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## Buffs defense up to task

*By Brian Howell*  
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BOULDER — So far, there have been few complaints about the way the University of Colorado football team has played defense.

Yet, as the Buffs (2-1) get ready to host Georgia (1-3) on Saturday at Folsom Field, they are far from satisfied.

“We can be a lot better,” linebacker Michael Sipili said.

The Buffs face perhaps their toughest challenge of the season on Saturday.

“Oh yeah,” cornerback Jimmy Smith said. “They’ve got some running backs, they’ve got a tight end that’s a freak of nature. They’re going to make some plays.”

CU’s task is to prevent Georgia from making too many plays.

Georgia has exceptional talent, but the Bulldogs are also riding a three-game losing streak in which they’ve scored just 14 points per game.

Despite Georgia’s struggles, CU feels it has to be at its best.

“I think there’s just so many weapons across the board that it’s hard to focus on just one of them,” linebacker B.J. Beatty said. “We’re going to have to play a complete game.”

That starts with stopping the run. CU gave up just 7 yards on 13 carries against Hawaii on Sept. 18. CSU gained just 49 yards on 25 rushing attempts on Sept. 4. Those numbers are a little skewed when you consider that Hawaii ranks 119th in the country in rushing offense and CSU is dead-last at 120th.

Cal, which ranks 34th, gained 159 yards — 31 below its average — on 36 attempts on Sept. 11.

The 71.2 yards per game the Buffs are allowing on the ground ranks seventh in the country.

“Our No. 1 goal as a defense is always to stop the run first,” CU defensive tackle Will Pericak said. “From then, it’s keeping them from passing it more.”

Georgia figures to present the Buffs with a much tougher challenge than Hawaii did two weeks ago. The Bulldogs average 124.3 yards per game on the ground.

Washaun Ealey has rushed for 198 yards in three games (he missed the opener), and Carlton Thomas has 114 yards. Caleb King (70 yards) has 19 carries in his two games.



Colorado’s Rodney Stewart splits Hawaii defenders at Folsom Field in Boulder on Sept. 18. After a bye week, the Buffs will face Georgia at home on Saturday. **Joshua Buck/Times-Call**

“They have a big offensive line,” Pericak said. “The key is just to do your job, do your assignment and be gap sound.

“Georgia is a whole different team (compared to Hawaii), in my opinion. They’re focused more on running. It’s going to be a battle in there.”

Georgia quarterback Aaron Murray is a redshirt freshman with just four games under his belt, and that makes stopping the run even more essential.

“We’re going to force him to throw the ball,” Sipili said.

Still, Murray is a weapon in his own right. He’s thrown for 879 yards, but he’s also gained 68 yards — and two touchdowns — on the ground.

“He really hasn’t made that many rookie mistakes,” nickel back Pat Mahnke said. “Hopefully his inexperience comes out.”

No matter what the Bulldogs bring to the table, the Buffs insist they will be ready. So far this season, their defense has been up to every challenge. This shouldn’t be any different.

“Oh yeah, we’re up to the task,” Pericak said. “It’s going to be a challenge no matter what. They’re a good team.”

**EXTRA POINTS:** CU’s opponents have converted just 20.5 percent of third- or fourth-down conversions (8-of-39). CU’s defense is No. 1 in the country in that department. ... The CU offense has scored on six of seven trips inside the red zone (five touchdowns, one field goal). ... CU running back Rodney Stewart is on pace for 1,012 yards. His career high is 804 (in 2009).

Brian Howell can be reached at [bhowell@times-call.com](mailto:bhowell@times-call.com). Read his Buffs blog at [www.timescall.com/blogs/howell](http://www.timescall.com/blogs/howell).

