed limits on his time in the office, and it becomes very workable.

Just a few years ago, it would have been ludicrous to think that reaching back to the past would be a solution for the future. But Nebraska and Kansas State have proven such a strategy can work.

Why not here? Who better to pick up the battle with Osborne and Snyder than the man who used to battle them on an annual basis?

Certainly, it would take some convincing. But we're guessing -- hoping? -- that a plea to McCartney's loyalties might be enough. If Osborne and Snyder were willing to make a sacrifice to come back, Mac might be coerced to do the same.

Make it clear: No lifetime promise required. No 24-7 commitment necessary. Just a couple of years of his input. Clean up the rough edges that have prevented CU's program from moving forward and put a little swagger back in the program.

The peripheral benefits would be huge.

One, Hawkins wouldn't be under the impression that a "coach in waiting" had been hired. Hawkins respects McCartney, and is said to seek his counsel regularly. Increase that occurrence, and give the rest of his staff the benefit.

Two, it would be a tremendous public relations coup.

The day that Osborne stepped back into the picture at Nebraska, NU fans were back on board. Ditto for Snyder and Kansas State.

It would be the same in Colorado. CU fans threatening never to buy season tickets again would reconsider their position the day that Bill McCartney walked back into the Dal Ward Center. Meanwhile, former players who have become some of the program's most vocal critics would return to the fold.

McCartney does have some ties to the current staff. Running backs coach Darian Hagan was Mac's quarterback when CU won the 1990 national championship. Linebackers coach Brian Cabral and secondary coach Greg Brown both worked for McCartney at CU. The immediate connection is there.

And, he is still greatly respected by CU's booster base -- from the biggest donors down to the occasional ticket buyer.

Since the day he retired, McCartney has made it clear that his coaching days are behind him. Even as recently as last spring, he reiterated that point.

But unique problems require unique solutions. The Buffs need McCartney -- as much as he needed them when he took his first head coaching job, as much as he needed them when he was awarded a contract extension in the midst of a 1-10 season.

Crazy? Of course -- but not as absurd as it would have sounded just a few years ago.

The landscape has changed. Osborne and Snyder are back in the Big 8 (um, Big 12) picture.

Mac would make it an interesting trifecta.

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Buff O-line can't explain woes

Colorado running game goes nowhere vs. MU

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 11/01/2009 12:02:24 AM MDT

Dozens of plays decided the outcome, but one play Saturday at Folsom Field summed up the biggest problem facing the Colorado football team.

The offensive line isn't clearing holes for teammates to run through.

It was fourth-and-1 in the first minute of the fourth quarter at the Missouri 13-yard line. Colorado had scrambled back from a messy first half in which it fell behind 33-3 to cut the lead to 16 points. A first down and a touchdown could have changed the game. It could have made the crowd a factor again and pumped some more life into the Buffs.

But Missouri linebacker Sean Weatherspoon slipped unblocked into the backfield and stuffed Rodney Stewart for minus-2 yards and gave the ball back to his offense without any damage to the Tigers' advantage on the scoreboard. Stewart had also been stopped for no gain on the previous third-down play.

Quarterback Tyler Hansen, who fumbled three times Saturday and was sacked eight times as Tigers consistently came through the line unblocked or hardly touched, pointed his finger at the entire offense for not being able to get a single yard in a pivotal situation eight weeks into the season.

"That was huge," Hansen said. "That killed us. We have to get that first down and that's on everyone on the offense. Fourth-and-one, that's you against the other guy and they just beat us. They just came off the ball and out-punched us. We should take that personal. That should not happen.

"We have total confidence in our O-line to get the job done. They're big dudes, they're strong dudes and they should have all the confidence in the world to get out here and go after that D-line. It blows my mind that we couldn't get that one yard. That cannot happen."

The Buffs entered Saturday's game ranked 110th in the nation in rushing and will likely drop even closer to the bottom of the 120-team pile this week. Colorado coaches could have been more creative with their play calling in the situation considering the Missouri defensive front seemed to be having its way most of the game, but wide receiver Scotty McKnight said it's a matter of pride.

"That play in particular doesn't come down to the play call," McKnight said. "If he were to call a pass the offensive line should take that personally. We should be able to have enough push up front to get one yard. Bottom line."

Colorado rushed for a total of 72 yards on 24 carries, but when losses from the eight sacks are factored in, the Buffs finished with minus-14 rushing yards.

Members of the offensive line said they were troubled by the way they performed Saturday and struggled to identify what has kept them from building the strong "downhill" running game they envisioned in the offseason.

A handful of players have been shuffled in and out of the lineup, particularly at right guard, but they say those changes are no excuse.

"I take this very personally," Ryan Miller said. "We can be so much better."

Missouri coach Gary Pinkel said he and his staff planned multiple blitzes for the Buffs because they knew they would be facing an inexperienced quarterback in Hansen, who made his third start of the season and fifth of his career.

But the offensive line struggled to get those packages blocked even though the Buffs said Missouri didn't do anything they hadn't seen beforehand on film.

Hansen was hammered repeatedly. He was caught for a safety, he fumbled three times and threw an interception.

CU first-year offensive line coach Denver Johnson said there are many factors that play a part in blocking each play and not all of them involve the offensive line.

He also credited the Missouri defensive front and singled out Weatherspoon as a great player, but he admitted that his group hasn't played as well as he would have liked to this point in the season.

"It's been a terribly frustrating thing to all of us," Johnson said. "Hopefully we can just keep chipping away at it and try to find some solutions and get a little better as we go. But there is a lot of dynamics that go into that.

"You think about running the ball. There is a lot more involved in that than five offensive linemen and one running back."

Sophomore Matt Bahr said the solution to many of the Buffs offensive problems is getting the running game going. He said more time might need to be devoted to it in practice and the linemen need to take an outing like Saturday personally and do better.

"As an offensive line, I think we really need to improve our run game," Bahr said. "The key to our offense is our run game. It's no secret. Everyone knows it. It's got to be an emphasis in practice to run the football. We can't allow ourselves to get stopped early. A lot of times I feel like we're fighting just to get going."

Colorado has fallen behind often this season and has been forced into passing situations. It happened again Saturday when the Buffs fell behind 21-0 in the first quarter and 33-3 at halftime. Bahr said that has affected the running game at times and it makes it easier for defenses because the Buffs become one-dimensional. That combination led to Missouri's eight sacks, the most by a CU opponent since 1984.

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CU Buffs QB Tyler Hansen struggles against Missouri defense

QB sacked 8 times, commits four turnovers in loss

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 10/31/2009 11:58:53 PM MDT

Tyler Hansen isn't better than Cody Hawkins.

At least not when Colorado's offensive line gets dominated like it did during the Buffs' 36-17 loss to Missouri on Saturday at Folsom Field.

Hansen, who gave CU fans some hope with his dazzling play in the upset of Kansas two weeks earlier, completed 22 of 36 passes for 190 yards with one interception against the Tigers. He also lost three fumbles.

The poor performance came on the heels of the disheartening 20-6 loss at Kansas State in which Hansen completed just seven passes for 89 yards and was replaced by Hawkins, only to watch the former starter throw a pair of interceptions in the two-minute drill.

"It was a struggle for him today, but he made some plays," CU head coach Dan Hawkins said of Hansen. "I told him afterwards not to beat himself up. Everyone walks into the valley of death."

Hansen's purgatory included being sacked eight times for losses that totaled 73 yards. That included being driven into the Folsom Field sod for a safety.

"I could have played a lot better. I had those four turnovers, that killed us," said Hansen, who was making his third start of the season. "Can't do that. I came out real slow. I thought I played a lot better in the second half."

The Buffs fell behind 33-0 before attempting to rally. Hansen connected with Scotty McKnight eight times for 98 yards in the second half, but it was too little, too late.

Missouri held Rodney Stewart to three net yards of rushing on 10 carries and stuffed "Speedy" on a key fourth-and-1 when the Buffs had a chance to cut into what was only a 16-point lead in the third quarter.

"That's what we want to do is run the football and control the game clock and kind of drive the ball methodically down the field," Hansen said. "Today we didn't get the run game going and in the second half we had to throw the ball because we were down 33-3 or whatever it was."

CU's offensive line, advertised as the strength of the team and a reason for hope before the season, was pushed around by a team that is making it a habit of bullying the Buffs.

Where's the pride up front?

"Lack of focus on our part, and I'll take that upon myself and the entire O-line that we definitely need to communicate and get our stuff together," offensive tackle Ryan Miller said. "We're playing well, but we're not playing well enough."

