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Longmont, Colorado
Friday, August 27, 2010

Publish Date: 8/27/2010

The Buffaloes' nickel

By Brian Howell
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BOULDER — It didn't take long for Ashley Ambrose to be impressed with Parker Orms.

Ambrose, the defensive backs coach at the University of Colorado, was conducting a camp at CU a couple of years ago. Orms was still in high school but came to the camp one day.

"He caused two turnovers the first two plays," Ambrose said. "He was smaller, but I was saying, 'You know what? This guy's got it.'"

"I knew then he was going to be good."

Orms is still making plays. Now a redshirt freshman for the Buffs, he is slated to start as the nickel back in CU's secondary.



Parker Orms runs an interception back for a touchdown during the Colorado scrimmage on Aug. 12 at Folsom Field in Boulder. **Joshua Buck/Times-Call**

Considering the amount of passing CU's opponents do, Orms figures to be on the field a lot.

"I'm going to be out there the whole time," the 5-foot-11, 190-pounder said.

Orms was a star at Wheat Ridge High School. Niwot got a glimpse of that in 2008, when Orms ran for 139 yards and a touchdown against the Cougars.

While growing up in Wheat Ridge, Orms spent a lot of time in Boulder watching the Buffs.

"This is a big dream for me," he said. "My ultimate goal is to go to the NFL, but this is pretty close to the best thing that is going to happen to me. I just want to go out there and make it actually come true — play and win."

Orms redshirted a year ago, and it proved to be a valuable time for him. He said he learned quite a bit from the now-graduated Cha'pelle Brown, CU's nickel back in 2009. Orms carried that into a strong showing during spring ball, and he hasn't stopped.

"I just came out here in the fall and took it all in and played my best," he said.

As CU's nickel back, Orms will be asked to do a number of things, from lending support in pass coverage to coming up and stuffing the run. He'll even be asked to blitz the quarterback.

"I think it's a perfect position for me, because I like to roam around and make plays," he said.

Ambrose has been waiting for two years to get Orms on the field for the Buffs.

"He's a defensive back with a linebacker's mentality, and that's what we want at that position," Ambrose said. "I just

like what he's doing. He's picked it up; he's grasped the whole thing. He's just a natural football player."

Orms' emergence is bound to make this a strenuous fall for the family. His brother, Dylan, recently was named the starting quarterback at Northern Colorado.

Parker Orms' CU debut will come at noon Sept. 4 against Colorado State. His brother will make his first start for UNC about 95 minutes later.

"My mom is going to come to the first half of mine and then race down to Greeley and watch the second half of his," Parker Orms said.

There are four dates this year when CU and UNC both will play home games.

Regardless of the hectic schedule for the family, Orms can't wait to get started.

"I'm so excited for the first game," he said. "I've been waiting since I was a little kid, coming up here watching the games."

Brian Howell can be reached at bhowell@times-call.com. Read his Buffs blog at www.timescall.com/blogs/howell.

Bufs need to get offensive

Colorado last in Big 12 total offense in three of Hawk`s four seasons

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 08/26/2010 11:55:55 PM MDT

The Buffs stumbled out of the blocks, tripped over the first two hurdles and were a bloody mess by the time they reached the finish line with a 3-9 record in 2009.

Colorado trailed Colorado State 20-3 at halftime and lost the opener 23-17 on a Sunday at Folsom Field.

Five nights later, CU fell behind Toledo 23-3 at halftime and lost the nationally televised road opener 54-38.

Due to the slow starts, the Buffs ran the ball 44 times for 124 yards and passed the ball 104 times for 587 yards during an oh!-and-2 start.

"It's the key to any season. You have to establish that run and get it going," CU offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau said after Thursday's practice. "We will definitely emphasize that next week, obviously, against Colorado State. Then we'll worry about Game Two when that arises. Right now we've got to get going on Colorado State."

CU has finished last in the Big 12 in total offense the past two seasons. In 2008, the Buffs were 10th in rushing offense (124.5 yards per game) and in 2009 they were 11th in rushing (87.9), barely ahead of a Texas Tech team that ignored the ground game for the most part in Mike Leach's spread offense.

