

McCoy, Texas won't overlook CU Buffs

Longhorns, 33-point favorites over Buffs, face OU next week

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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Historically, Texas is as about as good as it gets in college football.

The program passed Notre Dame this season and moved into second on the all-time wins list with 836 and counting. Only Michigan (876) has won more games.

The Longhorns (4-0) -- led once again by Heisman Trophy candidate Colt McCoy -- are also ranked No. 2 in the latest polls behind Florida. Texas has outscored the opposition 198-61 so far this season.

As good as Mack Brown's team is on fall Saturdays, the coaches and players do an equally good job of talking up the opponent throughout the week.

Texas is a 33-point favorite over Colorado, but it doesn't sound like anyone outside of the locker room is peeking ahead to next week's Red River Shootout against rival Oklahoma.

"That's the good thing about our team. I walked through the locker room yesterday and everyone was talking about Colorado and what we have to do to beat Colorado," McCoy said during a press conference on Monday. "That shows you the leadership on our team from coach Brown all the way to the whole staff and the seniors. Just to understand that it is one at a time and that's what we're focused on, we've got to take care of business."

The Buffs (1-3) are coming off a very disappointing non-conference season that included double-digit road losses to Toledo (54-38) and West Virginia (35-24) on national television.

Saturday's game in Austin will kickoff at 5:15 p.m. on ESPN.

"On film they look pretty good. I'm sure they'll be prepared and I'm sure coach (Dan) Hawkins will have a nice package set up for us on Saturday," said Texas defensive tackle Lamarr Houston, who is from Colorado Springs. "I know that they're a smash-mouth football team always."

Smash mouth? The Buffs?

Well, that was the plan the CU coaching staff talked about before the season. Injuries to Rodney Stewart and Darrell Scott and some early deficits have turned Hawkins' team into an offense that seems to rely too much on the passing game.

Cody Hawkins has thrown 187 passes through four games, completing 98 of them for 1,047 yards with seven touchdowns and seven interceptions. Stewart, Scott, Demetrius Sumler and Brian Lockridge have combined for 102 carries, 468 yards and four touchdowns.

Despite these numbers, the Longhorns sound as if they are preparing for Chris Brown, Bobby Purify, Cortlen Johnson and the rest of the 2001 Buffs.

"Colorado is not running the ball quite as well as they were last year and our concern is that they will come in and try to run the ball against us," Brown said. "And by running, handle our pass rush and give Cody time to throw. You have to stop the run. We stopped the run against UTEP and that gave us a chance to put pressure on the quarterback, but if you allow a team to run then you have got a chance to get beat."

Texas defeated UTEP 64-7 on Sept. 26, then sat back during a bye week and watched the Miners spoil Houston's BCS aspirations with a 58-41 upset of the Cougars in El Paso.

Brown has warned his team to avoid the "poison cheese" and take each opponent on the schedule seriously.

"You can't listen to all that's around you and you just need to play your best every week, and that's hard to do," Brown said. "I used to think it was easy to do. I would say, 'Why can't you play 12 times?'"

"Not many people do it, and I don't know why, but it doesn't happen very often that you take your A-game 12 times. You're going to have to win some games that you don't play well in."

Since CU defeated Texas in the 2001 Big 12 championship game, the Longhorns have gone 4-0 against the Buffs, winning those games by an average score of 45.3 to 10.3.

"Their record doesn't show how good they are. They're going to come in here and play a really great game," Texas offensive guard Charlie Tanner said. "They've got some guys on defense back from last year that love to fly around, they find the football and they're really physical up front, so it's going to be a really good challenge for us."

The Longhorns' next three games are against No. 19 Oklahoma in Dallas, at No. 24 Missouri and at No. 15 Oklahoma State.

Yet the mantra off the field this week is: Beware of the Buffs.

"I'm not looking on to the next four games. We're just looking at Colorado right now," Texas wide receiver Dan Buckner insists. "You can't look ahead to next week because that's when this week might jump up and bite you."

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cu football - briefs

CU Buffaloes concerned about fast-scoring Longhorns

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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BOULDER — To gash and to not get gashed, that's been a continuing challenge for Colorado.