Hansen has the talent to make things happen with his legs or arm. But it sounds like too many of his offensive teammates are waiting for him to do all of the heavy lifting and save the season by himself.

"People are waiting for other people to make plays," McKnight said. "As an offense you have to take pride and make plays from the first snap of the game and not wait for someone else to do something to get some energy going. You just have to take pride in that."

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CU Buffs DE Nick Kasa says he`s out for rest of year

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 11/01/2009 12:01:17 AM MDT

Colorado freshman defensive end Nick Kasa says he won't play again this season.

Kasa, the highest rated recruit in the Buffs' 2009 class, missed Saturday's home game against Missouri because of an undisclosed illness. After the game he told the Camera he won't be back this season and plans to appeal to the NCAA for a medical redshirt season.

"I'm not coming back," Kasa said. "I'm going to see about a redshirt."

It's questionable whether he will be eligible for a medical redshirt because he has played in four games or a third of the season. However, he had been on the field for just 47 snaps in those contests.

CU offensive lineman Ryan Miller was granted a medical redshirt last season after playing in the first four games of the year. He suffered a broken leg in the fourth game and the NCAA ruled that he still fell within the acceptable limits to be eligible for a medical redshirt.

Kasa missed half of August practices and the first three games this season after suffering a sprained ligament in his knee. He was listed as out of next week's game against Texas A&M on the Buffs' postgame injury report, but CU has not released any official statement about Kasa's season being over.

Prepared for fake

Colorado wide receiver Scotty McKnight said the Buffs practiced all week for the fake field goal Missouri executed late in the second quarter and there was no excuse for allowing it to succeed.

"We worked on it all week," he said. "We worked on the exact same fake. That's when people want to go and point fingers at the coaching staff. We couldn't have been better prepared for that play. The exact same play was practiced over and over again. We knew they were going to run it, and we couldn't stop it. That's one of the frustrating things."

WR McKnight

continues climb

With nine catches for 104 yards against the Tigers, McKnight continued his school record streak of 32 games with at least one reception.

Saturday's performance was McKnight's third career 100-yard game and it helped him move from sixth to third on the Buffs' career receptions list with 139. He is one yard shy of tying former tight end Daniel Graham for seventh in CU history in career receiving yards. He has 1,542.

Senior moment

CU safety Ben Burney picked off Missouri quarterback Blaine Gabbert in the middle of the third quarter and returned the ball 78 yards for the Buffs' first non-offensive touchdown of the season.

It was Burney's third career interception. Colorado hadn't returned an interception for a touchdown since Cha'pelle Brown's pick-six helped save the Buffs from an upset at home last season against Eastern Washington.

Simmons sighting

Wide receiver Andre Simmons hadn't touched the football since making a catch against Colorado State for a 44-yard gain in the season opener, but he was finally more involved in the game plan Saturday.

Simmons was back on several punt returns though he never actually got his hands on the ball in those instances. He carried the ball on a reverse for 15 yards.

Bowl hopes

Colorado must win its remaining four games just to be bowl eligible with a 6-6 record. But it's possible the Buffs could be left out of the postseason even if they do pull off a strong finish.

Three Big 12 teams already are bowl eligible and a total of 10 teams in the conference are within two wins of earning eligibility.

The best possible scenario for the Buffs would be four wins and a fellow Big 12 team earning a spot in the national championship game, giving the conference two teams in Bowl Championship Series games.

Notable

The official attendance of 45,634 Saturday was the smallest crowd to see a Big 12 game in Boulder since the Iowa State game in 2006. [...Tight](#) end Riar Geer made two catches for 19 yards and moved ahead of former Buffs Jon Embree and Joe Klopfenstein on the career receptions list for tight ends. He now has 81 catches in his career.

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THE DENVER POST

cu football

Mizzou dominates early and thumps CU 36-17

By John Henderson
The Denver Post

Posted: 11/01/2009 01:00:00 AM MST



CU quarterback Tyler Hansen is tripped up, one of the eight times he was sacked in the Buffaloes' 36-17 loss at Folsom Field. (RJ Sangosti, The Denver Post)

Colorado scored an offensive touchdown. Missouri did not. Scotty Mc-Knight caught eight passes. Missouri's Danario Alexander did not. The Buffs were in it in the fourth quarter.

Unfortunately, the booing homecoming crowd of 45,634 and an increasingly angry state live in the present. What they took away from Folsom Field was this: falling behind a last-place team 33-0; eight sacks, including one for a safety and two more for lost fumbles; a complete inability to stop a hobbling quarterback.

That's the small picture. The big picture Buffalo

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- [Visit](#) Tom Kensler's All Things Buffs blog for a behind-the-scenes look at CU sports .

BOULDER — To a coach grasping at any glimmer of hope for the future, we present Dan Hawkins with the second half of Colorado's miserable 36-17 loss to Missouri on Saturday.

Nation sees this morning is scarier than anything it saw Saturday night at a costume party or in a haunted house or in "Scream 3."

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Colorado is 2-6, 1-3 in the Big 12 and has all but lost hope for Hawkins' first winning season in his four years — but is taking on serious cred as the worst team in the league. As for overall disappointing seasons, fans are looking all the way back to that 1-10 season in 1984, Bill McCartney's third year.

For the seniors, the majority of whom came in with Hawkins, this is not sitting well.

"We're a trapped animal right now," said senior safety Benjamin Burney, whose 78-yard interception return for a touchdown briefly opened a window of opportunity. "We've got to get out. Ain't no jokes anymore. No more waiting. No more speeches from captains or coaches. We've got to play now.

"It's on us."

Like the ending of Halloween movies, the beginning of Colorado games is becoming just as predictable. Again, players echoed previous shortages of fire, spark and momentum.

Missouri opened the game with two consecutive 80-yard TD drives, the second on a 73-yard TD pass from Blaine Gabbert, playing on a sprained ankle, to Alexander, one of his six catches for 115 yards in the first half. Linebacker Will Ebner sacked Colorado quarterback Tyler Hansen to force a fumble on the next play.

Post Poll - Coach Dan Hawkins



Two drives later, Missouri (5-3, 1-3) took two plays to score. After 12:20, Colorado already trailed 21-0.

"People are waiting for other people to make plays," said McKnight, who had a game-high nine catches for 104 yards, "especially on offense because the defense has played great in the majority of these games. As an offense, you have to take pride and make plays from the first snap of the game and not wait for someone else to make something happen and fill you with energy."

They might get scared straight if someone handed them a first-half stat sheet. Ahead 33-3

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THE DENVER POST

at halftime, Missouri had outgained Colorado 306-55, making the 400-176 final tally seem almost respectable.

The first boos were recorded at 3:55 of the first quarter on a 1-yard run, with CU down 14-0. The fans booed Hansen's fumbled snap. They booed Missouri's fake field goal for a TD to make it 33-0. They booed the Buffs off the field.

"It's hard to tell sometimes just a little bit with guys what their mentality is going to be like," Hawkins said. "Defensively, we gave up some gashers, and then they just couldn't get any momentum going."

Until the third quarter. Hansen and McKnight, who, with Rodney Stewart held to 3 yards rushing on 10 carries, was Colorado's lone threat, began connecting. After Burney's interception return made it 33-17, Colorado drove to the Missouri 13 and faced fourth- and-1 early in the fourth quarter.



It was long day for Colorado head coach Dan Hawkins, whose Buffaloes fell to 2-6 this season following a 36-17 loss to Missouri on Saturday at Folsom Field. (RJ Sangosti, The Denver Post)

Against a Missouri defensive line that dominated most of the day, Stewart was buried by linebacker Sean Weatherspoon for a 2-yard loss.

"We have total confidence in our offensive linemen," Hansen said. "It blows my mind that we couldn't get that 1 yard. It blows my mind. That cannot happen."

It did happen, and so, probably, will Hawkins' fourth losing season. Afterward, Hawkins lamented about the game. But he could just as well have been talking about the Hawkins Era.

"I never think I'm out of it," Hawkins said. "I never think it's over."

John Henderson: 303-954-1299 or

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Three questions

A look at how CU answered Tom Kensler's three questions going into the game:

1. Can Colorado stand toe-to-toe with Missouri this time? Hardly. The Buffs did show some life in the second half. But in the first half, with the verdict in doubt, Missouri dominated the line of scrimmage on both sides of the ball. In the first 30 minutes, Colorado managed just 55 yards of total offense to 306 for Missouri. Anything CU did in the second half, as it turned out, became cosmetic.