In three of Dan Hawkins' four seasons, CU has been dead last in the conference in total offense. In 2007, when the program made a bowl appearance and finished 6-7, the Buffs were 10th in total offense and eighth in rushing offense.

"We definitely want to run the ball. That's how you win football games is by pounding the rock and that's what we're going to do," CU senior center Keenan Stevens said. "It's night and day right now. We have so many guys who can play this year. That depth really helps run the football."

The Buffs' starting left tackle, Nate Solder (6-9, 315), is a potential first-round NFL pick. Right guard Ryan Miller (6-8, 310) is another talented and battle-tested member of the unit.

Starting right guard Ethan Adkins and backup Mike Iltis are both juniors who should be able to get the job done at a high level at this stage of their careers. Bryce Givens and David Bakhtiari have been engaged in one of the better fall camp competitions at right tackle.

And tight end Ryan Deehan, a preseason Mackey Award candidate, is essentially a sixth offensive lineman.

"Our offensive line has really gotten better. If people come out and take them lightly, I think they're going to be in trouble," starting running back Rodney Stewart said. "This year the holes are about five inches bigger on every play."

CSU, also coming off a 3-9 season, ranked fifth in the Mountain West Conference last season in rushing defense, yielding 152.1 yards per game.

That number was helped by the fact that the Buffs had 21 rushing attempts for 29 net yards in the opener.

"It's always important to run the ball in every game. If you do you can control the time of possession, what defenses do, play-action opens up, all that stuff," said CU quarterback Tyler Hansen, who did not see the field in 2009 until the fifth game at Texas. "If you can run the ball effectively, you can really control a game and do what you want to do."

The Buffs can talk about running the ball all they want, but until a more balanced attack is established and the team starts winning games it's just a bunch of hot air.

"You never know," Stewart said when asked if running the ball would be a key to avenging last year's loss to the Rams. "They might put a lot of people in the box and our passing game might open up. We're just going to see how it plays out."

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Woelk: CU-CSU series has grown in importance

By Neill Woelk Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 08/26/2010 11:54:18 PM MDT

If there is one enduring image Colorado fans must hope their beloved Buffs have had scorched into their memories, it is the scene at Folsom Field immediately following Colorado State's win in Boulder a year ago:

CSU fans storming the field and Rams players dancing on the Buffs' midfield logo.

Much like Colorado once forced itself upon Nebraska as a rival, Colorado State has done the same to the Buffs. Now, the level of importance to both schools is much more equal than it was 20 years ago.

For years, Colorado State was little more than a necessity on CU's schedule. CU won the first two games when the series was resumed in 1983 (after a 25-year hiatus), then won eight in a row after an upset victory by the Rams in Boulder in 1986.

Truth is, the Buffs had bigger fish to fry in that era. While Bill McCartney never ignored Colorado State, it was quite clear that Mac's laser was centered more closely on the likes of Nebraska and Oklahoma. Mac was intent upon making Colorado a national power, and the CSU game wasn't exactly a major credibility boost in that regard.

Rather, it was a no-win situation for the Buffs. A win wasn't a surprise, but a loss made headlines. And, unlike the rivalry McCartney was busy pursuing with Nebraska, the CSU game wasn't a league contest. It mattered nary a whit in the pursuit of a Big Eight championship. Thus, the CSU game was more business as usual than a rivalry for McCartney, and he went about it without much fanfare. When he stepped away from the game, he had won six of seven from CSU, including the last four.

Maybe the CU coach who took the series more seriously than any other was Rick Neuheisel, who assumed control just when CSU was enjoying a resurgence under Sonny Lubick.

Neuheisel made sure CSU didn't make any strides in closing the gap. He knew that Colorado State was improving, and he recognized the importance of keeping the rivalry one-sided.

