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What went wrong for Buffs in 2010?

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LINCOLN, Neb. — Before the 2010 season began, the University of Colorado football team felt it was good enough to produce a winning season.

The Buffs weren't alone. CU administrators felt the Buffs were good enough, too. So did many fans and boosters. Even members of the media were predicting seven or eight wins.

Yet, after Friday's 45-17 loss at Nebraska, CU finished with a 5-7 record, one win short of a bowl game. It's the fourth time in five years that CU has failed to reach a bowl game, and the fifth straight year it has finished with a losing record. In fact, CU has had as many non-bowl seasons (four) in the past five years as it did in 21 years from 1985-2005.

"I really thought we should have had a lot better record going into this (Nebraska) game, but obviously we didn't," CU interim coach Brian Cabral said. "We're a better team than that."

That may be true, but the Buffs didn't prove it. So, what went wrong? There was plenty:

Road woes: CU came into the season with 13 straight losses outside of the state. When the Buffs embarked on their first trip of 2010, they insisted they were a different, more mature team and that they were better equipped to handle the road. Then they went to Cal and lost 52-7.

CU never got any better on the road, finishing 0-5. Four of those games weren't even close: 52-7 at Cal, 26-0 at Missouri, 43-10 at Oklahoma and 45-17 at Nebraska. The fifth game was at Kansas, when the Buffs saw a 45-17 fourth-quarter lead turn into a 52-45 loss.

Injuries: Every team goes through them, but the Buffs had some particularly difficult injuries.

On offense, quarterback Tyler Hansen (ruptured spleen), backup running back Brian Lockridge (ankle) and receiver Travon Patterson (ankle) all suffered season-ending injuries. The loss of freshman running back Justin Torres, who quit the team four weeks into the year, didn't help either.

Defensively, the Buffs saw their secondary devastated by injuries to Anthony Perkins (knee), Parker Orms (knee), Travis Sandersfeld (leg), Paul Vigo (leg) and Vince Ewing (knee). Linebacker Jon Major (knee) also suffered a season-ending injury.

Not-so-special teams: This was a major area of concern before this year, and it continued to be this fall.

Kicker Aric Goodman finished strong, making nine of his last 11 field goal attempts, but he started 1-for-4, and had a bad miss late in a 27-24 loss to Texas Tech.

Whenever Zach Grossnickle came on to punt, it was an adventure. He had a few nice punts, but was terribly inconsistent. In the return game, the Buffs had some good moments, but all too often let the opponent start with great field position.

Lack of firepower: From the start of camp, the Buffs talked about the immense amount of talent on offense. Despite that, the Buffs scored just 24.2 points per game and gained just 359.7 yards per game, ranking near the bottom of the Big 12 in both categories.

Pass unhappy: CU boasted one of the best sets of cornerbacks in the Big 12, with Jimmy Smith and Jalil Brown. Still, the Buffs were one of the worst teams in the country against the pass, giving up 259.8 yards per game. Even Nebraska, which was primarily a run team, burned the Buffs with the pass. The Huskers, who threw 10 touchdown passes in their first 11 games, had four TD passes against CU.

For CU, many of these issues are all too common. They are issues that have plagued them for several years, not just in 2010.

Because those issues continued, the Buffs failed to live up to expectations in 2010, head coach Dan Hawkins was fired after nine games and the bowl season will go on without Colorado once again.

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