2. Will CU sophomore quarterback Tyler Hansen "seize the day"? It was more a case of siege, not seize. Hansen was under siege from Missouri's pass rush from kickoff to final whistle. Not giving much respect to Colorado's wide receivers, Missouri blitzed with safeties and linebackers, keeping Hansen on the run. Four turnovers (three fumbles and an interception) were killers. Hansen got sacked eight times, so in looking for any silver lining, it's fortunate that he didn't get hurt.

3. Can CU find a way to come up with big plays? Very few. Scotty McKnight caught a 28-yarder. Hansen gained 30 yards on a keeper. Nobody else, receivers or runners, had a play of longer than 15 yards. Same old, same old.

Key stat

139 . Until Aric Goodman's 48-yard field goal with 1:07 left in the first half, Missouri had scored 139 consecutive points on Colorado over three seasons.

Key play

Down 33-17 early in the fourth quarter, Colorado had momentum and a fourth-and-1 at the Missouri 13. Rodney Stewart was thrown for a 2-yard loss, giving Mizzou the ball and, essentially, the game. *John Henderson, The Denver Post*

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cu briefs

Bufs' line play very offensive

Posted: 11/01/2009 01:00:00 AM MST



Colorado's Brian Lockridge gets knocked off his feet while returning a kickoff during the Buffaloes' homecoming loss Saturday. Lockridge had 65 yards on three kickoff returns. (RJ Sangosti, The Denver Post)

BOULDER — Entering the season, Colorado's offensive line figured to be a strength of the team. Following Saturday's 36-17 homecoming loss to Missouri, CU offensive line coach Denver Johnson looked ready to pull out whatever hair he has left.

Buffaloes sophomore quarterback Tyler Hansen was sacked eight times. CU's running game, even without the losses from sacks, netted just 20 yards on 13 carries. Sophomore tailback Rodney Stewart, who entered the game ranked fifth in Big 12 rushing, ran 10 times for a net of 3 yards. Yes, 3 yards.

"Missouri's defense is pretty good," Johnson said. "But I think we might have made them look better, on occasion. Ryan Miller got beat for a sack. Matt Bahr struggled at times. Nate (Solder) gave up a couple of pressures. . . . You can go across the line, and probably every guy there struggled.

"Missouri is very active. That No. 12 (senior linebacker Sean Weatherspoon), that rascal is a good player. They helped themselves with schemes. They had a good plan of attack. We didn't handle it as well as we'd hoped to."

Missouri certainly played with confidence.

"If our coaches tell us the assignment and we get it right, then we will get to the quarterback," Tigers defensive end Aldon Smith said.

Spreading it out.

The spread offense is nothing new, but Missouri always seems to inject a few new wrinkles. For the third consecutive year, Colorado's defense looked tentative in the first half, seemingly playing on its heels rather than attacking.

"You never know what's coming," Colorado junior

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cornerback Jimmy Smith said. "We thought they would throw it a lot. But when they get some momentum on the ground, it messes up your defense a little bit. It frustrates everybody."

Making things doubly tough, the Tigers also ran well out of the spread formation, netting 184 yards, including 99 by Derrick Washington.

Footnotes.


Missouri coach Gary Pinkel called the second-half touchdown on a shovel pass off a fake field goal "huge" for momentum. "That was something I had been working on for Texas (the previous week), but we were never in position (to use it)," Pinkel said. . . . Colorado announced that sophomore tailback Darrell Scott (arthroscopic knee surgery Oct. 22) likely will not be ready for Saturday's home game against Texas A&M. . . . Benjamin Burney's 78-yard interception return in the third quarter was CU's first nonoffensive TD of the season. . . . Colorado freshman defensive end Nick Kasa did not play because of an undisclosed illness.

Tom Kensler, The Denver Post

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DAVE KRIEGER

Krieger: Vote not of confidence, but for Hawkins to take responsibility

 By Dave Krieger
The Denver Post

POSTED: 11/01/2009 01:00:00 AM MST

BOULDER — For embattled CU coach Dan Hawkins, the dreaded vote of confidence is having its usual effect.

So far, Hawkins has collected public endorsements from athletic director Mike Bohn and chancellor Phil DiStefano. The Buffaloes responded Saturday by sleepwalking through the first half against Missouri, surrendering 33 points and the game before even rubbing the grit out of their eyes.

It's probably time for these votes of confidence to stop. CU's brain trust would take less heat from boosters and alumni if it would just tell the truth: Like every other football coach in the land, Hawk's future in his current job depends on his performance.

If the most worrisome thing about Hawkins' program is its 2-6 record in Year 4, the second-most worrisome is that Hawkins seems so reluctant to admit his responsibility for the results. The CU coach likes to say he's harder on himself than anybody. If that's true, it must happen long after the wretches have left the building.

Former Broncos coach Mike Shanahan was hardly known for public introspection, but on the rare occasions when his team played as haplessly as the Buffs did in the first half Saturday, he would always start his postmortem with the obvious, acknowledging he had failed to get his team ready to play.

Hawkins made no such admission Saturday. When I asked if the coaching staff bears some responsibility for a team coming out as flat as CU did, this was his reply:

"Well, we always talk to them about that. But they know getting out of the gate is important. But so much of it is just a momentum thing, guys having a little resolve and having a little leadership and getting ready to go.

"I thought our meetings were great, practices were great. Last week (at Kansas State), we started a little bit slow defensively the first drive. But against Kansas, they were hot. It's just a matter of consistency."

Hawkins is a likable fellow. He has cleaned up the mess he found at Dal Ward, recruited good kids and vastly increased the emphasis on academics and citizenship. But through his first four years, he has yet to prove he can recruit or coach at a level that will make CU competitive in the Big 12.

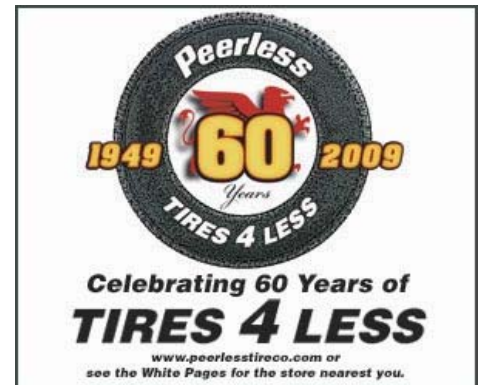
Quarterback Tyler Hansen's four turnovers jump out from Saturday's stat sheet, but the truth is he was running for his life most of the day. He was sacked eight times. If not for his mobility, it easily could have been double figures.

"They were definitely bringing some heat, and they were doing some things on defense that worked for

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them," Hansen said.

So what happened? Did Hawkins' staff fail to prepare the offense for Missouri's pressure? Did the Tigers do things they hadn't done before? Or did Hawkins' players simply fail to execute the protection scheme?

"It didn't appear to be a good day for us," said offensive line coach Denver Johnson in the understatement of the day.

"I know we had some guys struggle in pass (protection), and obviously we had some glaring pressures and a couple of sacks in there. Missouri did a great job of bringing a wide variety of pressures. Some of that's on us, some of it's on other players to pick up as well, backs and other people."

Perhaps the most damaging sack came in the first quarter with Missouri already up 14-0. Hansen never saw Tigers middle linebacker Will Ebner, who appeared to come on a delayed blitz and crushed him from behind. When I asked Johnson what happened there, he replied, "I think I know, but because it didn't involve my guys, I'd rather not comment."

The defense played to a similar trajectory, getting it together only after it was too late. So the breakdowns were all over, but Hawkins insisted Missouri coach Gary Pinkel did nothing uncharacteristic.

"They weren't doing anything different than we thought they were going to do, and we have to be able to just do the things we're supposed to do," Hawkins said.

There is no way for Hawkins to evade responsibility for desultory performances such as this. These are his players. These are his game plans. These are his motivational techniques, such as they are.

His defenders like to point out that Bill McCartney started slowly too, which is true. But McCartney's last losing season came in Year 3.

Hawkins is now 15-30 since arriving in Boulder. If he can't prepare his team better than he did Saturday, all the votes of confidence in the state won't save his job.

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Longmont, Colorado
Saturday, November 14,
2009

Publish Date: 11/1/2009

Plenty of blame to share for CU's offense

By Patrick Ridgell

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BOULDER — Tyler Hansen said it was all his fault. That was difficult to believe.

Colorado's sophomore quarterback was sacked eight times during Saturday's 36-17 loss to Missouri. Hansen avoided others with his scrambling.

Hansen fumbled three times — once on a center exchange — and also threw an interception. But in keeping with the theme of the day, Hansen said what went wrong was his fault, no one else's.

"That's all on me," said Hansen, who finished 22-for-36 for 190 yards. "That's so frustrating. I've never fumbled that much. We go over ball security all the time and maybe we need to do it more."