Example? One of Lubick's best teams was the 1997 squad that won the WAC title and finished 11-2 (the most wins in any season in CSU history). That coincided with Neuheisel's only losing season at CU. But the Buffs still handily won the matchup that year, 31-21, helping Neuheisel finish with a 4-0 record against Lubick and the Rams -- a statistics that still gnaws at Lubick perhaps more than any other in his storied career.

But the series began to even out in a hurry in 1999, when CSU thrashed the Buffs at Mile High Stadium, 41-14, in Gary Barnett's debut as Colorado's head coach. That turned the tide, and since then, it's been a competitive series.

Barnett ended up with a 4-3 record against Colorado State, and current head coach Dan Hawkins is 2-2 vs. the friendly folks from Fort Fun.

Thus, Colorado State has now won five of the last 11 -- a statistic that becomes even more significant when you consider that CSU has won only 20 times in the 81-game series.

Clearly, the game has Colorado's full attention, and rightfully so.

"We haven't forgotten," said Buff cornerback Jimmy Smith recently. "We know how important it is to start strong. We know what happened last year. We know what has to be done."

Even CU's coaching staff has made sure the Buffs are properly aware of the importance of the game.

According to a story on the school's official Web site, a sign with the 2009 score was a permanent fixture in CU's practice

bubble during winter conditioning. Strength coach Jeff Pitman even went as far as to use "green" to begin or end a drill -- and if players didn't respond correctly, punishment awaited.

"It's all about added motivation and focusing on CSU," Buff receiver Scotty McKnight said at the time. "They took it to us on the field."

No doubt, the series has changed. What was once a big game for the smaller school is now a very important game for both schools involved.

Guaranteed, both sides will be taking it very seriously on Sept. 4.

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colorado

CU Buffs don't want to pay the penalty for penalties

By John Henderson
The Denver Post

Posted: 08/27/2010 01:00:00 AM MDT



A referee kept a close watch on the game between Colorado and Nebraska at Folsom Field last November. (Kathryn Scott Osler, The Denver Post)

BOULDER — Disgruntled Colorado fans can look at last year's 3-9 campaign and point to a lot of tangibles: lack of speed, lack of talent, lack of health, lack of depth. Yet underlying it all is a tangible that's within their control and has

nothing to do with the other-colored jerseys across from them.

A lack of discipline.

Colorado finished last in the Big 12 and 116th of the 120 major-college teams in the country in penalty yards per game with 75.58. Only Arizona State (9.25) and Texas Tech (9.23) had more penalties per game than Colorado (8.92).

It should be noted that of the bottom 10 teams in penalties, only Southern Mississippi (7-6), Texas Tech (9-4) and Oklahoma (8-5) had winning records.

"That killed us last year," senior captain Scotty McKnight said after Thursday's practice.

Offense was the biggest culprit. The defense committed 26 penalties — including two pass interference calls — and special teams had a surprising 10.

But the type of penalties the offense committed drives coaches and quarterbacks into conversational profanity. Of Colorado's 107 penalties — in its 1990 national championship season, it committed 63 — 32 were false starts. That included three in a row against Texas, a 38-14 debacle that in no small part was because of 20 penalties for 140 yards.

"It has to do with experience, a lack of confidence and a lack of assertiveness," coach Dan Hawkins said.

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It also had to do with a lack of cohesiveness. Because of injuries and consistency, left tackle Nate Solder was the only offensive lineman who started every game at the same spot. The line had eight different starters.

The staff also changed the quarterback's signals that offseason. The carryover should help this year.

"A lot of it was inexperience and nerves," McKnight said. "Guys are young. A lot of those guys hadn't had a lot of starts under their belts. When you have a guy coming at

and he's jumping and it's loud, guys were getting itchy to get out, especially on pass plays."

Some penalties will forever haunt. There were the holding penalties that nullified Darrell Scott's 27-yard run and Anthony Wright's 56-yard reception against Toledo. There was the offside on third-and-2 at the Colorado 12 that produced a first down and a Kansas State TD in a 20-6 loss. There were the eight false starts against Texas.

However, the deadliest yellow trail came at Iowa State.

