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colorado football

It's time for CU's inexperienced but talented wide receivers to show their stuff



The Buffs would like to get wide receiver Andre Simmons some more action Thursday night. He has one catch this season for 44 yards vs. Colorado State. (Kathryn Scott Osler, The Denver Post)

The Buffs' young wide receivers are ready to contribute — now that they know the routes.

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 09/30/2009 01:00:00 AM MDT

BOULDER — It didn't take long for Colorado receiver Andre Simmons to realize he's not in Kansas anymore. As soon as he was issued that thick playbook, the transfer from Independence (Kan.) Community College knew things were a whole lot different at this level.

Not only that, but the playbook changes each week. It is continually updated and tailored toward the next opponent.

"It's just more complicated, coming from junior college," Simmons said this week. "It's like it was more complicated in junior college, coming from high school. But there's a bigger difference this time."

Colorado football fans have been waiting (and not all that patiently) for Simmons and other new receivers to spark an offense desperately

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in need of somebody to stretch the field. Through three games, only two wide receivers — junior Scotty McKnight and sophomore Jason

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Espinoza — have caught more than one pass.

McKnight and Espinoza joined the program as walk-ons and have exceeded expectations, with McKnight (5-feet-11, 190 pounds) on pace to top the team in receptions for a third consecutive season. Although sure-handed and crafty, there is no getting around the fact that both are

undersized, possession-type receivers. Espinoza (5-8, 175) also gets banged around as the primary punt returner and has a history of injuries.

Other wide receivers must step up, be it Simmons, true freshman Will Jefferson, former cornerback Anthony Wright or sophomore Marques Simas, a third-year player who finally got on the field for the first time against Wyoming. McKnight believes Thursday night's ESPN game at West Virginia will be a coming-out party for some of them, if not all.

Last week's bye allowed for five extra practices and additional time to memorize the plays.

"I think all those guys have made a ton of progress, just in the last couple of weeks," McKnight said. "They've been getting a lot of reps in practice. (Coaches) are going to try to work them in more. That's been pretty cool to see."

Like the fans, Jefferson thought it would happen for him earlier. After signing with CU just a week before August camp, the Southern Californian made news by quickly jumping ahead of two other freshman receivers (Jarrod Darden and Terdema Ussery are redshirting) who had been on campus since June.

But games are different from practices. Jefferson has just one reception: for 9 yards in the third game, against Wyoming.

"I got frustrated. I was down on myself a little

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bit," Jefferson acknowledged. "I just thought I could contribute so much, and I was in a rush to get out there. Now, I feel I'm ready to start helping out. I'm not thinking about the plays anymore. I feel real good about this week."

So does Simas, who said he is finally recovered from an early September knee strain that limited his college debut against Wyoming to just a few plays. Regarded as a four-star blue-chipper when he signed with CU out of San Diego, Simas redshirted in 2007 and then was ruled academically ineligible for 2008.

Simas has had more than two years to learn the offense, but he remembers what the newcomers are going through. The system, Simas said, is even more complicated this year, with more motion and more shifts.

"It's basically about getting comfortable with the playbook so you can be confident and play quicker," Simas said.

The challenge is not just about lining up and running a precise route, said coach Dan Hawkins, who also is handling the wideouts this season.

"Changes can be made (in the play call)," Hawkins said. "Then there can be changes based on what kind of look you get from the defense. The level of specificity can be pretty high."

Roll all that into the context of requiring perfect timing with the quarterback, and it's no surprise that Hawkins believes the learning curve for young wide receivers is steeper than for all

positions except quarterbacks and offensive linemen.

Considering that West Virginia (2-1) has reached 30 points in each game, Buffs offensive coaches know it's imperative to get in the end zone. Nobody expects another 17-14 game (the score of Colorado's overtime victory last year in Boulder), so CU wide receivers had better make some plays — big plays.

Can the newbies come to the rescue?

"Those guys have been working extra after practices," sophomore tailback Darrell Scott said. "If they play well, that would help our offense tremendously. If we can hit a couple of long passes early, then the West Virginia defense will back off."

*Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280 or
tkensler@denverpost.com*

CU receiving leaders

Through three games

Player Pos. Rec. Yds. TD

Scotty McKnight WR 20 227 2

Jason Espinoza WR 13 136 1

Riar Geer TE 13 119 1

Demetrius Sumler TB 7 35 0

CU sports information

Ryan Deehan TE 4 54 0

Patrick Devenny TE 3 25 1

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All Things Colorado Sports — Blogs — The Denver Post

SEPTEMBER 29, 2009, 3:25 PM

WVU's Stewart talks up Cody

By **TOM KENSLE** |  3 Comments

Nobody has to ask West Virginia coach Bill Stewart twice if he is a fan of CU junior quarterback Cody Hawkins.

On the Big East coaches teleconference, Stewart went on and on when asked about Cody Hawkins.

Said Stewart: "This guy is a gym rat. He's a film nut. He's a coach's kid. He knows what to do with the ball. He hurt us last year. That's why we tried to keep the ball away from him as best we could. He brings it all to the table. When he's done, it's a gut-wrenching performance. He gives maximum effort every time he's out there.

"He's a great, great competitor. This guy has winner written all over him. The kid's got it. We've got to keep him from making plays."

In last year's 17-14 overtime victory over West Virginia, Hawkins completed 22-of-32 passes for 179 yards and two touchdowns, with one interception.

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Former Boulder County stars contributing for Buffs

Smart, Pericak, Jaffee all playing

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 09/30/2009 12:06:38 AM MDT

Every fall there seems to be at least one former Boulder County prep star who makes significant contributions to the Colorado football team.

It's been a while since there were three doing so in the same season.

This fall former Boulder High School standout Jeff Smart is leading the Buffs in tackling for the second straight year after three games. He's a starting linebacker and a senior captain on coach Dan Hawkins' team.

Fellow defensive starter Will Pericak -- another former Boulder High Panther -- is just beginning his college career as a redshirt freshman at nose tackle, where he has played 119 snaps after overtaking third-year sophomore Eugene Goree in fall camp.

After paying his dues for several years on the bench, walk-on defensive back Arthur Jaffee, a product of Fairview High School, is a starter on four special teams units. He is the second leading special teams points earner after three games. Jaffee is battling Travis Sandersfeld for the top spot with just one point separating them.

"It's been a long trip, but it's all been worth it," Jaffee said. "You really have to give your all and completely dedicate yourself to the program and to what coach Hawk is doing. As a walk-on, sometimes it's frustrating mentally when things get really rough or practices get long or when you have to wake up real early.

"I just keep telling myself it's all good things. It's good for me, for my mind, my body. Good for the soul."

The trio will return to the field Thursday night nearly 1,400 miles from Boulder in Morgantown, W.V., where they hope to recharge their season with an upset over the heavily favored Mountaineers on ESPN.

Colorado sports information director and associate athletic director Dave Plati said the last time three or more local players played significant roles for the Buffs in one season was 1996 when Toray Davis, Adam Reed, Tennyson McCarty and Corey Kish all were significant contributors.

Jaffee was just beginning to understand the game at that point as a young boy growing up in Boulder. He was a frequent visitor to Folsom Field in those days because his family had season tickets.

Now he's living a dream by playing for the program he once worshipped from the stands.

Jaffee plays key roles on the punt and punt return teams as well as the kickoff and kickoff return teams. He toils in those roles and as a reserve cornerback for hours nearly every day, but unlike most of his teammates, he can get away when he needs a little peace or a home-cooked meal.

Jaffee said CU is a big enough school and his life is often so busy that he sometimes feels hundreds of miles away even though his childhood home is just a few minutes from campus. It's the same for other local players who haven't earned significant playing time yet, but who put in the hours and the work alongside their teammates.

"I guess the biggest thing is that a ton of friends and a bunch of family members are at every game, and they're involved in the program and have been for awhile," Smart said.

Smart will leave the program later this year as one of the most accomplished former walk-ons and local products to have played in Boulder. He is on track to finish his career as one of the top 15 tacklers in CU history.

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CU in for “tough fight”

Bufs head to Morgantown for Thursday primetime game

By Alex K.W. Schultz on September 30, 2009

Colorado Buffaloes head football coach Dan Hawkins was a man of few words Sunday.

“Let’s hope so,” Hawkins said when asked if CU’s defense has built upon its shutout of the Wyoming Cowboys on Sept. 19 at Folsom Field.

