

Holy Toledo! Rockets roll over Buffs

CU falls to 0-2 after lackluster effort

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 09/11/2009 10:59:48 PM MDT

TOLEDO — The two losses have been identified, but from where will the 10 wins come?

The Colorado defense is a sieve. The offense is mistake-prone and the entire team is being overpowered and outran by supposedly inferior opponents after an allegedly successful offseason of workouts. The Buffs are 0-2 because of it.

Coach Dan Hawkins' team fell behind Toledo by two touchdowns early in the first half Friday night at the Glass Bowl in a scene eerily similar to the season opener against CSU. The Buffs gave up a big play bonanza a second-half rally couldn't overcome. The Rockets' Blue-out in the stands became a 54-38 blowout loss for the Buffs that will further fuel calls for Hawkins' job.

And to add injury to insult, CU starting quarterback Cody Hawkins sustained a concussion on what appeared to be a helmet-to-helmet hit while crossing the goal-line with 1:53 remaining in a game that was over long before that.

Holy Toledo? CU fans are already calling for Dan Hawkins' job.

"It's the nature of the beast," Hawkins said. " And I think it's great that people want us to win. All I can do is what I can do. We're going to have supporters. We're going to have detractors. I can't control what people think, nor am I willing.

"I know this: Inside our program we're doing things right. "

Just not on the field in the first two games.

Colorado gave up 624 yards of total offense to a team picked to finish somewhere in the middle of the pack in the Mid-American Conference this season. The Rockets racked up 11 plays of 20 yards or more and four plays of 40 yards or more, and that was just 10 seconds into the fourth quarter. Seven of those big plays went for touchdowns.

Midway through the fourth quarter Toledo had run 50 plays and was averaging more than 10 yards per play.

Meanwhile, CU struggled to score points against a defense that gave up 52 points in Week 1 to Purdue, until producing a couple touchdowns in the final 2:56 of the lopsided game.

"Too many big plays, that's for sure," Hawkins said.

This isn't the first time Toledo left a team from a Bowl Championship Series conference slack-jawed. The Rockets have defeated Pittsburgh, Kansas, Iowa State and the Buffs at home in the past six seasons. But this was the first big upset for first-year coach Tim Beckman

The Buffs' road losing streak extended to six games dating back October 2007 when they won at Texas Tech. The program is now 4-16 in games played outside Boulder since Hawkins was hired.

The game began just after 9 p.m. in Toledo, making it the second latest start in CU history. The 1991 Blockbuster Bowl against Alabama began at 9:09 p.m. in Florida.

Cody Hawkins completed 30 of 62 passes for 356 yards with four touchdowns and three interceptions as he tried to rally the Buffs in the second half. CU scored three third quarter touchdowns to trim what was a 30-3 advantage to 37-24.

Two Buff touchdowns came in a 20-second span with a fumbled kickoff return by Toledo sandwiched in between. But the Buffs' defense squandered touchdown passes to Jason Espinoza and Riar Geer when they allowed Toledo quarterback Aaron Opelt to dash 61 yards up the middle for a score that stretched the lead back to 20.

The run didn't end Opelt's night but it capped a tremendous performance from the senior, who came into the game leading the nation in passing. Opelt completed 15 of 23 passes for 319 yards with four touchdowns and no interceptions.

Friday's game began in similar fashion to the season opener. The Buffs gave up a 60-yard pass on a third-down play,

allowing Toledo deep into its territory. Opelt connected with wide receiver Danny Noble on an eight-yard touchdown pass two plays later, and the Buffs were playing from behind again.

The Buffs missed a golden opportunity on a third-down play with four minutes left in the first quarter. Hawkins lofted a ball to tight end Riar Geer who had come open down the middle, but Geer dropped the ball and the Buffs punted.

Toledo wasted no time scoring again.

Opelt connected with true freshman Eric Page on a 70-yard touchdown pass. Page blew by linebacker Michael Sipili, made the catch and raced untouched to the end zone. Page, one of the best high school quarterbacks in northern Ohio the past two years, had two catches for 130 yards at that point in his new role as a wide receiver at the college level.

Unlike Week 1 when they abandoned the running game after falling behind, the Buffs stuck with the ground game on the next possession. Scott began to find chunks of real estate, including a 32-yard run. But the drive stalled when CU was unable to convert a third down and the Buffs settled for a 32-yard field goal.

Toledo answered the Buffs with a 50-yard field goal with 10 minutes left in the half. The line drive kick from Alex Steigerwald had just enough distance. It was a career best and the fifth-longest kick in Toledo history.

The kicking woes of Aric Goodman returned on the next Colorado possession. After the offense sputtered out on a 10-play drive, Goodman missed a 47-yard field-goal attempt.

Toledo lengthened its lead in the final minute of the half when Opelt scrambled eight yards for a first down on fourth-and-seven and ran 27 yards for a touchdown two plays later. Toledo led 23-3 at the end of the first half.

The onslaught continued on the Rockets' first possession of the second half. Following a 40-yard kickoff return, Toledo chewed its way down the field in big chunks scoring on a 26-yard touchdown pass from Opelt to Kenny Stafford.

Colorado finally found the end zone in the third quarter when Hawkins hit wide receiver Scotty McKnight for the second week in a row with a four-yard touchdown pass. The score began the Buffs' rally, but it came too late.