It's first-and-goal at the Iowa State 9. Colorado trails, 17-3, in the third quarter. Freshman tackle Bryce Givens is called for a 15-yard personal foul. Givens, um, disagrees. Tweet! Fifteen yards for unsportsmanlike conduct.

"He said the magic word," McKnight said, "a couple times."

Suddenly, it's first-and-goal from the 39, resulting in a missed field goal.

"Bryce is an intense player," McKnight said. "I love that guy. I love playing with him. It's almost like old-school football. Sometimes when you play a game as emotional as football, emotion gets the best of you. He was young. That mistake won't happen again with him."

If it happens to anyone, they're running — even in practice. Hawkins put his foot down. He has

Colorado Football

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either football operation guys or paid referees throwing flags every practice.

Only four are allowed — offense, defense and special teams — all day. Any more, and players run 100-yard gassers. On one two-a-day, they ran seven. Sprint 700 yards after a practice in August and see if you'll wait for the ball to get hiked next time.

"It's not, 'Oh, you can't do that next time' or 'That can't happen again,' " offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau said. "We had to do something. We've been a lot better in camp."

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fan mail

Tyler Hansen: Believing big part of the game for Buffs

By The Denver Post

Posted: 08/27/2010 01:00:00 AM MDT

Ever wanted to ask sports personality a question? Now's your chance. They will answer readers' questions in The Denver Post's "Fan Mail" feature.

In this installment, University of Colorado junior quarterback Tyler Hansen tackles readers' questions about the CU's rivalry game against Colorado State, what it's like throwing to so many receivers and handling the pressure that comes with playing for coach Dan Hawkins.

Keep an eye out for next week's installment, when former Broncos star tight end Shannon Sharpe fields fan's questions. Send your Qs in an email to fanmail@denverpost.com.

Tyler, congrats! All the Buff alums are so happy you are our starting QB. I grew up in Fort Collins but my heart belongs to CU and Boulder. Why do the Rams come out onto the

field when they play us with more intensity? And the Buffs, like last year, start like it's an easy win? We should be stomping on them. Good luck and stay intense!

--Abby, Fort Collins

Tyler Hansen: Abby, I totally agree with you about last year's CSU game at Folsom Field. Colorado State came out with more intensity and passion and we got hit in the mouth from the start and did not react.

I do believe that rivalries are always close. And they're difficult games to win - especially the CU-CSU game because there's so much that rides on the game. And with it being the first game of the year, it makes it that much harder.

As a leader on this team I can assure you that we will come out and play our game and will have that passion and intensity that we lacked in years prior. We have nothing but respect for CSU and look forward to the game at Invesco Field.

Tyler, what single part of your game do you feel has improved the most from last November to this August?

--Steve, Fort Collins

Hansen: Steve, I feel I have taken a much

different approach to my game this season.

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Colorado quarterback Tyler Hansen escapes a group of Kansas State defenders in Manhattan, Kan., last season. (AP | Charlie Riedel)

The biggest change is that I've made huge strides in the mental part of the game. So much emphasis is put on the physical part of football, but the mental part of the game is the most important.

I now know protections, know the offense entirely, and have a solid knowledge of defenses. With this new knowledge of the sport, I can just go out and play.

Admit it, who is the best athlete in your family? Best means athlete's accomplishments, championships, etc.
--Pam, Murrieta, Calif.

Hansen: Haha. My mother wants me to answer this question the "right" way by stating that she is the best athlete in the family. But I'm the only one still competing. So who

Sports Fan Mail

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knows what will happen in the next two years. A championship maybe?

Congratulations on working so hard and being one of a long line of athletic QBs at CU. I am confident you are our best chance to succeed at the position. There has been a lot of criticism for the head coach. He seems to stay positive even in the face of his lack of success. What other qualities does Coach Hawkins have that you feel will serve him for the team to turn it around this year? And how does he get you "psyched" for the opener at CSU?

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--Terry, Mancos

Hansen: Terry, Coach Hawkins is a great man and a great coach. He has won everywhere he has been and I truly believe that he and our incredible staff will turn this thing around and will finally get some wins on Saturdays.