“We’ll see,” Hawkins said when asked if the 1-2 Buffs will be able to stop junior running back Noel Devine and the high-powered West Virginia Mountaineers offense Thursday night.

Bufs fans can only hope Hawkins’ actions will speak louder than words when the fourth-year coach, who is 14-26 at CU, leads his troops onto Mountaineer Field at Milan Puskar Stadium in Morgantown, W. Va., to face one of the country’s most prolific offenses.



Football delivers a win for CU against visiting Wyoming 24-0 Sept. 19. Fans will next see their Buffs travel to West Virginia on Thursday. (CU Independent file/Molly Maher)

The game will be nationally televised on ESPN with kickoff set for 5:45 p.m. MST.

“They can do it all,” Hawkins said of the 2-1 Mountaineers, who are averaging 32.7 points per game compared to the Buffs’ 26.3, which is 10th in the Big 12 Conference.

WVU has churned out 1,456 yards of total offense in three contests. Devine, a 5-foot-8-inch, 176-pound sparkplug, has carried the ball 51 times for 320 yards. He averaged 8.5 yards per carry in a 41-30 loss to the Auburn Tigers on Sept. 19.

The Mountaineers’ rushing attack is averaging 192.3 yards per game and 293 passing yards, both second in the Big East Conference.

Senior quarterback Jarrett Brown, who has passed for 798 yards, is third in the conference behind Cincinnati Bearcats senior Tony Pike (1,223 yards) and Syracuse Orange senior Greg Paulus (888). However, both Pike and Paulus have played one more game than Brown. Brown’s 151.2 quarterback rating is fourth in the Big East.

With Brown being another threat the Mountaineers have, how will the Colorado defense contain him?

"It's going to be a tremendous challenge," said Greg Brown, fourth-year CU defensive passing game coordinator and secondary coach. "This is a great group here. They've done the impossible, which is replace Pat White with another standout quarterback, and he is. He's as big as a moose, fast and he has a tremendous arm."

So how do the Buffs, who squeaked past the Mountaineers 17-14 in overtime last year in Boulder, begin to prepare to contain WVU's spread offense approach?

"If the refs would allow us to have 13 on the field, that might be a start," Brown said. "That might help us. There's so much speed out there. They're just one heck of a group."

Junior cornerback Jimmy Smith, who leads the Buffs with 19 unassisted tackles, acknowledged the Mountaineers' offensive prowess.

"This is definitely going to be the fastest team we've played," Smith said. "As long as we take care of our assignments and just play our game, I think we'll be alright."

In going 0-2 to begin the season, the Buffs surrendered 1,000 yards of total offense. CU's wounds appeared to be patched up when it allowed just 230 yards in a 24-0 win over the Cowboys.

The shutout win might not serve as an accurate barometer because UW is eighth out of nine teams in the Mountain West Conference in scoring at 17.2 points per game. The Cowboys were also unable to manufacture an offensive touchdown against the Texas Longhorns on Sept. 12.

"We're heading in the right direction, but by no means have we arrived," Brown said. "We just took one step versus Wyoming, but there are many, many more steps to take to get to where we want to be."

Seeing how West Virginia hasn't had any trouble generating points, one would imagine the Buffs will need to score heavily. The numbers don't look good, though. CU is 11th in the Big 12 in rushing yards per game (91.7) and eighth in passing yards (251).

"It's just going to be one of those deals where we're going to have to play lights out," Brown said. "It's going to be a tough fight."

Contact CU Independent Staff Writer Alex K.W. Schultz at Alexander.schultz@colorado.edu.

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Longmont, Colorado
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Bufs like Burney at safety spot

Move from cornerback apparently permanent

By Patrick Ridgell
© 2009 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Ben Burney's move from cornerback to safety in Colorado's defensive secondary is looking permanent.

That comes from defensive backs coach Greg Brown, who stopped gushing over what Burney brings to the secondary long enough to say this Monday night:

"He's there until further notice," Brown said. "He's there."

Burney said that after CU's 24-0 defeat of Wyoming on Sept. 19, opposing offensive schemes will dictate whether he plays safety or corner, the position he began in 2009 and played in 2007, for the rest of the year. He said he would play wherever coaches deemed it most necessary.