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Woelk: CU free-fall inexplicable, inexcusable

Neill Woelk Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 09/12/2009 12:39:20 AM MDT

Abysmal.

Five days after the Colorado Buffaloes played what fans insisted was the worst game by a CU team in decades, the Buffs found a new bottom.

Maybe Colorado State isn't that good after all -- but the Buffs are definitely that bad. Worse than anyone could have imagined.

Toledo -- a middle-of-the-pack, Mid-American Conference team -- slapped the Buffs silly on national television Friday night as Dan Hawkins' Buffs were blinded by the Rockets' red glare.

Don't blame this one on the quarterback. The Buffs were bad across the board. It was, quite simply, one of the most embarrassing performances by a CU team in decades. Not since Drake walked into Boulder and hammered the Buffs, 41-22, in 1980 have the prospects for CU football looked so dim.

That loss to Drake -- the second of two humiliations at the hands of the Bulldogs for Chuck Fairbanks -- set the stage for a half-dozen years of unparalleled struggles for the Buffs.

Now, three decades later, prospects look no better as Hawkins' fourth team has inexplicably regressed.

Ten wins? You can bet Buff fans are thinking more of a Detroit Lions-type of finish, the kind that would read 0-12 at season's end.

Certainly, it is difficult to look at Colorado's schedule and pick one team -- any team -- the Buffs will be favored to beat.

It is easy, however -- painfully easy -- to look at the Big 12 schedule and wonder when the CU record for points allowed in a season will be eclipsed this year (451, by that 1980 Fairbanks team, in case you were wondering).

Currently, the Buffs are on pace to give up 462 -- and they have yet to play the "tough" teams on the schedule.

Earlier this week, I suggested it was a little early to paint a doomsday scenario.

Today, it's hard to avoid it. For the second week in a row, a team picked to finish in the middle of a non-BCS conference buried the Buffs. It's hard to imagine how CU will find the ability to compete with the powerhouse teams that remain on the horizon -- Texas, Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma State to name a few.

All of which points to a question no one can easily answer: How did it get this bad this fast? How did a team that came within a 57-yard field goal of going to a bowl game last year deteriorate so rapidly?

By no means can the issues facing this team be placed solely at the feet of the quarterback. Take the best quarterback in CU history -- shoot, take your favorite college quarterback of all time -- and put him under center Friday night and the final outcome isn't different. The Buffs might have scored more points, but fact of the matter is Toledo stuck half a hundred on the board.

Remember those "little things" Dan Hawkins said the Buffaloes had to fix?

They're actually gaping holes -- beginning with a defense that Buff coaches insisted would be their strength this year.

Throughout fall camp, CU coaches were quietly confident in their defense. They knew their offense would struggle at times, particularly with a dearth of fleet wide receivers, a young offensive line and questions at quarterback.

But they believed the defense -- with a host of returning players in the secondary and what coaches thought would be an outstanding linebacker corps -- would be able to hold the fort.

Instead, opponents have stormed the fort and the defense has been ... well, defenseless.

What's painfully clear is that CU has few game-breakers, or play-makers on either side of the ball. Hawkins has recruited highly touted linemen and linebackers since his arrival, but he has failed to improve team speed -- something that was agonizingly evident Friday night. Toledo outran the Buffs all night long, something that does not bode well for a team that's staring a Big 12 schedule in the face.

Now for a reality check: This morning, the cries for Hawkins' immediate dismissal will hit a crescendo.

That's not going to happen. The act of erasing a head coach in the middle of a season -- OK, early in the season -- never, ever improves the situation. While all signs point to a dismal year, starting anew at this point would not help. Unless Hawkins steps down of his own accord, he'll almost certainly be the head coach at season's end.

Then, unless this season produces some kind of drastic turnaround, athletic director Mike Bohn will have a decision on his hands.

I'm still not betting on a coaching change.

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CU defense once again gives up big plays

Toledo racks plays of 20 or more yards 11 times

By Matt Markey For the Camera
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 09/12/2009 12:37:04 AM MDT

TOLEDO -- A succession of explosive plays by Toledo had a significant role in the 54-38 thumping Colorado took at the hands of the Rockets here Friday night at the Glass Bowl.

The Rockets took advantage of the Colorado defense to convert 11 plays of 20 yards or more, including four in excess of 40 yards, while working over the Buffaloes for 624 yards of offense. Toledo had three plays of 60 yards or more, and scored six touchdowns on big plays.

"There were too many big plays, that's for sure," Colorado head coach Dan Hawkins said. "We got close, but we weren't able to stop them."

Toledo identified and exploited soft spots in the Colorado defense on its first possession, as quarterback Aaron Opelt faced little pressure from the rush while waiting for freshman wide receiver Eric Page to work deep into the secondary. Page stopped and jumped to make a 60-yard reception between two Colorado defenders.

On its next possession, Toledo had Page slip behind the CU defense in the middle of the field, then outrace everyone for a 70-yard touchdown that gave Toledo a 13-0 lead. Midway through the second quarter, Opelt hooked up with Kenny Stafford, who made a leaping catch between two defenders for a 46-yard gain, setting up a 50-yard Toledo field goal.

After Colorado's Aric Goodman missed a 47-yard field goal try, Toledo tailback DaJuane Collins bounced out of the pack and cut outside for a 27-yard gain. Just before the half ended, Opelt angled 27 yards on a touchdown run that helped the Rockets to a 23-3 halftime advantage.