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cu football

## Bieniemy's tirade the turning point in CU Buffs' 1990 national title run

By Natalie Meisler  
*The Denver Post*

Posted: 10/01/2010 01:00:00 AM MDT



Quarterback Darian Hagan, now the Buffs' running backs coach, revels in a 27-12 1990 victory at Nebraska in which CU rallied from 12-0 down. (Karl Gehring, The Denver Post)

A ruckus erupted on the sideline. Texas had

driven inside the Buffaloes' 20-yard line looking to add to its 19-14 lead as the third quarter was expiring.

And Colorado's 1990 team was looking at a 1-2-1 start in the blistering heat of Austin unless it turned things around.

On the sideline, CU's firebrand 5-foot-8 tailback, Eric Bieniemy, couldn't hold his frustration any longer. Two decades later, his tantrum is still remembered as a turning point in Colorado's 1990 national championship season.

As the quarter ended, CU's offense huddled with the defense, which was changing sides of the field.

"I don't know if it was a rant. It was one of those opportunities getting everybody to understand the moment in time we were in," Bieniemy recalled in a phone conversation. "I basically wanted to call the team up and say: 'Hey, defense, we have your back. Go out and make this stop and offensively we'll get it done.'"

Coach Bill McCartney remembers the incident too.

"I'm on the 20, and I can't help but turn, and I notice the 11 offensive starters in a huddle," he said.

Whatever Bieniemy said, it must have worked. The defense went from what McCartney called "emotionally bankrupt" to digging in and holding the Longhorns to a field goal, making it 22-14.

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CU roared back to win 29-22, with Bieniemy scoring two touchdowns and Alfred Williams recording a huge sack to start a 10-game winning streak to the national championship.

"E.B. was at a different level. He was motivating once he got out there with us," strong safety Tim James said. "That was the point. We looked at each other and said, 'Let's get out of here with a win.' "

It's just one of the many stories that will be retold as the 1990 team celebrates its 20-year reunion this weekend in conjunction with Saturday's game against Georgia. In another twist of fate, Bieniemy, now the Minnesota Vikings' running backs coach, has a bye this weekend.

"That was

a Bieniemy moment; it certainly was the turning point," said former wingback Mike Pritchard, the team MVP and its highest draft pick. "We had Bieniemy moments, but we also had Darian Hagan moments and Alfred Williams moments. I think at one point everybody stood up."



Eric Bieniemy was CU's all-time most emotional player, coach Bill McCartney said. (American-Statesman file photo)

Even with a big ensemble of playmakers and leaders, "E.B. was the understood leader," said then-quarterback Charles Johnson. "We wouldn't have won the national championship if not for E. B. . . . There was a little Napoleon in him."

The 1989-90 seasons featured a cast of characters with larger-than-life personalities, foremost among them McCartney, a charismatic motivator who cajoled the Buffs to a championship run against a brutal schedule. He found talent in some of the toughest neighborhoods in the country, from Houston to Detroit to Los Angeles, and molded it into a

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tight-knit unit.

"If you look at guys like us, we were high risk," said Johnson, who grew up in Detroit. "There was a survival mentality to the team. . . . We used to fight in practice at least once a week."

McCartney wasn't without his own quirks, manufacturing a rivalry with Nebraska years before it became one. He banished the color red from facilities. A defensive coordinator by trade, he constantly tweaked his offensive schemes.

From the championship team, nine players were drafted into the NFL the following year and another nine over the following two years. Four assistant coaches

went on to run their own programs.

## Bufs' run to No. 1

*A look at Colorado's 11-1-1 season en route to the 1990 national championship:*

Date	Opponent	Score
Aug. 26	No. 8 Tennessee	31-31
Sept. 6	Stanford	21-17
Sept. 15	at No. 21 Illinois	22-23
Sept. 22	at No. 22 Texas	29-22
Sept. 29	No. 12 Washington	20-14
Oct. 6	at Missouri	33-31
Oct. 13	Iowa State	28-12
Oct. 20	At Kansas	41-10
Oct. 27	No. 22 Oklahoma	32-23
Nov. 3	at No. 3 Nebraska	27-12
Nov. 10	Okla. State	41-22
Nov. 17	Kansas State	64-3
Jan. 1	No. 5 Notre Dame	10-9

(Click image to enlarge)

CU's 1989 season was all about overcoming adversity off the field when quarterback Sal Aunese died of cancer. The Buffs went 11-0 in the regular season, and only the Nebraska and Oklahoma games were close. In 1990, many games went down to the wire, including the 10-9 Orange Bowl victory over Notre Dame.