But his move to safety prior to the Wyoming game produced immediate results that might render opposing schemes less of a factor in the decision. It wasn't just the five tackles and a forced fumble he gave a defense that struggled against Colorado State and Toledo. Cornerback Jimmy Smith said Burney brings certain intangibles, along with lots of speed.

"The ability to tackle in the open field very well," Smith said. "He's very smart. He's one of the smartest players we have.

"It's just reassuring. It's really reassuring because he knows everything. He knows my position, he knows the nickel position, safety position, what the other safety and linebackers are doing."

Said Brown: "First of all, he was a solid starter for 13 games in 2007 against some highly competitive teams. He did a heck of a job starting opposite (Terrence) Wheatley.

"He's been on the field in big games; he helped us beat Oklahoma, made plays to help us win that game. So he's been around the block. He knows what he's doing."

Burney redshirted in 2008 to recover from multiple surgeries he had following 2007 on his wrists, shoulders and a knee.

Burney, a 5-foot-11, 190-pound senior, is listed as CU's starter at strong safety for Thursday's game at West Virginia (5:30 p.m., ESPN). Anthony Perkins is the starting free safety, ahead of Patrick Mahnke. Both are sophomores who have played some, but not as much as Burney. Burney is also listed as a reserve corner. He said that if an injury comes to one of the corners, he'll return to the spot.



Colorado's Ben Burney celebrates after a play against Wyoming on Sept. 19 at Folsom Field in Boulder. **Lewis Geyer/Times-Call**

Burney is the son of former Denver Broncos defensive line coach Jacob Burney. He obviously wants to play in the NFL next year. He said his versatility will enhance his chances in the eyes of NFL scouts.

He said he prefers the move for another reason.

"I get to be on the field," Burney said. "Before that, I had to share time to be on the field. Now I'm always on the field, so it's great news."

Read Patrick Ridgell's CU sports blog at www.timescall.com/blogs/ridgell. He can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.

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Stewart ready for second crack at West Virginia

September 29, 2009 7:19 PM

Posted by ESPN.com's Tim Griffin

The aftermath of last season's wild Colorado-West Virginia game remains firmly etched in Colorado running back [Rodney Stewart](#)'s memory.

Not only did he rush for a career-high 166 yards to spark the Buffaloes to a 17-14 upset victory in overtime, but he also learned the cardinal rule about celebrating on the field after a victory.

"I took my helmet off and laid it down on the grass for a few moments," Stewart said. "Then when I turned around, it was gone."

Stewart said he never found his helmet and never has faced any fallout from his school about the departure. But it still taught him about too much jubilation without accounting for all of his playing equipment.

"Yeah, I've always kept my helmet pretty close by after that," Stewart said with a chuckle.

The Buffaloes would love for Stewart to duplicate last season's big performance -- with or without his helmet after the game -- when they travel to meet the Mountaineers in the rematch Thursday night in Morgantown, W. Va. (ESPN, 7:30



AP Photo/David Zalubowski
Rodney Stewart rushed for a career-high 166 yards against the Mountaineers last season.

- [Brian Bennett](#)
- Brian Bennett joined ESPN.com in August 2008 after nine years at The Courier-Journal in Louisville, Ky., where he covered college sports and the University of Louisville beat. He lives in Louisville.
- [Heather Dinich](#)
- Heather Dinich covered ACC and Big Ten football for five seasons before joining ESPN.com in November 2007. She's an Indiana grad but somehow her favorite day of the week is Saturday.
- [Tim Griffin](#)
- Tim Griffin joined ESPN.com in February 2008. He has covered the Big 12 since its

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p.m. ET).

Their hopes of springing an upset will obviously depend on a big outing from their ground game, which has been riddled with injuries this season.

Stewart missed most of the first two games with a hamstring injury, accounting for only 38 yards in those two losses.

But he rebounded in a big way in his most recent game, rushing for 127 yards to spark the Buffaloes' 24-0 spanking of Wyoming.

The injury was a disappointing reminder for Stewart about how his 2008 season ended up. After producing a team-best 622 yards in only eight games, he sustained a broken leg late last season after a horse-collar tackle by Texas A&M linebacker Von Miller.

Stewart's early setback was similarly frustrating because of his hard work over the offseason in rehabilitation.

"It was really disappointing because I was going through the same thing as last year," Stewart said. "But it just made me work that much harder so I could get back into the lineup."