The Buffaloes failed to make the necessary adjustments at the half, as Toledo's Collins broke free on a 43-yard run down the Colorado sideline on the first play of the third period. The Rockets pushed down to the Colorado 26, and from there Opelt found a wide-open Stafford in the middle of the end zone to push the lead to 30-3.

"All those big plays they had definitely hurt us a lot," Colorado defensive back Ben Burney said. "Seeing all of those points on the board makes it tough to try and come back."

Before the Buffaloes put together a third-quarter rush that got them within 37-24, Toledo hit on a 35-yard pass play to push the ball into Colorado territory, and Opelt went 23 yards to tight end Tom Burzine for another touchdown and a 37-10 lead. As soon as the Buffaloes got within two scores, Toledo cashed in another big play as Opelt went 61 yards for a touchdown on a quarterback draw.

"That 61-yard run -- that was the dagger in the heart for us," Burney said. "That really hurt, because we were working our way back into it, and then they hit another explosive play on us. It's frustrating to see."

Toledo's Opelt completed 15 of 23 passes for 319 yards and four touchdowns. The Rockets averaged almost 10 yards per offensive play.

"The points and the yardage they put up shows that they definitely had some good players out there," Burney said. "We just have to do a better job of shutting down those big plays the rest of the season. We can't let that keep happening."

The Buffaloes are repeat offenders in this category, since Colorado State did essentially the same thing to Colorado's defense in the first week of the season, a 23-17 Buffs loss. In last week's game, the Buffaloes got burned five times on plays of 20 yards or longer, with four of those plays going for 40 or more yards. In just five plays, Colorado State picked up 215 yards in that game.

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QB Hawkins suffers concussion on TD run

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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TOLEDO, Ohio ---- Late in the fourth quarter of Friday's game, Cody Hawkins scrambled toward the end zone of a game that already had been decided. He dived for the goal line and was hit so hard in the head his helmet flew off as he scored a touchdown.

Hawkins was dazed and was initially diagnosed with a concussion. Coach Dan Hawkins said he did not know if his son would be able to fly home with the team.

"He took a shot and he'll be OK," Dan Hawkins said. "He showed a lot of courage on the play."

Cody Hawkins took every offensive snap for the Buffs despite the lopsided score. If the onside kick CU tried after the touchdown had succeeded, true freshman quarterback Clark Evans might have been called into action. Evans was briefly warming up on the sideline.

Cody Hawkins threw for 356 yards in the game and threw for four touchdowns on top of his touchdown run. He moved into second place in passing attempts on the school's all-time list.

His 64 pass attempts in the game also set a school record.

If his concussion is significant enough to prevent him from playing against Wyoming in eight days, it will be interesting to see if coaches ask sophomore Tyler Hansen to burn his redshirt or if they turn to one of the true freshmen.

"Cody is a little Scotty McKnight from last week," wide receiver Scotty McKnight said. McKnight suffered a concussion in the season opener against Colorado State and returned to play Friday.

"Cody is trying to figure out where we are right now."

Old reliable

Speaking of McKnight. The junior missed most of practice this week after suffering the concussion. He not only played Friday but he led the Buffs in receiving with 11 catches for 114 yards and a touchdown.

McKnight has caught a pass in every game in his college career, a streak of 27 consecutive games. He caught a four-yard touchdown pass in the third quarter, giving him a score in four of his past five games, dating back to last season.

All for naught

After a week of clamoring to see more of Darrell Scott, Colorado fans saw the tailback finally used as a significant part of the offense Friday.

Scott ran 12 times for 85 yards in the game and appeared to be finding his rhythm in the early going, but the team fell behind and was forced again to abandon the running game.

Scott also returned kickoffs once again and set a school record with 290 all-purpose yards, breaking the record set by his uncle, Josh Smith, last season.

Familiar territory

Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn spent a few moments before Friday's game reminiscing. Bohn visited the Glass Bowl once before when the stadium looked decidedly different.

Bohn served as a graduate assistant coach at Ohio in 1983. Ohio visited Toledo that year and lost. Bohn said he wasn't even allowed to sit in the visiting coaches' box because it was too small at the time.

The stadium has changed considerably, but it's still small by major college standards. The visiting locker room barely accommodated the Buffs Friday and players were forced to get taped outside on the field.

Homecoming

Sophomore running back Rodney Stewart, an Ohio native from the Columbus suburb of Westerville, did not play Friday night as he continues to be sidelined with hamstring and thigh injuries.

Redshirt freshman linebacker Doug Rippy, from the Dayton suburb of Trotwood, had three tackles against Toledo in his return to his home state, and also knocked down a pass against the Rockets.

Notable

Colorado had two 100-yard receivers Friday. Jason Espinoza was the first to reach the century mark and finished with eight catches for 109 yards and his first touchdown. ... When CU recovered an onside kick in the fourth quarter, it ended a 0-for-9 stretch in that department. The last time the Buffs recovered an onside kick was against Nebraska in 1999. ... The game ended at 12:55 a.m. Eastern time, making it the latest-ending time for a CU game in history. ... As of Friday, about 10,000 tickets remained for next week's home game against Wyoming.

Matt Markey

contributed to this report.

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Bohn not ready to make coaching change

CU athletic director urges focus, poise

Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 09/12/2009 02:32:09 AM MDT

TOLEDO -- Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn ultimately might have to make a coaching change this season, but he's not there yet.