Through four games, Colorado's offense had recorded 19 gains of 20 or more yards, including two of more than 40 yards. By comparison, CU's opponents combined for 23 plays of at least 20 yards, and 11 of 40-plus.

College coaches, including CU's Dan Hawkins, call big plays "gashers." Texas is as athletic as any team in the Big 12 and prone to gashing its opponents. This season, senior quarterback Colt McCoy has thrown for touchdown passes of 78 and 42 yards, and junior tailback Vondrell McGee has a 51-yard TD run.

Colorado is allowing a conference-worst 6.3

yards per play.

"There's been a couple of plays where we were out of position," CU senior linebacker Jeff Smart said. "There's also a couple of plays where we just missed a couple of tackles. Like last week against West Virginia, you miss a tackle against those guys and they can take it the distance. It will be the same this week."

CU coach Dan Hawkins said the Buffs' defense must make sure to get players in the right spots so they can develop "a little intuition of what's going on. We have to get a little confidence and continuity in there."

Time right for Wright?

Offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau said sophomore receiver Anthony Wright is fully recovered from an ankle injury that slowed him for more than two weeks.

"He's been getting better every week," Kiesau said, "and we just have to find more opportunities to get him on the field. I think we're going to do that."

Kiesau said Wright, who converted from cornerback in August, is further ahead than junior college transfer Andre Simmons or freshman Will Jefferson.

"I'm anxious to do something out there," said Wright, who has one catch for 42 yards, against Toledo.

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Footnotes.

Five Colorado coaches were scheduled to leave early and recruit today in the Lone Star State. . . . CU is 7-6 in Big 12 openers. The Buffs stand 3-14 all-time vs. teams ranked No. 2 in the national polls. The last victory was the 62-36 home win over Nebraska in 2001. . . . CU did not suffer any new injuries last week against West Virginia. Starting center Mike Iltis, who sat out the WVU after suffering a concussion in practice, is listed as probable for Saturday. . . . Under coach Mack Brown, Texas is 14-4 after bye weeks.

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CU's Smart a true player

By Justin Williams

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BOULDER — Jeff Smart might not go down as the most recognizable linebacker Colorado has ever seen.

“If you saw that dude walking across campus, nobody would know who he is,” Dan Hawkins said.

But, as the Buffs coach clarified, “He can play.”

The aptly named Smart has come a long way from walking on to the CU football team in 2006 out of Boulder High School. He's since become a three-year starter, has played every defensive snap the past two seasons and was named a team captain prior to this year.

“He knows everything on the football field,” said fellow linebacker Jon Major, a redshirt freshman. “It's been a great opportunity to learn from that.

“One of our nicknames for him is ‘The Librarian,’ just because he's so smart.”

CU's longtime linebackers coach Brian Cabral said Smart — a 6-foot, 225-pound senior — is undoubtedly his best linebacker this season, and that's quite an enviable spot considering Cabral's success with the position.

“You can talk to him like you're talking to another coach,” Cabral said. “He understands football; he understands the game. He understands what we're trying to do, and he understands what the offense is trying to do.

“He just knows football.”

Cabral has had 11 players go on to the NFL, including Jordon Dizon, who became a mentor to Smart during his time in Boulder. Smart said he learned a lot from Dizon and still keeps in touch with the 2008 Detroit Lions draft pick. Smart also said he wouldn't mind pursuing the same NFL path as his predecessor.

“That's definitely something I would like to look into,” Smart said.

Cabral said Smart, considering what he's accomplished at Colorado since walking on, isn't someone to be counted against when chasing a dream.

“He's probably one of the hardest-working and most prepared players on our team,” Cabral said. “He's very opportunistic. He makes the most of everything he has.

“So I wouldn't count him out at all. He just needs an opportunity. I don't doubt that if he gets that opportunity, that he'll make the most of that, too.”



University of Colorado linebacker Jeff Smart runs through drills in Boulder on Wednesday. Originally a walk-on, Smart is in his third year as a starter for the Buffaloes.