Missouri's eight sacks were the most CU has allowed in a game since 1984 against Iowa State, which also had eight. Offensive line coach Denver Johnson said he wanted to reserve judgment on his group's performance until he studied the game film. He couldn't deny the obvious.

"It did not appear to be a good day and I think the film will bear that out," Johnson said.

Said right tackle Ryan Miller: "We just didn't execute properly."

Johnson said Tuesday that the offensive line had been making steady progress and had played well the past two weeks. While CU has started five offensive line combinations in eight games, it started the same five linemen Saturday as it did the previous week.

Head coach Dan Hawkins said the shuffling was no excuse.

"Those guys have been together for a couple of weeks," Hawkins said.

Hawkins said he told Hansen not to beat himself up over Saturday's performance. Two of Hansen's fumbles came when a blitzing pass rusher hit him hard.

"There's 11 other guys," Hawkins said. "They have to block the right guy and do the right things and give that one guy an opportunity to be successful."

Said Hansen: "I could've played a lot better. I had those four turnovers; that killed us." CU's minus-14 yards rushing Saturday included 73 yards lost on the eight sacks. Its record-low rushing output is minus-16 set against Iowa State in 1984.

CU ended the game with 176 total yards. Its low in 2009 is 127 at Texas.

ON HOLD: Officials called a holding penalty on CU cornerback Jimmy Smith on a third-and-goal play in the first quarter. The play did not result in an automatic first down because, according to CU's sports information department, the officials ruled the holding occurred after the pass was thrown.

Missouri ended up failing to convert on fourth-and-goal to end the drive.

INJURY REPORT: Receiver Anthony Wright did not play due to a knee injury. He'll have an MRI and is out for next week's home game against Texas A&M (11:30 a.m., FCS-C).

Defensive end Nick Kasa sat out with an undisclosed illness. He's expected to miss next week, too.

CU reported safety Ben Burney suffered a shoulder bruise. He's probable for Texas A&M. His 78-yard interception return was CU's first non-offensive touchdown in 2009, and its 14th longest return in program history.

Offensive lineman Bryce Givens dressed but did not play.

EXTRA POINTS: CU reported the attendance was 45,634, its lowest in 2009. Most of the south horseshoe was vacant when the game started, but filled in. ... CU receiver Andre Simmons touched the ball for the first time since the season opener on a 15-yard reverse in the second quarter. Simmons was sent deep to return punts late in the game. ... CU's Scotty McKnight extended his reception streak to 32 straight games. He caught nine for 104 yards.

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Longmont, Colorado
Saturday, November 14,
2009

Publish Date: 11/1/2009

Buffs' fall baffles, frustrates

By Patrick Ridgell

© 2009 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Scotty McKnight said he was about to blow a gasket. He wasn't alone.

Missouri led Colorado 33-0 on Saturday. Going back to the programs' 2007 meeting, the Tigers had scored 139 unanswered points on the Buffs. That's 139, folks. CU hadn't scored on Missouri in almost nine quarters.

Little sound came from the stands. It must have been deafening.

For all the optimism, determination, hope — whatever you want to call it — the Buffs offered this week, the fact they trailed 33-0 was too much to take.

"To me it was unbelievable," linebacker Marcus Burton said.

"I can't fathom we would allow that to happen defensively. We gave them the game. Gave it to them."

It looked more like Missouri took the game from the Buffs and the Buffs were unable to do much about it.

CU is 2-6 in 2009. It will not win 10 games. Not even close.

There were some expectations coming into this season that hindsight has made to seem silly. But those expectations, spurred by the head coach when he publicly discussed winning 10 games following 2008's frustrating conclusion, help make this the most bitter season of CU football in awhile. Burton, Ben Burney, Tyler Hansen and Scotty McKnight sat side-by-side after Saturday's loss and tried to offer explanations. They took the blame for Saturday's debacle. Maybe it was an effort to deflect pressure off coaches, and maybe they felt responsible for blown assignments, missed tackles, missed blocks, etc. Probably it was both.

But the problems they cite they've cited before. And now certain conclusions are unavoidable.

The Buffs are not improving. Their problems aren't getting fixed. The fault for that can go myriad directions, but eventually you just have to ask if you're good enough.

CU's talent is nothing like it once was, partially because of a supposed scandal and coaching change that rocked the university and program earlier this decade. Asked if there's a talent discrepancy between CU and its opponents, Burton said, "I think it's easy to point out a guy's height and speed and all that type of stuff. In that regard, yeah, they're more talented. But that's not always been the teams that have won.

"Look at Boise State ... they're playing dedicated football and we're just not doing that." CU had no clue how to defend Missouri's spread for the first half Saturday. And offensively, CU's minus-14 yards rushing Saturday, which included 73 yards lost on eight sacks, flirted with the smallest single-game rushing output in program history. The record low is minus-16 against Iowa State in 1984.

Remember, Missouri's two-deep is loaded with freshmen and sophomores. The young Tigers whipped the Buffs.

Saturday's attendance, reported at 45,634, was a season low and its smallest since the Miami (Ohio) game in 2007. That crowd was 45,243. It was a gorgeous Homecoming day. People stayed away.

There must be a lot of head scratching going on this morning over what's become of the program. It's clear it cannot contend. It's also clear CU, on the verge of its fourth straight losing year, is drifting toward that nowhere-land occupied by the Syracuses and Bayers of the college football world.

It's hard not to lump the Buffs in there today.

That's what's really unbelievable.

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Slow start leaves Buffs searching for answers

CU's season is on the brink after latest loss

By Cheng Sio on November 1, 2009

Colorado Buffaloes senior strong safety Ben Burney looked like a battered warrior as his bruised right shoulder was wrapped. But his shoulder doesn't hurt as much as his pride.

"This is my last season, I'm done after this," Burney said. "I love you guys and I'm trying to play my heart out. I don't care about my body. I don't care about anybody but this team. It's my family. We just got to come out and act that way, sacrifice everything for the season."

After CU's 36-17 loss Saturday to the Missouri Tigers, the Buffs' season is on the line. They are 2-6, which means they are one defeat away from missing a bowl game for the third time in head coach Dan Hawkins' four-year tenure.

The culprit to this season's downfall is simple: The team failed to show up when the game started – again.

For the fourth time this season, all losses, the Buffs trailed by double-digits at halftime. Against Mizzou, CU handed the Tigers a 33-point cushion in the first half.

"When you look at the scoreboard, we're losing by 30 points," junior wide receiver Scotty McKnight said. "I'm about to blow a gasket on the sidelines."

Getting angry might be a solution, but the reality is no one really knows why they stumble off the chute. And as Burney said, time is running out.

Many on the team have their theories about why they have slow starts.

For example, Hawkins said he thinks players need to gain momentum by making a couple of big plays. Meanwhile, junior linebacker B.J. Beatty said maybe guys haven't woken up because of the early start times of the last two games.

Both are valid reasons. After all, it's hard to make game-changing plays or wake up when Mizzou sophomore quarterback Blaine Gabbert had all day to find every receiving option available. Gabbert was sacked just once and had so much time, he could've had his morning coffee and read a newspaper before deciding who to throw to.

If Mizzou's 26-0 lead in the second quarter didn't wake up the sleeping Buffs, then maybe some Halloween trickery will.



Junior wide receiver Scotty McKnight holds off a Missouri defensive player during Saturday's game at Folsom Field. The Buffs lost to Mizzou 36-17. McKnight says the game was not a representation of how well the team has been performing at practices.

The Tigers went trick-or-treating on the Buffs when holder Forrest Shock faked a 41-yard field goal attempt and threw a shovel pass to Gahn McGaffie for a 24-yard touchdown.

Another possible theory came from McKnight, who said he felt some players were waiting for someone else to make a play instead of grabbing the situation by its horns.

“As an offense, you got to take pride and go out there and make plays in the first snap of the game and not wait for someone else to make something happen to kind of fuel you with energy,” McKnight said. “You just have to take pride in that.”

Of course, the simplest theory could be the team lacks the will to want to succeed until they are in a ditch the size of the Grand Canyon. It isn’t out of the question, as one player alluded.

“They weren’t doing anything different,” sophomore quarterback Tyler Hansen said. “We weren’t doing anything different. I think we just came out too lackadaisical, too relaxed. I think we need a little fire to us and we didn’t have the fire in the first half. In the second half, we kind of wanted it more.”

The most puzzling part about this situation is both the coaching staff and the players said they had great practices leading up to the game. But when the lights are the brightest, CU seems to lack the concentration to shine.