However, after two humbling and troublesome defeats to start the season against Colorado State and Toledo, Bohn has changed his tone in talking about coach Dan Hawkins and where the football program stands.

Reality has set in that the Buffs are nowhere near a 10-win team and might be hard-pressed to avoid 10 losses this season. CU gave up an astounding 624 yards of total offense to Toledo on Friday in a devastating 54-38 defeat once again broadcast nationally.

Just a few weeks ago, Bohn insisted the man he hired nearly four years ago and is under contract through 2012 was safe in his job and had no business being listed as a coach on the hot seat. But 45 minutes after Friday night's embarrassment had ended, Bohn must have known that was no longer a defensible position.

He was surrounded on the field at the Glass Bowl by reporters from local and national publications all wanting to know *when* the change would come, not *if*. He called for a cooling off period.

"This is a time for keeping our poise as a program," Bohn said. "It's a time to ensure recruits and let people around the program know that we need to keep our poise and focus our passion on getting after the Wyoming Cowboys."

Wyoming comes to town a week from today with new head coach Dave Christensen, who spent the past eight years at Missouri as offensive coordinator. The past two years with the Tigers, Christensen has put up a total of 113 points on the Buffs. Not exactly the face anyone in Boulder wants to see on the opposite sideline right now.

In a separate interview with the Camera on Friday night, Bohn was asked what he would say to CU fans who believe it's time to make a change in coaches.

"It's after the second game of the season and right now we're focused on creating an environment to get this turned around, and it starts with Wyoming," he said. "When the team runs out behind Ralphie before the Wyoming game, it's a great place to start. I know the kids and coaches are going to work hard this week and do everything they can to make them proud.

"That's what we're spending our time on. We understand the importance of creating a competitive team. Don't underestimate our competitive resolve as a program, a staff and a university to get this turned around."

Bohn said he and Hawkins had not discussed the heavy criticism the program has faced since losing the season opener to Colorado State or speculation in the media about the coach's future. Bohn said the program and the department might not have done a good enough job over the past three years

explaining to its fans the challenges it faced.

“We maybe have been guilty of building a façade that maybe didn't reveal the hole that we were in and the severity of the situation we were in associated with the program,” Bohn said.

When asked after Friday's loss whether he was concerned that the school or its fans would run out of patience, Hawkins said no.

“It's funny how things can turn,” he said. “I mean, they really can. You just have to hang in there and keep battling and hopefully get a little momentum going and a little bit of confidence going. Unfortunately, I think offensively, we got a little confidence going there.

“I think Darrell (Scott) coming out of this. I thought our O-line felt better coming out of this. Defensively, they're obviously going to have their dobber down. So, you just got to rally em.”

Hawkins received a vote of confidence from junior wide receiver Scotty McKnight after the game.

“This team is not deflated,” McKnight said. “This team has a lot of heart. Team chemistry is excellent. We're going to stay together. Hug up with each other. Get close to the coaching staff, figure this thing out and get it fixed.

McKnight was asked if he was worried about his head coach's future.

“No way,” he said. “Everyone on the team believes in coach Hawk and what he's trying to accomplish here. He sets some big goals for us. We just as players didn't take care of the details tonight.”

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cu football

Rockets blast past Buffaloes

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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Kevin Moyd's only carry for Colorado is halted after a 2-yard gain by Toledo's Beau Brudzinski, middle, and Malcolm Riley. (J.D. Pooley, The AP)

TOLEDO, OHIO — Colorado senior cornerback Cha'pelle Brown said earlier in the week that Friday night's game at Toledo would give the Buffaloes an opportunity to work against a

spread formation similar to the ones that CU will see often in the Big 12.

Now there's a scary thought.

The Buffs come home 0-2 after Friday night's 54-38 loss to the Rockets of the Mid-American Conference.

No, this UT wasn't Texas. And don't look for Rockets quarterback Aaron Opelt to be included in Heisman Trophy talk. But the Buffs sure let him look like a prime-time player. Opelt produced six touchdowns (four passing, two rushing) and finished with 428 total yards (319 passing).

And once again on national TV, CU appeared almost inept at times.

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"We gave up too many big plays, that's for sure. It's a little bit of a 'getting adjusted in the game' issue," CU coach Dan Hawkins said. "We've got so many young guys up front on both sides of the ball, that's part of it."

Toledo (1-1), a member of a league that loves to upset teams from bigger conferences, led 23-3 at halftime and kept scoring.

The Rockets lost 52-31 six days earlier to a

rebuilding Purdue squad. This time, Toledo didn't even call on its punter until midway through the third quarter. By then, Toledo led 30-3.

Colorado showed some life and scored two touchdowns in the third quarter, when a TD catch by Jason Espinoza was followed by a CU fumble recovery at the Toledo 4 on the ensuing kickoff. But Opelt, a dropback passer who rarely runs, scooted 61 yards on a draw on the second play of the fourth quarter to make it 44-24.

At that point, Toledo already had five plays of longer than 40 yards and 10 of 20 or more.

The real backbreaker came on a 27-yard run by Opelt with 36 seconds left before the break.

"He's a nice player and does a good job. And he can run," Hawkins said.

CU's defense, blitzing and pass rushing from the edges, evidently failed to account for a quarterback keeper. But the Buffs should have learned. A play earlier, Opelt scrambled for 8 runs on third-and-7 to keep the chains moving.

