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Schedule analysis: Colorado

By Ted Miller ESPN.com

We'll be reviewing each Pac-12 team's schedule, and now we move on to the South Division.

Up next: Colorado

Breakdown: five home (four conference games), seven road (five conference games), one neutral field

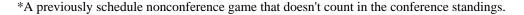
Nonconference opponents (with 2010 records)

Sept. 3 at Hawaii (10-4)

Sept. 10 California (5-7)*

Sept. 17 Colorado State (3-9)

Sept. 24 at Ohio State (12-1)



South Division games

Oct. 29 at Arizona State

Nov. 4 USC

Nov. 12 Arizona

Nov. 19 at UCLA

Nov. 25 at Utah

Crossover games

Oct. 1 Washington State

Oct. 8 at Stanford

Oct. 15 at Washington

Oct. 22 Oregon

Conference misses

*California

Oregon State

Key stretch: It's not how you start; it's how you finish. The Buffaloes don't play a South Division game until Oct. 29, and then they play all five divisional foes over the final five weeks of the season -- three of which are on the road. While it would be nice for the Jon Embree Era to get off to a fast start, it would be more meaningful for the Buffs to head into the offseason - bowl season? -- feeling good about the way they finished.

Trap game: Colorado's Pac-12 opener is at home against Washington State. I'm sure Buffaloes players and fans are well-aware of the Cougars' struggles of late. On this brutal schedule, it would be easy to pencil in this one as a victory. That might be a mistake: The Cougs figure to be much improved.

Sure thing: There are no sure things here. You could volunteer Colorado State for that role -- the Rams were pretty darn terrible in 2010 -- but that's a rivalry game in which the Buffaloes have an uneven history.

Analysis: This is one of the toughest schedules in the nation. There are likely five foes that will be ranked in the preseason Top 25. Maybe more. Thirteen consecutive games without a bye (which means no off-week providing extra time for a sprained ankle or "stinger" to heal). Just five home games. A visit to Ohio State, which is still Ohio State despite the offseason turmoil. A Hawaii team that won 10 games in 2010 and features one of the best quarterbacks in the nation (Bryant



Moniz). A "10th" Pac-12 game against California, which doesn't count in the conference standings. The lone conference miss is Oregon State, which probably wouldn't be the Buffs' first choice. Finally, with a 13-game schedule, the Buffs have to win seven to qualify for a bowl game. That, suffice it to say, won't be easy. Colorado could be much better in 2011 than it was in 2010 but not produce a record that reflects that.