“I thought we had our best practice we’ve had in a long time on Tuesday,” Hawkins said. “I think they were ready. Meetings were good, the prep was good, all of that I thought was really good. It’s hard to tell with guys what their mentality is going to be.”

McKnight added, “We’re practicing great and that’s what make this so frustrating. I don’t feel like guys are losing focus, but when we get into the game, we need to make plays and we need to do a better job focusing in general.”

The only thing for certain is the Buffs have trapped themselves into a corner and they are looking for ways to escape. If the Buffs don’t find an exit strategy and get off to quicker starts by 11:30 a.m. next Saturday against Texas A&M, then you can stick a fork in them.

“We are a trapped animal and we have to get out,” Burney said. “If we play to our full potential, we can win games.”

Contact CU Independent Sports Editor Cheng Sio at Cheng.sio@colorado.edu.

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Missouri haunts Buffs

CU one loss away from losing season

By Richard Londer on October 31, 2009



Frustration has set in as the bowl possibilities are slipping away from the Colorado Buffaloes.

"I think definitely now, our backs are against the wall," senior strong safety Ben Burney said. "It's no joke now. What happens when you put a Buffalo against the back of the wall? It's got to charge out. That's how we have to be every single play in everything we do. There's nothing else for us except the next four games."

The Buffs dropped their sixth game this season as they fell to Missouri 36-17 Saturday in front of 45,634 at Folsom Field. With the loss, the Buffs fell to 2-6 overall and 1-3 in the Big 12 Conference.

With four games remaining, the Buffs will need to win their remaining games to become bowl-eligible.

It was a tale of two halves for the Buffs, and unfortunately, the clock ran out on them.

Wasting no time, Missouri marched down for scores on their first two drives. The first touchdown came on a 2-yard carry from tailback Derrick Washington, capping off an 11-play, 80-yard drive.

Following a Colorado punt, Missouri made the end zone its own as quarterback Blaine Gabbert found wide receiver Danario Alexander on a crossing route, which he turned into a 73-yard catch-and-run touchdown.

Before the end of the first quarter, Missouri mustered one more touchdown coming on a 2-yard completion from Gabbert to Alexander to go up 21-0.

A majority of Missouri's ability to get up early came from Colorado turnovers.

"We had four turnovers," sophomore quarterback Tyler Hansen said. "That killed us. We can't do that."

Hansen lost three fumbles, two of which came in the first half, and threw an interception.

Slow starts seem to be a common theme for the Buffs as they were only able to generate a 48-yard Aric Goodman field goal in the first half.

Part of the slow start can be attributed to Missouri's pass rush not allowing Hansen to get comfortable in the pocket. The Tigers sacked Hansen eight times, four in each half.

"They were definitely bringing the heat and they were doing some things on defense that worked for them," Hansen said.

In the second half, the Buffs looked like a different team, allowing only three points after giving up 33 in the first half.

However, a majority of the defensive success in the second half was a matter of execution.

"We cleaned a few things up, but it wasn't massive," head coach Dan Hawkins said. "Towards the end of the first half, we were able to stop them so we went to some of that stuff in the second half."

CU opened the third quarter with an 8-play, 58-yard scoring drive. The Buffs scored their only offensive touchdown on a 3-yard Rodney Stewart run.

The next Colorado touchdown came later in the third as Burney returned an interception 78 yards to cut the deficit to 33-17. It was Burney's first career interception returned for a touchdown.

The remainder of the game was a combination of stalled drives from both teams. The Buffs were stopped on a fourth-and-1 at Mizzou's 13 and later, Hansen threw an interception at the Tigers' 23. Missouri kicker Grant Ressel iced the game on a 33-yard field goal with 3:57 left in the game.

If Colorado has any shot at turning the season around, they need to get off to quicker starts.

"A lot of it is a momentum thing and guys making more plays," Hawkins said. "But again, I think it is part of them growing up and learning."

As frustrated senior linebacker Marcus Burton vented to the media, one thing became clear in his mind.

"We need to get clicking on the same cylinder, and that's just not happening right now," Burton said.

Contact CU Independent Staff Writer Richard Londer at Richard.londer@colorado.edu.

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Tigers maul Hansen and Colorado, 36-17

By [Kyle Clark](#) on October 31, 2009 · [Comment](#) · [Email This](#) · [ShareThis](#)



Safety Benjamin Burney dodges Missouri quarterback Blaine Gabbert after intercepting his pass. Burney would score on the play. (INDenverTimes photo)

BOULDER — So much for coming out with emotion. Colorado had a disaster of a start, then couldn't do nearly enough to come within striking distance of Missouri as they lost big Saturday afternoon, 36-17.

Tyler Hansen and the Buffaloes' offensive line helped the Tigers nearly as much as their own players, giving up eight sacks, which reduced Colorado's rushing total to minus 14 yards. The powerful Mizzou defense also recovered three fumbles from Hansen's grip.

Two of those fumbles, along with a safety, came in the opening half. As a result, Missouri scored 33 points, 21 of them alone in the first quarter.



Colorado's first-half play was shockingly bad, even to the opposition. (INDenverTimes photo)

Mizzou quarterback Blaine Gabbert looked plenty healthy, throwing for 192 yards and two touchdowns. Battling a bad ankle for the past three weeks, Gabbert was even brave enough to try six rushing attempts, which resulted in 26 yards.

Gabbert got help setting up the spread with a 184-yard team rushing performance behind running backs Derrick Washington and De'Vion Moore. Washington also scored a touchdown, finishing off the Tigers' opening drive.

CU's offensive unit finally managed to get a field goal on its last possession before the break, but down 30 points, fans started to pour out of Folsom. Those who didn't stick around for the third quarter missed the only touchdown drive by the Buffs. Cornerback Aurthur Jafee returned his first kickoff of the season to the Colorado 42, then Hansen led a 58-yard drive that ended with a 1-yard Rodney Stewart score.



Tyler Hansen gets sacked in his own end zone midway through the second quarter. (INDenverTimes photo)

Colorado's next and last set of points came from its defense. Midway through the third, safety Benjamin Burney picked off a Gabbert pass and ran it back 78 yards nearly untouched. For a moment, it appeared the Buffs could climb back into the game, but Missouri clamped down. The Tigers stopped CU on fourth down three times in the final quarter and

picked off a Hansen pass.

Faced with the second consecutive game that had little offense, along with chants from the stands calling for his head, Dan Hawkins still believes the season can be successful.

“You talk about your options every week, and the tangible is that you have to win out to go to a bowl game. The intangible is that people always talk about sports building your character, and I think that’s part of it. Having some resolve and battling it out counts for something. Regardless of what’s on the line, we need to show up and put our best foot forward and give it our best effort.”

Calling out specifics such as a bowl game is unusual for Hawkins, who has tried to talk about the program in broad, noncommittal terms since the “Ten wins and no excuses” fiasco of the spring. It’s a move that seems, well frankly, a little desperate. Hard to blame the guy after an afternoon like that.

Editor’s note: Comments have been turned off on football stories involving CU to meet the university’s requirement for giving media credentials to Web site reporters and photographers.

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Posted on Sat, Oct. 31, 2009

Mizzou throws everything it has into victory

By MIKE DeARMOND
The Kansas City Star

BOULDER, Colo. | Missouri hit Colorado with a running game. A passing game. Eight sacks that resulted in three fumble recoveries and a safety. A fake field goal for a touchdown.

And then — in ultimately the best defensive stand of the season — the Tigers stopped Colorado three times from second and 2 at the 14 with the Buffaloes threatening what seemed to be an insurmountable lead.

Yes, Missouri put a lot into a 36-17 victory over Colorado here on Saturday. All it had in ending a three-game Big 12 losing skid, and at 5-3, keeping alive hopes of closing out the league season in another rush to a North Division title.

"We threw everything at 'em," said Mizzou quarterback Blaine Gabbert, his sore right ankle suddenly not as sore as it was in consecutive losses to Nebraska, Oklahoma State and Texas.

Gabbert completed 17 of 29 passes for 192 yards and touchdowns of 73 and 2 yards in the first quarter to Danario Alexander, who finished with eight catches for 123 yards.

But it was the running game so long ignored by the Tigers — Mizzou had five rushes of 10 yards or more in the first half after just six runs that long in the three previous games combined — that set up Missouri's blitz to a 33-3 halftime lead.

"It really did," said Washington, who had 103 yards rushing in his first 21 carries but wound up 1 yard short of 100 because he stumbled and fell on his final carry in the fourth quarter.

"I don't know what to say about that."

But, of course, that wasn't the important thing.