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Cody Hawkins completed 30-of-64 passes for 356 yards and four touchdowns - but also threw three interceptions. (J.D. Pooley, The Associated Press)

"Nobody is crying. Nobody is ready to end the season," CU cornerback Benjamin Burney said. "We definitely have the talent to be a good defense."

Colorado junior Cody Hawkins draws criticism from fans for his lack of arm strength but, ironically, his problem in the first half was overthrowing receivers.

The most costly was just missing tailback Darrell Scott for what would have been a 30-yard touchdown late in the second quarter. Scott, sprinting down the left side, made a diving attempt for the pass but could not reach it.

Hawkins finished with 356 yards on 30-of-64 passing with four touchdowns and three interceptions. He was sacked three times. His 64 attempts are a school record.

Scott was used more this time. After just one carry in the season opener, Scott was the primary ballcarrier Friday night, finishing with 85 yards on 12 carries. He also had eight kickoff returns for a school-record 204 yards. His 290 all-purpose yards (including a 1-yard catch) ranks fourth all-time in school history.

But nothing seemed to go right for Colorado.

Toledo struck first, moving 84 yards in eight plays with its first possession. The bulk of the yardage came on a 60-yard completion to the CU 14 on third down, with Opelt finding 5-foot-10, 165-pound Eric Page down



Toledo tight end Tom Burzine manages to hang on for a 23-yard touchdown reception against CU safety Patrick Mahnke. (J.D. Pooley, The Associated Press)

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the right sideline.

Five days earlier vs. CSU, Colorado's defense was burned by the big play, with five going for 215 yards. Apparently, that problem was not fixed because an even longer "gasher," as Dan Hawkins calls them, was yet to come.

It was Page's turn again, this time on a 70-yard touchdown reception. The freshman speedster ran by the Colorado defense, along the left hash mark, and was open by almost 10 yards when he caught Opelt's spiral.

Colorado, meanwhile, stumbled around and at times couldn't seem to get out of its own way. The Buffs punted away their first two possessions, but did miss a potential long gainer when senior tight end Riar Geer got behind the Toledo defense but dropped a perfect throw by Cody Hawkins.

When scoring the Buffs' final touchdown, Hawkins took a hit to the helmet and may have suffered a concussion.

"Cody's a little rocked," said CU receiver Scotty McKnight, who tied a school record with 11 catches and finished with a 114 yards. "Cody is trying to figure out where he is right now."

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Swagger flagging

Three questions the Buffaloes had heading into

Friday night's game against Toledo:

1. Can Colorado shake off the bitter loss to Colorado State and regain some swagger?

Answer: Swagger? Colorado needs to show it can win a football game. Up next is a Sept. 19 home game against Wyoming.

2. Will tailback Darrell Scott become a focal point of the offense?

Answer: He tried. With Rodney "Speedy" Stewart sidelined by a lingering hamstring problem, Scott carried the load. In the first half he rushed 12 times for 85 yards, a 7.1-yard average.

3. Can the CU defense avoid being beaten on big plays?

Answer: A resounding no. Toledo wide receiver Eric Page, a 5-foot-10, 165-pound freshman, had 130 yards with two catches in the first half. Another Rockets receiver, Kenny Stafford, had a 46-yarder. And two running plays went for 27 yards — all in the first half. Then Stafford caught a 26-yard touchdown pass on the opening drive of the third quarter.

Tom Kensler, The Denver Post

Key stat

130 : Yardage on two receptions by Toledo freshman receiver Eric Page in the first quarter, including a 70-yard touchdown catch.

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Key play

After Colorado finally showed some spunk with a pair of third-quarter touchdowns to pull to 37-24, Toledo senior quarterback Aaron Opelt took off up the middle and couldn't be caught before crossing the end zone for a 61-yard touchdown on the second play of the fourth quarter.

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[Colorado's season slides from bad to worse](#)

September 12, 2009 1:27 AM

Posted by ESPN.com's Tim Griffin

The Glass Bowl continues to be a chamber of horrors for Big 12 teams.

But even those earlier losses weren't anything like the humiliation that Dan Hawkins and Colorado endured for nearly four hours Friday night.

Toledo upset its third Big 12 team in four seasons at its home stadium as the Rockets hammered Colorado in a convincing [54-38 victory](#).

No matter how you spin this debacle, it was a humiliating performance for the Buffaloes.



AP Photo/J.D. Pooley

After an 0-2 start, Dan Hawkins may regret his "10 wins with no excuses" statement.

Even after Colorado scored a couple of late touchdowns in garbage time to make the final score appear more presentable, it won't make this one go down any easier.

Hawkins' prospects for hanging on to his job took a hit when his team was blown out in the first half. And his son, Cody, endured a devastating helmet-to-helmet tackle on Colorado's final touchdown run that knocked him out of the game.

Toledo quarterback [Aaron Opelt](#) came into the game leading the nation in passing after one game. His built on those statistics with a strong effort as he passed for 319 yards and four touchdowns and added 109 rushing yards and two touchdown runs. Opelt had a hand in Toledo's first six touchdowns.

Former Oklahoma State defensive coordinator Tim Beckman claimed his first victory as Toledo's head coach. And if his team plays like it did Friday night, they will be legitimate challengers to win the Mid-American Conference's West Division.