Despite playing at less than 100 percent, Stewart accounted for a career-best 32 carries in the triumph over the Cowboys. He was pressed into the additional service because [Darrell Scott](#) missed the game with a bruised knee.

"You definitely get into a rhythm when you get the ball a lot," Stewart said. "I just wanted to make the most of my chance to carry when it was there."

Stewart's contributions helped provide some juice for a moribund Colorado running attack that produced an average of 62 rushing yards per game in the first two games.

"Having a healthy 'Speedy' back there is really going to help your chances on offense," Colorado quarterback [Cody Hawkins](#) said. "He brings energy, fun, play-making ability, speed, explosion, swagger and confidence to the field. He's a great guy for our offense."

That win was huge for the Buffaloes after their early-season losses to Colorado State and Toledo. Stewart said he can sense an attitude change since the triumph.

"It turned things around a lot and let us know we had confidence as a team," Stewart said. "We just want to build on that for our next game."

The Buffaloes and Stewart will be challenged by a West Virginia rush defense that ranks 14th nationally and has yielded 100 rushing yards as a team only once this season.

"I think they are pretty similar to last year," Stewart said. "They don't really blitz as much as they did last year. I think they were probably a little more athletic last season, but we've still got to get ready to play."

And like last season, the game will be played before a national television audience on Thursday.

Stewart vows to be ready with his helmet accounted for at all times.

"I love Thursday night games," Stewart said. "I really wish we could play every game on that night."

[Big 12](#), [Rodney Stewart](#), [Von Miller](#), [Darrell Scott](#), [Colorado Buffaloes](#), [Cody Hawkins](#), [Texas A&M Aggies](#)

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inception, among a variety of beats during a 24-year career at the San Antonio Express-News. Griffin, a Memphis State University graduate, lives in San Antonio with his wife and son.

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- [Adam Rittenberg](#)
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- [Graham Watson](#)
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- [May 2009](#) (208)
- [April 2009](#) (239)
- [March 2009](#) (284)
- [February 2009](#) (228)
- [January 2009](#) (387)
- [December 2008](#) (485)
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Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Colorado's Hawkins has close ties

Quarterback's Idaho high school coach keeps tabs on him from West Mifflin

Wednesday, September 30, 2009

By Colin Dunlap, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette



Doug Pensinger/Getty Images

Quarterback Cody Hawkins has thrown for 753 yards and five touchdowns this season.

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. --

There's a coach in West Mifflin who knows the quarterback at Colorado very, very well from their time together in Idaho.

Confused?

West Mifflin High School coach Tim Brennan, in his third year at the school, was formerly the coach at Bishop Kelly High School in Boise before moving to the Pittsburgh area when his wife took a job there.

His star quarterback in Idaho was Cody Hawkins, who led Bishop Kelly to back-to-back unbeaten seasons and state championships in 2004 and '05, throwing for 73 touchdowns in that span.

Hawkins -- now a junior starter at Colorado (1-2), which plays at West Virginia (2-1) tomorrow night -- is the son of Dan Hawkins, the Colorado head coach who formerly was the ultra-successful coach who built Boise State into a winner.

Got all that?

One thing is for certain: Brennan knows what makes the younger Hawkins so good and what he does that could give the West Virginia defense fits.

"His leadership ability," Brennan said of the 5-foot-11, 190-pound Hawkins. "He has made kids, at all levels he's played, rally around him. Cody understands, and I have never really coached a kid who has done this like him, he understands that everyone needs to be motivated a little differently. Sometimes, there is a kid who you need to really get after and sometimes you need to approach another kid a little differently. He just knows how to do it."

Hawkins also knows how to win. Most everyone would agree that the truest barometer of a quarterback's success is wins and losses.

If that indeed is the case, Hawkins went through a stretch in his life where he could have called himself the most successful quarterback on the planet -- and he would have had a legitimate claim to such a statement.

From the time he was in Pop Warner football in sixth grade through Colorado's 2007 season opener, Hawkins was 60-0 in games he started at quarterback.

"Everyone probably really started to notice him in seventh and eighth grade," Brennan said. "Obviously, with his dad being at Boise State, they knew who Cody was, but as a player, it was in seventh and eighth grade that he really started to show people his abilities."

And as Hawkins grew, so, too, did those abilities.