"Without the 1989 season, it wouldn't have inspired the 1990 season," Bieniemy said.

That season began with a tie against Tennessee in Anaheim, Calif., in the opener, then a one-point loss at Illinois in the third game.

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"We started so horribly," center Jay Leeuwenburg said. "We were reading our press clippings and believed we were that good."

Game days weren't the only adversity for McCartney's Buffs. His practices made Saturdays seem easy.

"Coach Mac coached toughness," James said. "Tuesdays and Wednesday were two- or three-Tylenol days before we even went out there. You knew you were going to have a headache."

Today, teams talk about chemistry. Back then, the McCartney-Bieniemy relationship was spontaneous combustion.

"Like oil and water," said Hagan, the ex-quarterback and now the Buffs' running backs coach. "They got after each other."

McCartney remembers well a game at Oklahoma when Bieniemy was a freshman.

"This guy kept bumping into me on the sideline," McCartney said. "He was a 5-6, 190-pound freshman. He was so competitive, so wired, I had to tell him, 'Get back.' He was fired and inspired. He was the single most emotional person who ever played at CU."

It took awhile for a mutual appreciation to grow, however. Bieniemy was suspended for the opener against Tennessee for an off-field issue, and there were more than a few times he pushed the envelope, testing his coach.

Asked if he regretted the aggravation he caused McCartney, Bieniemy said with a laugh, "Not at all."


He added: "You know what? Those were growing pains in my life. Without some of the aggravation moments, I wouldn't be in the (position) I'm in today. Coach Mac had a great great influence on my life. I didn't realize that until I left the university."

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OCTOBER 1, 2010, 3:08 PM

# CU says Georgia pass rush compares favorably with Cal's

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

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**BOULDER** – The last time Colorado played against a 3-4 defense California sacked CU quarterback Tyler Hansen six times. Georgia also plays a 3-4.

Uh-oh.

Although CU senior left offensive tackle Nate Solder said Georgia's front seven compares favorably in size and athleticism with that of Cal, the Buff team captain is not looking for a repeat performance by his unit.

"We just made too many mistakes against Cal," Solder said. "We made mistakes early and it was an uphill struggle the whole time.

"There were dumb things that we did that had nothing to do with Cal. I think (a cleaner performance by CU's O-line) is going to be a huge factor in this game."

Cal's pass rush was led by outside linebacker Jarred Price (5-11, 213), who recorded two sacks. Georgia's sack leader also is an outside linebacker: junior Justin Houston (6-3, 258), who is tied for third in the talent-rich Southeastern Conference in both tackles for loss (6.5) and sacks (3.0).

"I think we match up well with them," Solder said of the Bulldogs. "They have good players. They have some speed and athletes. We have big players and athletes as well.

"They may have a little more size on the end than Cal. Similar, though."

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OCTOBER 1, 2010, 10:33 AM

# CU not counting on Georgia's Green to be rusty

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

BOULDER – Colorado defensive secondary coach Ashley Ambrose played 13 years in the NFL as a defensive back, earning AFC defensive back of the year with the Cincinnati Bengals in 1996.

He knows a future pro receiver when he sees one. He sees one, at least on film, in Georgia junior A.J. Green.

“He looks like a prototypical NFL receiver, a lanky guy that can run, catch the ball with his hands, run great routes,” Ambrose said.

Ambrose hopes Green will be a bit rusty, having sat out the Bulldogs' first four games under an NCAA suspension for selling his bowl jersey. Saturday's game in Folsom Field will mark Green's season debut. Green has been able to practice with the team, however.