Before letting up on the last possession, Toledo moved the ball at will against the pedestrian Colorado defense. The Buffaloes allowed 624 yards in the game -- the most they have permitted since yielding 639 yards against Missouri in 1984.

Those struggles made Hawkins' job security appear more tenuous. After a disappointing home loss to Colorado State last week, the Buffaloes have started 0-2 for the second time in the last four seasons.

His "10 wins with no excuses" prediction for this season appears to have bitten him in the backside pretty quickly. His team might be mathematically eliminated from being able to accomplish that feat before October.

And if the Colorado message boards and fan forums are any indication, Buffalo fans aren't happy about that possibility after the first two weeks of the season.

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Longmont, Colorado
 Sunday, September 27,
 2009

Publish Date: 9/12/2009

Toledo rips apart Colorado

*By Jason Mack
 For the Times-Call*

TOLEDO, Ohio — The Colorado Buffaloes have a long road ahead if they are going to reach head coach Dan Hawkins' goal of 10 wins this season.

With a 54-38 loss to the Toledo Rockets last night, the Buffs fall to 0-2 and would have to go undefeated the rest of the way.

"Every team can be beat, and every team can beat you," Hawkins said. "It's the nature of the beast. I think it's great that people want us to win. All I can do is what I can do. We're going to have supporters and detractors. I can't control what people think. I know inside our program we are doing things right."

The loss could be especially costly for the Buffs: Junior quarterback Cody Hawkins took a brutal hit on a 12-yard touchdown run with 1:53 remaining in the game.

His status is unknown, but from the talk of the team, it sounds like he suffered a concussion. In last week's loss to Colorado State, junior wide receiver Scotty McKnight suffered a concussion but returned to the lineup.

"Cody is a little rocked," McKnight said. "Cody is a little 'Scotty McKnight' from last week. Cody is trying to figure out where we are at right now."

The quarterback struggled in the first half, completing 11 of 18 passes for 80 yards. He had an up-and-down second half, finishing the game 30-of-64 for 356 yards and four touchdowns with three interceptions.

McKnight led CU in receiving with 11 catches for 114 yards and one touchdown. Sophomore Jason Espinoza caught eight passes for 109 yards and a touchdown.

Sophomore running back Darrell Scott received only two touches last week but carried 12 times against Toledo for 85 yards. He also returned eight kickoffs for 204 yards.

"He did a nice job," Dan Hawkins said. "Unfortunately, the game plan, as it unfolded, we weren't able to stick in there with him. He's a rhythm runner. Once he got in a rhythm, he got some confidence going. Unfortunately, when the score got away from us, it prohibited us from running that much."

The Rockets scored on an 8-yard pass from Aaron Opelt to Danny Noble and never looked back, taking a 6-0 lead 7:18 into the game after failing on a two-point conversion. Opelt finished the game 15-of-23 for 319 yards with four

TOLEDO 54, COLORADO 38

Colorado

032114—38

Toledo

13101417—54

First Quarter

Tol—Noble 8 pass from Opelt (pass failed), 7:18.

Tol—Page 70 pass from Opelt (Steigerwald kick), 3:00.

Second Quarter

Col—FG Goodman 32, 13:31.

Tol—FG Steigerwald 50, 9:59.

Tol—Opelt 27 run (Steigerwald kick), :36.

Third Quarter

Tol—Stafford 26 pass from Opelt (Steigerwald kick), 12:36.

Col—McKnight 4 pass from C.Hawkins (Goodman kick), 7:26.

Tol—Burzine 23 pass from Opelt (Steigerwald kick), 4:51.

Col—Espinoza 5 pass from C.Hawkins (Goodman kick), 1:43.

Col—Geer 4 pass from C.Hawkins (Goodman kick), 1:23.

Fourth Quarter

touchdowns and rushed eight times for 109 yards and two scores.

Freshman Eric Page gave Toledo a 13-0 lead with his second big play of the night, catching a 70-yard pass with 3:00 remaining in the first quarter after catching a 60-yard pass on the previous drive.

Aric Goodman put the Buffs on the board with a 32-yard field goal 1:29 into the second quarter, but the Rockets scored 17 unanswered points to take a 23-3 lead into halftime.

Trailing 37-10, the Buffs made it interesting late in the third quarter. Senior punter Matt DiLallo kept a drive alive with a 9-yard run on a fake punt. Cody Hawkins followed with three straight incomplete passes, but Toledo was called for roughing the passer on third down.

After fumbling the snap for a loss of 10 yards, Cody Hawkins completed a 21-yard pass to Riar Geer down to the Toledo 4-yard line. The quarterback capped off the drive with a 4-yard touchdown pass to Espinoza in the right corner of the end zone to cut the deficit to 37-17 with 1:43 remaining in the third quarter.

Sophomore safety Tra Sandersfeld forced a fumble on the kickoff return, and junior cornerback Jimmy Smith recovered on the Toledo 4-yard line. Geer caught a 4-yard touchdown from Cody Hawkins to give the Buffs 14 points in 20 seconds and make it a two-score game with 1:23 remaining in the quarter.

"We always tell them it's a long game," Dan Hawkins said. "I've seen 20 points scored in four minutes before. You just have to keep playing. We told them at halftime it doesn't come back in big chunks; it comes back one play at a time."

As fast as Colorado climbed back into the game, it fell out of it even quicker.