"We were clicking on all cylinders in the first half," Washington said.

Missouri rolled to 400 yards total offense, but only 94 of those came in the second half. That's when the Missouri defense really took over.

Colorado cut Missouri's lead to 33-10 on Rodney Stewart's 3-yard TD run with 11:37 left in the third quarter. With 7:02 left, Benjamin Burney picked off a Gabbert pass to the sideline and ran it back 78 yards for a touchdown.

Suddenly, the Buffaloes were making a game of it.

And, as the fourth quarter opened, Colorado faced that second and 2 at the MU 14.

Sean Weatherspoon stopped Stewart for a yard, then the MU forward wall held Stewart to no gain. On fourth down, Weatherspoon broke through and threw Stewart for a 2-yard loss.

"It feels great when you finish it off," Weatherspoon said. "Second down we made a pretty good play. Third down we did pretty well."

"On fourth down, Coach Steck (Dave Steckel) called a play. I ended up shooting the gap to make a play in the backfield to get us off the field."

Colorado QB Tyler Hansen, whose sack total nearly doubled from 10 to 18 after the Tigers knocked him around, agreed.

"That was huge," Hansen said. "That killed us."

The defense had more in store for Colorado.

With 11:09 to play and Colorado at the Missouri 38, Hansen threw short of his intended receiver over the middle. MU's Kevin Rutland, stumbling as the football approached, intercepted the pass.

Missouri's line ended two more Colorado possessions late. Defensive end Aldon Smith, who finished with three sacks, rose up and batted down a third-down pass. MU nose tackle Jaron Baston — who really wanted an interception — got his chest in front of

a fourth-down pass inside the final 4 1/2 minutes.

The Tigers managed their only score of the second half off that opportunity, Grant Ressel's 33-yard field goal.

In the first half, Jarrell Harrison tackled Hansen in the end zone for a safety.

There was also some razzle dazzle in that first half. With Missouri lined up for a 42-yard field-goal attempt, holder Forrest Shock made a shovel pass to defensive end Jacquies Smith — in allegedly to block — and he rambled 24 yards down the left side for a touchdown.

Not until just more than one minute remained in the half did Colorado score, on a 48-yard field goal.

"The turnovers popped today, and the sacks popped," MU coach Gary Pinkel said.

Never mind that Colorado is now 2-6 overall and now 1-3 in the Big 12, its lone league victory coming over Kansas.

"It's kind of fun when things are going our way, the momentum," Pinkel said. "I just want to keep it."

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Stand and deliver

MU defense makes the big plays.



Photo by [Nick King](#)

Missouri redshirt-freshman defensive end Aldon Smith (85) pulls down Colorado running back Rodney Stewart in the first quarter of the Tigers' 36-17 win Saturday.

By [Joe Walljasper](#)

[Sunday, November 1, 2009](#)

BOULDER, Colo. — Aldon Smith got the final word yesterday on Folsom Field. Actually, it was more like a bellow from the mountaintops. Think about those old Ricola cough drop commercials, and you get the idea.

Slide Show



● [Missouri 36, Colorado 17](#)

After squirting through the Colorado line and sacking Tyler Hansen for the third time, sealing Missouri's 36-17 victory, Smith raised his head to the sky and unleashed a scream.

"Relief," Smith said, describing his emotions at that point.

The Tigers (5-3, 1-3 Big 12) needed relief after limping into Colorado on a three-game losing streak, and they got it, thanks in large part to a defense that kept making plays long after MU's offense stopped. Consider Missouri's defensive numbers against the Buffaloes — eight sacks, minus-14 rushing yards allowed, three fumble recoveries, one interception, three fourth-down stops and a safety — then consider the mediocre offenses ahead on the schedule. I don't see any reason the Tigers can't get back into the Big 12 North race ... for whatever that's worth.

With the exception of last week's Texas debacle, Missouri has played sound defense this season. What it hadn't done before yesterday was make many big plays. Generally speaking, the Tigers played conservatively, guarded against big plays and forced opponents to put together sustained drives.

Yesterday, though, defensive coordinator Dave Steckel turned up the aggression with blitzes. Cornerbacks Kevin Rutland and Robert Steeples each sacked Hansen. Linebacker Will Ebner jarred the ball loose on a blitz deep in Colorado territory. Linebacker Zaviar Gooden and safety Jerrell Harrison combined to drag Hansen down in the end zone for a safety.

Missouri Coach Gary Pinkel said his staff noticed on film that Hansen struggled against blitzes.

"You examine every quarterback before we play them," Pinkel said. "If they bring more than four — if they bring five or six — examine what is his plus-minus ratio. Generally, the younger the quarterback, the more trouble he has dealing with that."

Hansen, a sophomore who has played sporadically for two years in a rotation with Cody Hawkins, got no help from his running game. Actually, less than no help. Rodney Stewart, a respectable running back who averages 78 yards per game, managed just 3 yards on 10 carries.

Missouri's sturdiness against the run was never more important than on a key stand early in the fourth quarter. With 17 unanswered points, Colorado had narrowed its deficit to 33-17 and had a second-and-2 on Missouri's 14. Linebacker Sean Weatherspoon stopped Stewart for 1 yard. Gooden, who was around the ball all day, held Stewart for no gain on third down. And on fourth-and-a-foot, Jacques Smith crashed down from right end and forced Stewart to bounce outside. Weatherspoon shot the gap and dropped him for a 2-yard loss.

"It was big to see the crowd's reaction," said Weatherspoon, who had 12 tackles. "It kind of took the wind out of their sails."

The modest crowd of 45,634 had reason for hope before that play.

MU quarterback Blaine Gabbert looked much healthier than the previous three games and got off to a hot start. But despite good protection all day from his offensive line, he struggled in the second half and forced passes where they didn't belong. One of those passes landed in the arms of Colorado's Benjamin Burney, who returned it 78 yards for a touchdown. That cut Missouri's lead to 16 points and led to some concern on the MU sideline.

"It's amazing when that momentum changes," Pinkel said. "It's remarkable. You can feel it, man, especially on the road. I think our defense took over at that point."

From that point, Colorado's drives ended this way: Weatherspoon's fourth-down tackle, a Rutland interception, a punt, a batted-down pass by Jaron Baston and Aldon Smith's final sack.

Now, for a reality check. Missouri does not have a dominant defense, as Texas proved beyond question last week. And Colorado (2-6, 1-3) has a terrible offense.

But, if you haven't noticed, so do a lot of Big 12 North teams and so does next week's visitor, Baylor. The only upcoming opponent that could be described as remotely explosive is Kansas, and the Jayhawks have been underachievers this season.

Unlike last year, when defenders served as comic relief in Big 12 highlights, the stars in the North are Nebraska defensive tackle Ndamukong Suh, Iowa State linebacker Jesse Smith and Weatherspoon. The best player on the field yesterday, though, was Aldon Smith, a redshirt freshman who is on pace to become Missouri's single-season sacks leader. He has eight and needs three more to tie Justin Smith.

"We're looking at this," he said, feeling a mile high literally and figuratively, "like a whole new season."

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Mountainous awakening: Missouri 36, Colorado 17

Bright day for Tigers in Boulder.



Photo by [Nick King](#)

BOULDER BASH Missouri running back Derrick Washington is tackled just short of the goal line by Marcus Burton of Colorado on a fourth-down play in the first quarter.

By [Dave Matter](#)

[Saturday, October 31, 2009](#)

BOULDER, Colo. — If indeed it's always darkest just before dawn, Missouri's football season has discovered a new day.

Slide Show



● [Missouri 36, Colorado 17](#)

In their first conference game under sunlight since last November, the Tigers came to the Rocky Mountains looking to erase a three-game losing streak. And knowing Missouri could salvage its ugly October with a sweep through the rest of the schedule, Gary Pinkel sensed the pressure closing in on his team.

“There comes a time, man, when your back’s against the wall,” he said yesterday, his back literally against the wall of the visitor’s locker room at Folsom Field. “You know how to handle it? Don’t ever get here. Don’t get to three losses in a row. Because a lot of times, you don’t ever get out of it.”

The Tigers have wedged their way out. For now.

Unleashing an offense that’s been missing for a month, Missouri climbed out of sole possession of last place in the Big 12 North Division with a 36-17 victory over hapless Colorado, blowing away the Buffs with a first-half explosion unseen by Tiger fans since the season-opening win over Illinois.

And for a while, the 75th meeting between these programs looked much like the last two, Missouri onslaughts from the beginning. With MU’s defense bearing its teeth like never before and the offense coasting to touchdowns like it was a preseason scrimmage, little suspense was lingering by the time Pinkel’s team grabbed a 33-0 lead with 4:03 left in the second quarter.