I was once told that a coach is only as good as his talent. And in years prior to this year, CU had a young and inexperienced team. We finally have the experience and the talent to do something special this year.

Also, going 3-9 last year provides much of the motivation we need for not only CSU but all the games on our schedule.

We keep reading locally that CU will be an improved team. But all of the national sports writers are predicting another non-bowl season. Why do you think there is such a disparity in analysis of your team and what can change the perception of what you are trying to accomplish?

--Mark, Englewood

Hansen: Mark, I do believe we can - and

will - do something special this year and surprise the world. I think everyone who has seen our team recently in fall camp and in the spring truly sees something different.



Buff's fans mob Tyler Hansen after CU defeated Kansas 34-30 at Folsom Field last season. (Andy Cross, The Denver Post)

The national sports writers and other national media outlets look at our performance from last year and base their opinion off our 3-9 record. But they do that with most teams in our situation. We can easily change this perception by winning.

You have had to give up what was to be a redshirt season two years in a row, but I've never read any of your thoughts on that. What were you feeling?

--Brian, San Diego

Hansen: To gain the experience was a blessing. There are no guarantees that you will ever play a full season, and you never know what will happen tomorrow.

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like I lost my redshirt either year in the 10th game of the season. Most quarterbacks don't start until their junior season anyway, so I am grateful for the opportunities I've had and am looking forward to the season because of the experience I was able to gain.

How is my truck?

--Frederick, Murrieta, Calif.

Hansen: Your truck is great, father. Haha!

Tyler, it sounds like you've become a team leader this summer after putting together 7-on-7 drills and separating yourself in practice. How do you plan to translate this leadership to the field on gameday? What do you need to do as a leader to get your team to the next level and finish games with a victory?

--Chris, Denver

Hansen: Chris, I believe we have everything in place to perform and get some wins on Saturdays. Now we have to just go out there and do it. As a leader on this team, I am stressing to everyone to do their own job and do it well. If we can control what we can control, we will be fine and everyone will be happy and proud to be a Buff.

Tyler, so many people today expect instant gratification. If they don't get their way, they leave for what they perceive to be greener pastures. Please let us know what you did to stay motivated and keep yourself working

hard to eventually be named the 2010 CU starting QB.

--Steve Gruenler, Parker

Hansen: Steve, I believe great things come to those who wait and earn them. I knew I chose the right place when I was a senior in high school in 2008 and I know great things await the University of Colorado in the near future.

My dream growing up was to be the starting quarterback at a big university and I know most people don't get an opportunity to start until their junior year, so I stayed patient and kept working toward my goal and it all worked out. Now I'm working toward my next goal - getting a win on September 4th.

Will we see the Buffs running the option on occasion this year? It seems to be making a comeback, and the Buffs seem to have the personnel for it. I suppose it's a difficult scheme to implement and run on only a limited basis. Lots of us long-time fans would love to see it again.

--Geoff, Dallas

Hansen: Geoff, I do know the option attack was a big part of the history of CU football and believe me, I love listening to Coach (Darian) Hagan tell me stories. If done right, the option can be very difficult to defend.

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But I have to say it would be fun to learn the option from Hagan.

I just booked my flight from Fort Lauderdale to San Francisco to watch you guys in your first road game at Cal. What do you have to do differently to turn things around and start winning on the road this season?

--Mike, Coconut Creek, Fla.

Hansen: Mike, I too am very excited to travel to my home state of California and play the Bears. But to get a road win, we have to make plays early and believe in ourselves.

I thought last year against Oklahoma State we were close to changing our road attitude. But this year we know the importance of winning on the road and are determined to get some victories.

Tyler, a talented and experienced offensive line anchored by Nate Solder and Ryan Miller will obviously have a major impact on the team's ability to run the ball. But how big of an effect on the running game do you expect from having a cadre of wide receivers who are able to stretch the field?

--Dave, Highlands Ranch

Hansen: Dave, great question! I believe with our offense - as on any offense - you are only as good as your offensive line. And we have some studs. Nate Solder, Ryan Miller and Keenan Stevens will all be great parts of an excellent offensive line.