Opelt opened the fourth quarter with a 61-yard touchdown run to extend the lead back to 20 at 44-24.

"He is a good player, and he can run," Dan Hawkins said. "They did a good job against us, getting us in dime and checking to some runs. We had some gap errors in there."

On the ensuing drive, the Buffs were driving the ball before Cody Hawkins was intercepted on the Toledo 11-yard line by Barry Church.

CU forced the Rockets to go three-and-out, but senior safety Lester Richmond intercepted Cody Hawkins at the Toledo 23-yard line on first down.

Toledo capitalized on the turnover, with DaJuane Collins scoring on a 23-yard rush with 8:41 remaining for a 51-24 lead.

Tol—Opelt 61 run (Steigerwald kick), 14:10.

Tol—Collins 23 run (Steigerwald kick), 8:41.

Tol—FG Steigerwald 43, 4:01.

Col—Devenny 18 pass from C.Hawkins (Goodman kick), 2:56.

Col—C.Hawkins 12 run (Goodman kick), 1:53.

A—20,082.

CUToledo

First downs

25 21

Rushes-yards

23-95 43-305

Passing

356 319

Comp-Att-Int

30-64-3 15-23-0

Return Yards

15 4

Punts-Avg.

3-33.0 3-31.7

Fumbles-Lost

3-1 2-2

Penalties-Yards

9-100 12-104

Time of Possession

29:08 30:52

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING—Colorado, Scott 12-85, Sumler 4-20, DiLallo 1-9, Moyd 1-2, C.Hawkins 5-(minus 21). Toledo, Collins 20-160, Opelt 8-109, Thomas 6-21, Pasquale 6-18, Team 3-(minus 3).

PASSING—Colorado, C.Hawkins 30-64-3-356. Toledo, Opelt 15-23-0-319.

RECEIVING—Colorado, McKnight 11-114, Espinoza 8-109, Geer 3-28, Sumler 3-4, A.Wright 1-42, Deehan 1-34, Devenny 1-18, Ebner 1-6, Scott 1-1. Toledo, Noble 5-56, Stafford 4-88, Page 3-138, Burzine 1-23, Bailey 1-8, Collins 1-6.



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UT Athletics



Article published September 12, 2009

Opelt leads University of Toledo's rout of Colorado

By ZACH SILKA

BLADE SPORTS WRITER

The Mid-American Conference quarterback derby just got another entry.

Showing some incredible athleticism and shocking playmaking abilities, University of Toledo quarterback Aaron Opelt threw for 319 yards and four touchdowns while also rushing for 109 yards and two touchdowns in a 54-38 win over Colorado at the Glass Bowl Friday night in front of 20,082.

The victory was the first as a head coach for Tim Beckman and snapped a two-game skid in home-openers for the Rockets.

"I think this gets our players to start to believe a little bit," Beckman said. "All the hard work that we put them through – that's exactly what I said to the guys downstairs [in the locker room] – it's going to pay off."

Often left unmentioned among the best signal callers in the conference, Opelt has proved he belongs just two games into his senior season. He finished 15-of-23 passing against the Buffaloes (0-2), a week after completing 41 of 67 passes for 423 yards in the season-opener at Purdue.

"I was pleased with the way I played," Opelt said. "Like I said from Day One, we have playmakers. It's easy for me to get the ball to them and watch them make plays."



Toledo's Aaron Opelt breaks through the Colorado defense en route to a 61-yard touchdown run on the first play of the fourth quarter to put the Rockets up 44-24 last night at the Glass Bowl.
(THE BLADE/DAVE ZAPOTOSKY)

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PHOTO GALLERY

VIEW: University of Toledo - Colorado photo gallery

After the Rockets' defense forced a Colorado punt to start the game, Opelt found freshman wide receiver Eric Page streaking down the right seam on UT's sixth play from scrimmage for a 60-yard connection. Page couldn't break free from Colorado safety Patrick Mahnke and was brought down at the Buffs' 14-yard line.

Two plays later, Opelt found tight end Danny Noble in the end zone for an 8-yard touchdown pass with 7:18 left in the first quarter to cap an eight-play, 84-yard scoring drive that took 3:15 off the clock.

The score would stay at 6-0, however, after the Rockets (1-1) failed on their two-point conversion attempt. Holder Bill Claus took the snap and immediately rolled to his right and lofted a pass that fell incomplete.

It didn't take long for the Rockets to make amends, though. Following another Colorado punt, Opelt connected with Page again and this time, the Springfield graduate would not be denied entrance to the end zone.

After two straight run plays to start the drive – the second giving UT a first down on DaJuane Collins' 15-yard rush around the right end – the Rockets opted to take another shot downfield with Page.

Running a slant route over the middle, Page hauled in Opelt's pass at

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midfield, cut back to the left sideline to evade a Colorado defender and scampered all the way to pay dirt. The 70-yard connection put the Rockets ahead 13-0 after Alex Steigerwald's PAT with 3:00 left in the quarter.

The Buffaloes answered with a 32-yard field goal from Aric Goodman from the right hash on the ensuing drive. Running back Darrell Scott's 32-yard rush through a big hole put Colorado into UT territory, and the junior kicker capped off the eight-play, 56-yard drive with 13:31 remaining in the second quarter.

UT matched the Buffs' field goal on its next drive when Alex Steigerwald converted a career-long 50-yarder for a 16-3 lead with 9:59 left in the half.