Would backup quarterback Jimmy Costello play the entire second half or just a quarter? Could Pinkel get home in time to merrily great trick-or-treaters? Maybe Colorado would make things interesting and fire embattled Coach Dan Hawkins at halftime.

There wasn’t much else to ponder as 45,634 watched Part III of Missouri’s demolition of the Buffs unfold on an otherwise gorgeous homecoming afternoon. Trampling Folsom Field much like CU mascot Ralphie V does here before every opening kickoff, Missouri (5-3, 1-3, Big 12) surged to touchdowns on three of its first four possessions, seemingly setting the tone for a third straight blowout of the Buffaloes (2-6, 1-3).

“We came out motivated,” MU tailback Derrick Washington said. “We lost three in a row and a lot of guys were like, ‘It’s time to win. It’s time to get this victory. It’s time to come on.’ ”

On their game-opening drive, the Tigers did it with grit, going 80 yards in 11 plays with a mix of quick throws and runs

between the tackles. Missouri even broke out its version of the Wildcat, snapping the ball directly to Washington in the shotgun with left tackle Elvis Fisher lined up as a fullback. MU simply calls the formation “Jumbo.”

“That’s nice having Big Elvis back there, because you know he’s going to blow somebody up,” said Washington, who gained 2 yards on the play. “Elvis likes being back there. He’s telling me I have to give him the ball every once in a while.”

Instead, the Tigers gave it back to Washington on back-to-back runs from the goal line, the second going for a 1-yard touchdown, Missouri’s first game-opening touchdown drive of the season. In fact, the Tigers hadn’t visited the end zone on their first drive in 10 games, not since last year’s victory at Iowa State.

“When we can get the running game going — and I’ve said this all along — it really makes our offense move,” said quarterback Blaine Gabbert, who left the locker room free of a cast, boot or any protective contraption on his healing right ankle.

“When we can pick up chunks of yardage on first down, 7-8 yards, and pick up short third downs, it really gets us in a flow. And then that really opens up the passing game.”

That was the recipe on Missouri’s second possession. With 5-foot-7 nickelback Cha’pelle Brown matched against 6-5 wideout Danario Alexander in the slot, Gabbert looked for his favorite receiver on the third play of the series. It paid off with a 73-yard catch and run to the end zone, as Alexander shook free from Brown off the snap and dodged diving safety Ray Polk in the secondary.

“Of course I loved it,” said Alexander said of his matchup with Brown, a day-long mismatch that led Alexander to eight catches for 123 yards and two scores. “But Cha’pelle, he’s a great athlete. He’s pretty fast, but I wanted to take advantage of that ever since I saw it on film.”

Colorado’s next possession lasted all of one play, as Missouri linebackers Will Ebner and Zaviar Gooden swarmed quarterback Tyler Hansen in the pocket, the first of Missouri’s eight sacks and four takeaways against CU’s beleaguered offense.

From there, the Tigers added scores on a 2-yard Gabbert touchdown pass to Alexander, a 29-yard Grant Ressel field goal, a safety on safety Jarrell Harrison’s sack of Hansen in the end zone and, finally, a shovel pass from holder Forrest Shock to defensive end Jacquies Smith on a fake field goal that covered 24 yards — a play the Tigers planned to use last week against Texas but never found an opportunity to call.

Smith’s rumble to the end zone pushed MU’s lead to 33-0 and marked 139 consecutive unanswered points by the Tigers against CU, dating back to the last game here in 2007.

Pack the bags, start the bus and get ready for Baylor. Right?

Not quite.

Like it did each of the last three weeks, Missouri’s offense experienced another second-half malaise, this time converting only two of nine third downs as Gabbert relapsed into his unsteady self. On their first six possessions of the second half, the Tigers went punt, interception, punt, punt, punt, punt. And the pick was costly, as cornerback Benjamin Burney stepped in front of a pass for Andrew Jones and returned it 78 yards for a touchdown, giving the Buffs a glimmer of hope trailing 33-17 midway through the third quarter.

“We really slowed up in the second half,” Gabbert said. “And that cannot happen. That falls on me.”

Luckily for Gabbert, Missouri's defense never loosened its chokehold on the Buffs. Colorado got down to Missouri's 12-yard line as the fourth quarter began, but a curious decision to try to convert a fourth-and-1 instead of kicking a chip-shot field goal went up in smoke when Missouri linebacker Sean Weatherspoon dropped running back Rodney Stewart for a 2-yard loss.

"We knew they were going to run the ball," said Weatherspoon, who made a game-high 12 tackles despite playing the second half with a shoulder injury. "I'm just coming downhill trying to shoot a gap. I ended up getting through there scot-free."

Colorado finished with minus-14 yards rushing on 24 carries, compared to 184 yards on 45 carries by the Tigers' runners.

With 11:09 left, an interception by MU cornerback Kevin Rutland ruined CU's last chance to slice the deficit as the Tigers added a 33-yard Ressel field goal to secure a three-score lead ... and a rare day to celebrate under the sun.

"We're not satisfied, but we're happy we got this win," Washington said. "We've been trying to fight for a win for three weeks and finally got one. It was destined to happen."

Reach Dave Matter at 573-815-1781 or e-mail dmatter@columbiatribune.com.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Jackson's catch stands out as Missouri football beats Colorado, 36-17

By [Craig Thomas](#)

October 31, 2009 | 6:10 p.m. CDT



MU sophomore Jerrell Jackson pulls in a one-handed catch against CU defender Jeff Smart. Tigers went into halftime leading the Buffaloes 33-3. | KEVIN A. ROBERTS/Missourian

BOULDER, Colo. – Running toe-to-toe with his defender, Missouri wide receiver Jerrell Jackson looked back at quarterback Blaine Gabbert and found what we wanted. He reached in an effort to put his right hand on the football, which was about to zoom several inches behind his head.

He palmed it, tucked it toward his body and fell forward for five yards. The play was [posted on](#)

[YouTube](#) before the game even ended, labeled "Greatest Football Catch Ever."

Sounds of "Ooooooh" rang down from the impressed Folsom Field crowd. Though the drive eventually ended in a turnover, the dazzling play was reflective of the day the Tigers had early. Missouri cruised in the first half and held off Colorado after halftime for a 36-17 win, its first in Big 12 Conference play.

"Blaine could have just led me, and made it an easy catch," Jackson said. "I guess it probably slipped out of his hand, went like real far behind me."

Jackson couldn't help but smile. "I had to go in my Jerry Rice box and just stick one hand out there and bring it in," he said. "That was my craziest catch I ever had. I can't wait to watch ESPN and see what happened."

Colorado (2-6, 1-3 Big 12) took control in the second half by outscoring the Tigers 14-0 in the third quarter, but Missouri's 33-3 halftime lead provided the Tigers enough cushion to survive their sloppy play late.

Gabbert was decent early but struggled at times in the second half. Colorado's Benjamin Burney hauled in Gabbert's second interception of the game and returned it for a touchdown, cutting Missouri's lead to 33-17.

Missouri (5-3, 1-3) didn't waste time getting ahead early. Derrick Washington plunged in from a yard out to give the Tigers a touchdown on their opening drive for the first time this year. Later, wideout Danario Alexander broke away from his defender, caught Blaine Gabbert's pass and coasted 73 yards into the end zone, putting Missouri up 14-0.

The Tigers also got a big boost from their defense, which allowed minus-14 rushing yards.

"I think the main thing is that everybody gave each other's word that we was going to practice as hard as we ever practiced this week," defensive end Brian Coulter said.

A fourth-down tackle by Sean Weatherspoon and an interception by Kevin Rutland spoiled chances for Colorado to close the gap in the fourth quarter. Grant Ressel's field goal put Missouri up 36-17 with 3:57 to go.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Colorado's buffalo tradition more than just a sprint

By [Robert Mays](#)

October 31, 2009 | 6:36 p.m. CDT



Ralphie, the live buffalo mascot at the University of Colorado, leads the players onto the field before the game and at the beginning of the second half. | KEVIN A. ROBERTS/Missourian

BOULDER, Colo. -- Steam surrounds Rob Hamilton's hands as a huge tongue enjoys the salty taste of his sweat-soaked leather gloves.

It emerges from a head covered in coffee-colored fur that turns tan just below the neck, a product of a coarse new winter coat. Not quite as harsh as steel wool, Hamilton says, but not far off.

It's 32 minutes before the run, and Hamilton, a junior at the University of Colorado and one of 14 student handlers of the school's live buffalo mascot "Ralphie," is crouched in front of a makeshift pen, his hands cupped around the 1,000 pound buffalo's snout, trying to calm her down.