Also, with all the speed we now have at wide receiver, it will only help all aspects of our offense.

Tyler, what's your favorite place to eat in Boulder?

--Luis, Denver

Hansen: Luis, my favorite place to eat in Boulder has to be Pasta Jay's. The Village Coffee Shop is a close second. I love 'em both!

Of last year's top-five wide receivers - McKnight, Simas, Geer, Sumler, Devenny - only McKnight remains. But the new CU roster shows a windfall of 14 wide receivers. What can you say about the wealth of receiver talent and how will this affect your performance as quarterback?

--Al, Colorado

Hansen: Al, we are so blessed to have all these great wide receivers that we have. Travon Patterson, Scotty McKnight, Toney Clemons, Paul Richardson, Will Jefferson, Kyle Cefalo, and many others all provide a lot of different assets that will be vital for our offense to be effective.


With the talent we now have at the receiver position - and again, if everyone does their job well - I really feel that most any secondary in the country, besides our own, will find it difficult to take away our passing game.

As the QB, I'm so excited to get to throw to these

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great athletes. I can throw a 5-yard hitch and they'll go 60 yards with it.

Tyler Hansen was named Colorado's starting quarterback on Aug. 21. Last season as a sophomore, Hansen threw for 1,440 yards and eight touchdowns, while starting the final seven games. Before being recruited to Colorado, he was a standout at Chaparral High in Temecula, Calif. He is a communications major at CU.

Hansen's father, Rick, was a quarterback at San Diego State from 1978-83, before being signed by the Chicago Bears. His mother, Pamela, was an All-American sprinter and hurdler at San Diego State.

Colorado opens its season on Sept. 4 against Colorado State, in the Rocky Mountain Showdown game at Invesco Field in Denver.

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AUGUST 27, 2010, 7:01 AM

CU preview: Denver East grad wins punting battle

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

In the ninth part of a series of look-aheads at Colorado's 2010 season, broken down by units, we look at the Buffs' punting game...

CU PUNTING

Newcomers: [Denver East](#) ^[1] HS has not sent many players to Colorado in recent years but [Zach Grossnickle](#) ^[2] (6-2, 190) has earned the starting job as a punter as a redshirt freshman. Grossnickle, who is on scholarship, has a strong right leg, having earned second-team all-state honors in soccer. He began showing more consistency during spring ball. True freshman [Dillan Freiberg](#) ^[3], a walk-on from Newport Harbor HS in Newport Beach, Calif., is listed as the top backup on the depth chart.

Biggest losses: [Matt Dillalo](#) ^[4] was the team's regular punter for most of the past four seasons. But the affable Floridian seemed to peak as a freshman, when he earned unanimous national all-freshman team honors. His average of 37.8 yards in 2009 ranked 11th among [Big 12](#) ^[5] Conference punters.

Strengths: Grossnickle has a big leg. And he is athletic, which can be an asset if he has to avoid a tackle or make one.

Weaknesses: Grossnickle has no experience at this level and there's no way of knowing how he will handle the pressure when the bright lights come on.

What to look for: CU coaches have high hopes that Grossnickle can develop into a top-flight punter. If the pressure gets to him, and Freiberg struggles, the Buffs could turn to senior place-kicker [Aric Goodman](#) ^[6], who also can punt. Rest assured that CU special teams coach [Kent Riddle](#) ^[7] will be holding his breath during Grossnickle's first few punts on Sept. 4 in the season opener against Colorado State. It can be frightening to send out a punter with no experience. cq

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Thursday, August 26, 2010

Mailbag: Colorado edition

By David Ubben
ESPN.com

We'll finish off with Baylor next week, but here are the rest of the team-themed mailbags.

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Andrew White in Boulder, Colo., asks: Hi David, cautiously optimistic for the Buffs in 2010. We've actually got the most experience and talent in this squad since the Barnett days, but do we have the coaching? (rhetorical) My question to you regards the recent news that CU is planning to stay in the Big 12 thru 2012. I think AD Mike Bohn is calling Beebe's bluff here. The Big 12 does not want CU sticking around for two seasons and having to navigate an 11 team slate in '12. My guess is you'll see the Buffs leave after '11, but having to pay much less of a buyout than previously stated. Thoughts? Thanks and Go Buffs!