He played freshman football and sophomore football at Bishop Kelly -- naturally engineering those teams to undefeated seasons -- before stepping in and leading the varsity team to a 24-0 combined record as a junior and senior.

West Virginia coach Bill Stewart, when asked about Hawkins yesterday, couldn't say enough about the kid who also had an offer from Oregon and more than likely would have gone to Boise State had his father remained the coach there.

In Colorado's pass-heavy, get-the-ball-out-quick system that Hawkins grew up studying diligently, he is 71 for 135 this season for 753 yards and five touchdowns.

"I hate to say the words 'gym rat' because this is not a round ball," Stewart said. "But he's the son of a coach and he's a film rat, he's a film guy."

"He grew up around football, he knows football. He's seen guys get chewed out, he's seen guys get loved. He knows where to place that football."

"You just look at all the great people he was around growing up ... this guy knows the game. He is a very, very good football player."

He might not be that big for a quarterback.

"Yes, you could say he gets a lot out of his talents," said Brennan, who will be in the stands at Mountaineer Field tomorrow night. "He's a great character kid, a hard worker and someone who, a lot of ways in life, makes the most of everything."

Stewart and the Mountaineers are hoping Hawkins doesn't make too much in the way of offensive advancement tomorrow.

Last season, in West Virginia's third game, Hawkins went 22 for 33 with a touchdown in Colorado's 17-14 overtime victory against the visiting Mountaineers. This time, Stewart will try to employ the same tactic and hope it works a little better: Simply, don't let Hawkins have the football in his hands.

"Last year, I tried to keep the ball on the ground to keep him off the field," Stewart said. "This year, I just hope our defense can contain him."

Colin Dunlap can be reached at cdunlap@post-gazette.com or 412-263-1459.

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Colorado Preview

By John Antonik for MSNsportsNET.com
September 29, 2009

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MORGANTOWN, W.Va. – Bill Stewart can't figure out which Colorado defense to expect on Thursday night at Milan Puskar Stadium.

Will it be the one that shut out Wyoming 24-0, holding the Cowboys to only 13 first downs and 230 yards of offense? Or, will it be the one that was torched by Toledo, giving up 54 points and 624 total yards in a 54-38 loss to the Rockets on Sept. 11?

"Defensively, they are a little bit younger than they were last year although their linebackers have the age in the group," said Stewart. "They played very, very hard against Wyoming and shut them out. We're very much concerned about the Buffalos and hopefully we can have a good game on Thursday night and help represent the Big East."

Youth and inexperience have been the two primary culprits for Colorado. The Buffalo defense has given up 1,230 yards and an average of 6.2 yards per play, but a whopping 61 percent of that offense has come on only 19 plays.

Blown coverages and missed assignments have accounted for 19 plays (12 pass and seven run) that have gone for 20 yards or longer. Against Wyoming, Colorado was much improved giving up just five plays of 10 yards or longer.

An area where Colorado (1-2) has not had any problems is scoring. The Buffalos have put up 38 and 24 points in their last two games behind the play of junior quarterback Cody Hawkins.

Hawkins is presently fourth in career passing at Colorado, trailing just Joe Klatt, Kordell Stewart and Koy Detmer with 5,338 career yards. Hawkins has completed 493 of 879 pass attempts with 41 touchdowns in 2 ½ years as a starter.

"This guy has winner written all over him," said Stewart. "They were misfiring a little bit – everybody knows that. They've had some breakdowns, who hasn't? Cody is a tremendous competitor. He understands exactly what his dad's offense is about. He was reared in that offense way back in the Boise State days and we've got to keep him from making plays."

In 2009, Hawkins has completed 71 of 135 passes for 753 yards and five touchdowns. He threw for 175 yards in Colorado's last game against Wyoming. Hawkins' longest completion this year was 41 yards to Andre Simmons.

The Buffalos have three receivers showing more than 13 receptions, with Scotty McKnight leading the way with 20 grabs for 227 yards and two touchdowns. Jason Espinosa and tight end Riar Greer both show 13 catches for averages of 10.5 and 9.2 yards per catch respectively.

Colorado has three exceptional running backs in Rodney Stewart, Darrell Scott and Demetrius Sumler. Stewart shows 165 yards and an average of 4.3 yards per carry. It was Stewart who burned West Virginia in last year's game in Boulder by running for 166 yards on 28 carries. It was one of only nine times in the last 54 games that the Mountaineer defense has allowed a 100-yard rusher.