And just as it appeared the Rockets would take a comfortable 13-point lead into the locker room, UT defensive tackle Derrick Summers broke into the Colorado backfield and sacked quarterback Cody Hawkins, who fumbled the ball before hitting the deck.

Freshman safety Jermaine Robinson came up with the loose ball on the Buffs' 38-yard line, giving the Rockets prime field possession with 1:32 left in the half.

Unable to get much going, Opelt broke off a 27-yard touchdown run on the sixth play of the drive to give the Rockets a 23-3 with 36 seconds left before halftime. The play originally looked like it would be a bubble screen to the left to Page, but that proved to be just a decoy. Opelt instead tucked the ball away and sprinted up the middle before cutting back to right and diving across the goal line.

Opelt proved he wasn't done with his magical night, as the Rockets tacked on seven more points on their first drive of the second half. The Fremont Ross product hit wide receiver Kenny Stafford, who was wide open over the middle in the end zone, for a 26-yard reception 2:24 into the third quarter.

Opelt later lofted his fourth touchdown pass of the night -- a 23-yarder to tight end Tom Burzine for his first career score with 4:51 left in the quarter for a 37-10 advantage.

But the four-year starter left the best for last.

After Colorado seized some momentum with two quick scores to end the third quarter that closed the gap to 37-24, Opelt raced 61 yards down the field on the first play of the fourth quarter to put the game out of reach at 44-24.

With the middle of the field wide open, Opelt took a snap from center and darted right up the gut for his career-long run, kicking on the afterburners to out-run Colorado safety Anthony Perkins as he collapsed across the goal line.

"I didn't know I could still run like that," Opelt said with a big smile. "I got out in the open field, and you guys all saw it. It shocked me too. It was awesome."

Collins added a 23-yard TD run with 8:41 remaining, and Steigerwald tacked on another field goal -- this one 43 yards -- with 4:01 to play.

Collins finished with 160 yards on 20 carries. Page had 138 yards on three catches, and Stafford chipped in with four catches for 88 yards.

Contact Zach Silka at: zsilka@theblade.com.

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Article published September 12, 2009

Rockets crank up defensive intensity First-half effort helps Toledo jump out to big advantage

By ZACH SILKA

BLADE SPORTS WRITER

Six days after giving up 52 points and 315 rushing yards in a season-opening loss at Purdue, the University of Toledo showed plenty more resolve on defense last night in its home opener against Colorado.



Toledo's DaJuane Collins tries to elude Colorado's Cha'pelle Brown during the first quarter.
(THE BLADE/DAVE ZAPOTOSKYDAVE)

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The Rockets kept the Buffaloes off the scoreboard in the first quarter en route to leading 23-3 at halftime, despite Colorado owning an 18:50-11:10 advantage in time of possession.

Against the Boilermakers on Saturday, the Rockets found themselves down 31-14 at the half.

UT was also much more effective at controlling its opponent's rushing attack as the Buffaloes ran for 99 yards on 18 carries in the first half.

Colorado sophomore running back Darrell Scott, who was limited by injuries in the Buffs' 23-17 loss to rival Colorado State last week, rushed for 85 yards on 12 carries.

His 32-yard scamper in the second quarter set up Colorado's only score in the half - a 32-yard field goal from Aric Goodman 1:29 into the second quarter.

Colorado junior quarterback Cody Hawkins was held to 11-of-18 passing for 80 yards in the first half.

Hawkins was also sacked once by senior defensive tackle Derrick Summers, resulting in a fumble that was recovered by freshman safety Jermaine Robinson with 1:32 remaining in the half.

The Buffaloes didn't score their first touchdown until 7:26 remained in the third quarter on a four-yard pass from Hawkins to junior wide receiver Scotty McKnight to make it 30-10.

WILLIAMS AILING: UT senior wideout Stephen Williams was a late scratch from last night's starting lineup due to injury.

Senior Robin Bailey started in his place and had one catch for eight yards in the first half.

Williams entered the game on UT's second possession but left the field early in the second quarter grabbing his upper right leg after an incomplete pass from quarterback Aaron Opelt.

He returned later in the half but did not have any more passes thrown his way in the first half.

SCOUTING TALENT: Scouts from seven NFL teams were in attendance at

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the Glass Bowl last night.

Representatives from the Cleveland Browns, Arizona Cardinals, Baltimore Ravens, San Francisco 49ers, Houston Texans, Jacksonville Jaguars, and Tampa Bay Buccaneers were on hand, likely evaluating Williams and safety Barry Church.

Colorado tight end Riar Geer and linebacker Jeff Smart are also considered NFL prospects.

BIG LEG: UT senior kicker Alex Steigerwald booted a career-long 50-yard field goal to put the Rockets ahead 16-3 with 9:59 left in the second quarter.

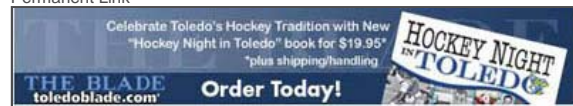
The kick from the middle of the field ranked as the eighth longest in school history.

Steigerwald later attempted another 50-yarder with 2:25 remaining in the half but pushed the kick wide left.

AFTER DARK: Last night's contest was the latest-ending game in Glass Bowl history.

The latest a UT home game had ended before last night was 12:06 a.m., a 37-31 double overtime win over Kansas in 2006.

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