She's extra feisty today. She's bucking and kicking more than usual. That spunk is what got her here. That, and the coffee-colored coat. They were the deciding factors in a 2007 makeshift buffalo beauty pageant that got her off a New Mexico farm and into buffalo lore.

But in less than an hour five of Hamilton's teammates will be clinging to a set of ropes, sprinting step for step with a three-year old buffalo that weights almost a ton. And if you ask them, she runs fast enough when she's in a good mood.

Ralphie's run onto the field has been a part of Buffalo football for 42 years, and is one of the great traditions of college football. But while it only takes 20 seconds for Ralphie to tear around Folsom Field, it's just a part of a day-long production.

It's 24 minutes before the run when nature calls on sport's most famous buffalo. Calls of "Rookieeeee" are instantly heard. Hamilton, one of the lesser tenured members of the group, takes the shovel and goes to work.

"Seniors don't touch shovels," senior Annie Lawson said.

Thankfully, the crew has already eaten, their traditional breakfast at a greasy spoon nearby called "Butcher Block." Ralphie makes it easy to lose an appetite.

Lawson knows all about shovel patrol. She was a freshman her rookie year, the lowest of the low. Ralphie handlers pay their dues. And it's before they even sniff a chance at "poop duty."

The group is considered a varsity sport at CU, and includes a tryout process that's more in-depth than some government background checks.

First, there's a paper application. After that group is pared down, it's a sprint test.

"Gotta make sure everybody who gets on the team is fast enough to keep up with her," senior Steven Green said.

And finally a round of interviews. Because if you want to be a Ralphie handler, you better be good in the spotlight.

"Most of our job is really talking to fans and being social and telling people what we do," Green said.

Any buffalo experience required?

"Buffaloes?" he said. "None. My wildlife experience before I got here? I had a Yorky in high school, a little five-pound dog. It's a little bit different."

Just a little.

It's 14 minutes before the run and grad student and former CU linebacker Sean Tufts runs in place in the north end zone, pushing his knees up toward his chest. Knees up. Always knees up.

Tufts doesn't even know if he'll be running. Nobody knows. Well, some do. Rookies rarely run.

"And if they do, it's in the back," senior Cole Schindler said.

Schindler doesn't have to worry about that. He's been around for years. And he'll be back for another next fall, taking an extra semester just for one more season with Ralphie.

But rookie or not, everyone has to be ready. Their coach makes the announcement 10 minutes before kickoff, and in the meantime there is stretching and jogging to be done.

It's 19 minutes before the run, and the initial stages begin. A blanket sewn by program director Kevin Priola's wife is thrown over Ralphie's back, "Go Buffs" on one side, "Beat Tigers" on the other.

Each of Ralphie's ropes is tied on. A group of five handlers checks the knots. There are often questions about Ralphie making an escape, but the response is usually a laugh. What buffalo would run from dozens of acres and their own Adams County ranch?

"She's the diva of the buffalo world," one freshman knot-checker said.

The ropes are called "leads," but Lawson prefers "tow ropes." See, running with Ralphie is barely running. While Ralphie IV was a slightly slower model, Ralphie V gets with it.

"You're actually being pulled faster than you can physically run," said Priola, who ran as a student from 1993-1996 before coming back as director. "It's almost like you're a cartoon character with your legs in the air."

It's four minutes before the run, and the group runs sprints up and down the north end zone.

It's two-and-a-half minutes before the run, and the group of five has been selected. John Graves and Tufts in the front. Green and Schindler in the back. John Delva at "loop." The loop is the brake, the runner in back who's not a runner at all. He's a hapless anchor.

The excitement builds.

“The moment he says your name, that’s when the adrenaline comes,” Schindler said.

Tufts runs in place again, driving his knees upward. Knees up. Always knees up.

The rest of the group makes its run onto the field to cheers. Each acts a spotter, protecting the run from players, cheerleaders and whatever else may stumble into Ralphie’s way.

It's 30 seconds before the run. The group of five take hold of the leads. Graves crouches.

“Let’s do it girl!”

Ralphie flies out of the pen, charging towards her 25-mile-per-hour peak. The cowboy hats fly off by the 30-yard line. The first turn goes smoothly. But then the second turn. The one after the peak is reached. The one that Priola says is like being whipped around on water skis after a hairline turn. One of Delva’s hands slips off as they reach the final straightaway back toward the trailer. He tightens his grip. Graves slips as he hits the turf. Ralphie rumbles into the trailer. The door is slammed.

Just another day.

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MU buffs up psyche at Colorado

BY VAHE GREGORIAN
OF THE POST-DISPATCH

Sunday, Nov. 01 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — Parched for a victory 36 days after their last, the Mizzou football team on Saturday at Folsom Field swigged — albeit with a hiccup — from what suddenly has become their oasis, aka the Colorado Buffaloes.

Amassing nearly as many points in the first half (33) as they had in their first three Big 12 games combined, the Tigers then stiff-armed away a Colorado rally to win 36-17 for their fifth win in the last six meetings against a program that previously had dominated the series.

The victory, MU's first in four tries in Big 12 play, was teed up by the first-half offensive binge but preserved by the defense, which muzzled the Buffaloes to 176 yards, plucked four turnovers and mauled quarterback Tyler Hansen for eight sacks, including a safety.

While the game may not exactly vault the Tigers (5-3 overall) back into the North division race, it revived hopes of at least competing for a third straight divisional title in the increasingly clumped and compacted standings.

Perhaps more significantly for the moment, it also simply rekindled MU's sense of itself as a winning program.

During coach Gary Pinkel's weekly address to the team Thursday night, one term that stuck with tailback Derrick Washington was, "Who do you want to be?"

More than anything else, the answer was simply not the one that had lost by a cumulative score of 101-36 in its first three conference games.

A loss to the Buffs (2-6, 1-3) could have sent the season spiraling out of control, and Pinkel acknowledged that in "the psychology of trying to win again (after this kind of slump), there's a lot of things that weigh on you."

"Talk about your backs against the wall," said Pinkel, who literally stood that

way as he spoke. "You know how to handle it? Don't ever get here. ... Don't get to three losses in a row. Because a lot of times you don't ever get out of it."

Against a team Missouri had crushed by a combined score of 113-10 the last two seasons, the Tigers appeared to hoist their way out of it immediately on Saturday.

After scoring 27 points in its previous 10 quarters of play, Mizzou put up 21 in the first quarter as it drove for touchdowns on three of its first four drives — highlighted by Blaine Gabbert's 73-yard TD pass to Danario Alexander.

"(Alexander) can touch a football and change a game," said Pinkel, noting how often he has done it this season.

Grant Ressel's 29-yard field goal made it 24-0 midway through the second quarter, and Jarrell Harrison's tackle for a safety made it 26-0.

Then came holder Forrest Shock's fake field goal shovel pass to Jacquies Smith for a 24-yard TD with 4:03 left in the half.

It was the second TD of the season for Smith, a defensive end who ran back an interception for a score against Furman. Smith noted the perfect blocking on the play but beamed as he noted, "I had to wiggle a little bit."

But MU's considerable wiggle room started to fade as the Tigers continued their second-half offensive slump.

Ressel's field goal with 3:57 left gave MU a total of six points in the second halves of their four Big 12 games, and the Tigers haven't had a second-half touchdown since the end of the Nevada game — more than 130 minutes of play ago.

"We've got to fix that," Pinkel said. "You can't be that good and all of a sudden become that average."

After MU managed just 38 yards in the third quarter and Gabbert threw an interception returned for a touchdown, Mizzou's offense was so below par and seemingly risky that Pinkel said, "I'm the one who shut it down in the fourth quarter" as he just tried to drain clock and get home.

CU's comeback started humbly with a field goal at the end of the first half, gained traction with a TD drive to open the second and had full-fledged momentum after Benjamin Burney's 78-yard interception return of Gabbert cut it to 33-17 midway through the third quarter.

That came with Mizzou perched to administer a knockout after Aldon Smith's fumble recovery at the CU 35 and Gabbert's 16-yard run gave the Tigers a first down at the CU 15.

Then with momentum almost tangibly in Colorado's hands, the Buffs' next drive took them to the MU 14 with a second and 2. But the Tigers bristled on three straight Colorado runs to choke off the threat.

"That's as big as a turnover," said linebacker Sean Weatherspoon, who slammed CU's Rodney Stewart for a 2-yard loss on fourth and 1. "It kind of took the wind out of them."

And put some wind back beneath MU's sagging hopes.

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