Hawkins fired a pair of first-half touchdown passes and 22 of 33 for 179 yards in a game the Buffs won in overtime 17-14.

West Virginia's offense managed 311 yards rushing behind 148 yards and a pair of touchdowns by quarterback Pat White, but WVU had trouble converting short yardage plays and stumbled in overtime when kicker Pat McAfee missed a 23-yard chip



Linebacker [Reed Williams](#) had an interception during last year's game at Colorado.

All-Pro Photography/Dale Sparks photo

shot.

"I watched that thing (Monday morning) and I got sick," said Stewart. "I wished I wouldn't have done it. I saw it last year and I saw it this summer. I've been in a bad mood ever since."

This year, West Virginia (2-1) has revived its passing attack, throwing for 879 yards in its first three games so far against Liberty, East Carolina and Auburn.

"They definitely have juice at every spot," said Colorado coach Dan Hawkins. "All of their guys can run. Last year was a close game and we were fortunate to win that game and hopefully we can do the same thing this year."

Senior [Jarrett Brown](#) has thrown for 798 yards in three games – exceeding the three-game totals of Jeff Hostettler in 1983 and Marc Bulger in 1998. Brown has also completed 68.5 percent of his passes with five touchdowns.

"He is a little different than Pat and I think they are both very difficult in their own way, that's for sure," said Hawkins. "I think you have to run a little more with him throwing it down the field a little more. He can run for a big guy, too. You have to really tackle him – you can't arm tackle him. He'll run over you."

However, Brown has thrown five interceptions and has fumbled twice in three games. In its last two games, West Virginia has turned the football over 10 times, including six that led to a 41-30 loss at Auburn on Sept. 19.

In that game, the Mountaineers took a 30-27 lead into the fourth quarter before self destructing. West Virginia threw interceptions on four straight possessions, turning a manageable deficit into an unmanageable one.

[Noel Devine](#) ran for 128 yards and scored three touchdowns while [Jock Sanders](#) caught a career-high 12 passes for 115 yards.

Devine is now ninth on the WVU career rushing chart with 2,236 yards. He needs 221 yards to pass Robert Alexander for eighth place.

Linebacker [J.T. Thomas](#), who missed a good portion of last year's Colorado game with a concussion, leads the Mountaineer defense with 22 tackles and 4 ½ tackles for losses. Corner [Brandon Hogan](#) shows 20 stops and two tackles for losses. Defensive end [Julian Miller](#) has 2 ½ sacks and four tackles for losses.

The defense should be bolstered by the return of middle linebacker [Reed Williams](#), who missed the Auburn game with a sprained foot. Williams recorded an interception in last year's game against Colorado.

Stewart said Monday that defensive tackle [Scooter Berry](#) is still questionable with a shoulder injury suffered in the East Carolina win.

"His shoulder is coming along. I don't know how many snaps he will get but I can assure you big 16 (Brown) and 47 (Williams) will be in the lineup," Stewart said.

West Virginia has won 15 of its last 17 night games at Milan Puskar Stadium, including a 6-0 record at home during Thursday night ESPN games.

"It's one of those great places in college football that you want to go to," Hawkins said. "The fans are very passionate and they get after it there, and it will be a night game with a lot of excitement and they will be chomping at the big to get back on schedule."

Colorado, meanwhile, has struggled on the road under Hawkins. The Buffalos have lost seven in a row on the road dating back to 2007, have won only two road games in 3 ½ years and have an overall 2-14 road record since 2006.

Since 2007, the Buffalo defense has given up an average of 45 points per game on the road including 58 last year at Missouri and 54 earlier this year at Toledo.

"Colorado is a very dangerous team," said Stewart. "They didn't start off well but they kind of settled back to the basics, particularly on the defensive side of the ball."

Game time is 7:30 p.m. with Colorado graduate Chris Fowler handling the call for ESPN. Craig James, Jesse Palmer and Erin

Andrews are also on the broadcast.

Thursday's game is one of at least five games that will air on either ESPN or ESPN2. It was announced yesterday that the Syracuse game has been picked up for television – either ABC regional or the Big East Network – while West Virginia's game at Rutgers on Dec. 5 will be televised by ABC.



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