DU: Bohn can call all the bluffs he want. I don't see the Big 12 lowering the withdrawal fees for any of the teams leaving. That sets a dangerous precedent. Dan Beebe already has a reputation (an untrue one, I might add) of being a pushover, and this would add some pretty legitimate evidence to support that. He doesn't need that. But this is about more than the reputation of a commissioner. The Big 12 can't be letting teams off easy because they don't want to/can't pay the full price to go when they want, when all it takes is one awkward year and some obnoxious rescheduling. The Buffs may end up staying until 2012, but I'd be very surprised if their withdrawal fees are lowered so that date moves to 2011. All indications so far from the conference suggest they'll do nothing to change that.

Eric of Green Mountain, Colo., asks: David - Colorado has not won a true road game since October of 2007 (over two seasons ago). Which game this year (if any) will the Buffs break the away-game losing streak?

DU: Wow, I didn't realize that. That would explain why winning seasons have been so elusive lately. The obvious choice this year is at Kansas on Nov. 6, for a game that may decide how the bottom few teams in the Big 12 shake out.

Dave in Missoula, Mont., asks: I know its popular to undervalue and underrate Colorado these days, but have you noticed that they have quietly put together the best WR corps in the conference? Add to that the best CB tandem, and the Buffs should surprise this season, that is, if they can overcome their coaching.

DU: Somebody in my chat yesterday referred to the Buffaloes' receivers as the best in the conference, too. Easy, folks. Eaaaasy. Are Paul Richardson, Travon Patterson and [Toney Clemons](#) better than the guys Colorado had last year? Sure ... we think so. But do we know? Absolutely not. Those guys have a lot of potential, but most of that potential stems from a) playing at USC or Michigan and b) recruiting stars. A lot of guys transfer and revitalize their careers. It happens a lot. But if these guys were major impact guys immediately, they wouldn't have transferred. Patterson had 10 catches in four years at USC. Richardson has still never played a down of college football and got kicked off his last team. Clemons had 12 catches in two years at Michigan. These guys could be good, and they're definitely underrated across the conference and nation, but they're not the best in the Big 12. If you want to see the conference's best receivers, watch a Texas A&M or Texas Tech game sometime.

Dave in Denver, Colo., asks: Hey David, love the blog. If the former UCLA chancellor is successful in blocking Colorado and Utah from the Pac-10, do you think the Big 12 would take them back? And if so, would they continue on with 11 teams or try to round out with another. If so, who do you see them offering to? Thanks.

DU: First off, the guy you're referencing, Chuck Young, is not going to be successful. This wasn't a hastily made decision. If the Pac-10's *current* chancellors legitimately try to block those teams' entrances, it would be a PR disaster for the conference. It's not going to happen. But the Big 12 wouldn't let them come back if it did. They'd have a better chance if there was a home-run 12th team hanging around, waiting for an invite. There isn't, and everyone in the conference sounds like they love the idea of a round-robin schedule in football and double round-robin in basketball.

As for future members, it looks like BYU is off the table now. Air Force might not be competitive enough. TCU and Houston make tons of competitive sense, but not enough fiscal sense. Get used to a 10-team Big 12.

Andy Baker in Grand Junction asks: Hey David, Do you think the fact that the coaches are not trying to establish an 'offensive identity' is a positive in looking at this season? Also, do you think the defensive backfield has a chance to be the best in the nation this year?

DU: You can make a case for either side. Last year, they tried to come into the season with that so-called "smashmouth" mentality, and they clearly didn't have the personnel to make it a reality. Colorado can do whatever it wants on offense. None of it will look good unless the offensive line gets better. If it gives up 43 sacks again and can't top 90 yards a game in rushing offense, the Buffaloes can forget about a bowl. Improve up front, and then they can start talking about a winning season.

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