Joshua Buck/Times-Call

Smart is quietly working his way up the CU record books. With 237 career tackles, he's tied for 38th on the school's all-time list. He said it's sometimes weird to see his name next to a bunch of guys he looked up to as a kid growing up in Boulder.

"I'm just happy to be on the team and be able to contribute and be part of what we're trying to do here," Smart said. "It's a real honor just to be a linebacker here.

"I'm not really concerning myself with the numbers right now, but I think after this year when I sit back and reflect on the career I've had here, it'll definitely be awesome to see my name next to those other guys."

Most of those guys were taught by Cabral, but the coach said he's never been more proud of a player than he is of Smart.

"When he walked on, you didn't know what to expect. You had no idea," Cabral said. "But I think he's exceeded everyone's expectations with what he's accomplished here.

"For a guy that wanted to walk on and just wanted to play football, he's made the most of everything he has."

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Rare Texas two-trek for CU's Burton

By Patrick Ridgell
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BOULDER — Colorado's Marcus Burton is one of the few Buffaloes who'll ever face the Longhorns twice at Texas' Darrell K. Royal-Memorial Stadium. In fact, Saturday's game marks the fourth time he's faced Texas, a rare occurrence given the Big 12's North-South scheduling.

He does not consider it an honor.

The two CU-Texas games of 2005 stick out. As a true freshman that season, Burton played on the losing end of a 42-17 decision in Austin. Seven weeks later in Houston, he played in the infamous Big 12 title game in which Texas beat CU 70-3.

"I really try not to look back on either time we played Texas in '05," Burton said. "Neither one came out good for us.

"I think the thing I did take away from that game is you don't look at the name; you don't look at who you're playing. You look at your assignments, what you need to do, regardless of what the jersey is or the ranking or all that kind of stuff."

Burton, from Channelview, Texas, expects about 22 friends and family members to make the trip to Austin on Saturday.

Other Buffs from Texas who expect large contingents of family and friends include senior long snapper Justin Drescher, from Southlake, who said 20 to 25 will attend. Defensive tackle Nate Bonsu, from the Dallas area, thinks about 18 family members and friends will show, including an uncle who lives in Austin.

The Buffs opened the week as 31 1/2-point underdogs, and that line actually grew to 32 1/2, meaning the betting public likes the Longhorns to cover. Just what is the national perception of CU's football program these days?

Normally, players pay little attention to point spreads. This isn't normal.

"I think any game, especially as a defender, you want to make a statement to their offense," Burton said. "Anytime you see the media has you as a 31-point underdog, you're saying there's no respect there."

Burton said Texas A&M and Texas Tech recruited him, but Texas did so only a little.

"It was one of those deals where they were thinking I wasn't good enough," Burton said.

Whenever a collegiate athlete returns to his or her home state to compete, there's something a bit more meaningful about it. This time, the story could be a little different.

College Athletes of the Week

CU Athletes of the Week

Male

Kenyon Neuman, Sr., cross country

Neuman won the men's 8K race during the 24th annual Rocky Mountain Shootout on Saturday.

Female

Nikki Marshall, Sr., soccer

Marshall scored four goals, becoming the program's all-time points leader, in last Friday's 5-1 defeat of Oklahoma.

CSU Athletes of the Week

Male

Mychal Sisson, So., football

In a loss to Idaho, Sisson had seven tackles, including three for loss, and a sack.

Female

Kasey Claussen, Sr., golf

Claussen finished second overall at the Heather Farr/CU Memorial Invitational in Erie. She had a three-day score of 218.

While the rest of the world might be speculating on just how ugly things could get Saturday night, the other story here is about Buffs like Burton. He's a guy who came to Boulder years ago and has endured plenty. He missed a year when his grades went south; he also has gotten married and started a family. He might play in the NFL; he might not. His senior year is off to a 1-3 start, and some fans are howling mad.

Saturday in Austin is one more chance for Burton to show some people who he is and what he can do.

"In '05, we went down there, and we were awed by the Vince Youngs and everybody that was on the team," Burton said. "I think the Texas aura this year is a little different. We know they have good guys; we feel like we have good guys. We just want to play ball."

Read Patrick Ridgell's [CU sports blog](#). He can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.