“Maybe for one play he'll have some nerves because he hasn't been out there in a while. But if he's like any other typical first-round (draft choice) guy, that won't even bother him. He's just going to go out and play his game and try to adapt to what we're doing.”

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SEPTEMBER 30, 2010, 4:16 PM

# CU's Ambrose: We're not changing our defense to stop Green

By TOM KENSLEER |  No Comments

BOULDER – It will be Jalil Brown covering Georgia receiver A.J. Green when the Bulldog standout is on the left side. And Jimmy Smith will get that responsibility when Green lines up to the right.

CU defensive secondary coach Ashley Ambrose said he has confidence in his senior cornerbacks and will not change the Buffs' base defense because Green, a potential NFL first-round draft choice, is on the field.

"We're just going to do what we always do," Ambrose said. "We're not going to have a different strategy. We're not going to change our defense for one guy."

"We're going to keep our guys on certain sides. We're not matching up. We've got guys that we feel are capable of covering anybody in college football. We're going to play what we play. It doesn't make any sense to change it up just for one guy."

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## All Things Colorado Sports — Blogs — The Denver Post

SEPTEMBER 30, 2010, 1:56 PM

# CU's Mahnke adjusting well to the nickel

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

BOULDER – The newest nickel back, junior Patrick Mahnke, said he enjoys the position.

“It’s a hybrid position. I like it,” Mahnke said.

In Colorado’s scheme, the nickel sets up relatively close to the line of scrimmage and is involved in run support as well as pass coverage.

It’s part safety, part linebacker. Mahnke, 6-feet-1 and 205 pounds, has experience at both. He was a safety for two seasons before being converted to inside linebacker during spring drills.

Still, Mahnke said it takes an adjustment to shift to a different position.

“Definitely having the bye week (last week) helped me get comfortable with the position,” he said.

Mahnke becomes CU’s fourth nickel, succeeding (in order) Parker Orms, Travis Sandersfeld and Paul Vigo.

“I’m keeping fingers crossed and also knocking on wood that nothing happens to Pat,” defensive backs coach Ashley Ambrose said. “I made sure I said a special prayer this week because to lose three guys in three weeks at the same position is unheard of.”

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## CU football looks into the mirror

CU football faces Georgia Saturday

*By Michael Krumholtz on October 1, 2010*

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When CU meets Georgia on Folsom Field this Saturday, the outcome could define both teams' seasons, for better or worse.

For two coaches, the outcome could determine their careers. Georgia's 1-3 start has head coach Mark Richt buckled into the hot seat. In Boulder, coach Dan Hawkins has been feeling the heat for quite a while. The CU head coach said he sympathizes with Richt after Georgia's third conference loss of the young season.

"I felt bad for Mark because I have tremendous respect for him," Hawkins said. "He's a great person and a great coach. It's been hard for them because they just can't get on track."

The Bulldogs have dropped their last three games, but star wide receiver A.J. Green returns just in time for the showdown under the Flatirons.

Green, who is projected by many to be a first-round pick in next April's draft, is done serving a four-game suspension.

His presence will present a challenge for a secondary which ranks last in the Big 12 in terms of pass efficiency defense. Senior corner Jalil Brown said he and senior Jimmy Smith plan to play Green man-to-man.

"They have guys who can play," Brown said. "We have guys on our team who can play, too."

At his weekly press conference Hawkins said that junior Patrick Mahnke will start at nickelback because three players in the spots ahead of him are out with injuries.

Coming off a bye week should prove an advantage for CU, which is 20-15 in games after byes since 1985. Hawkins noted that a few nicked-up players finally had some time to get healthy again.



Coach Dan Hawkins speaks at a press conference after the 2010 Rocky Mountain Showdown at Invesco Field at Mile High Saturday, Sept. 4. This Saturday will be the Blackout game against the Georgia Bulldogs. (CU Independent/Lauren Walter)

Junior quarterback Tyler Hansen was not one of those aching, thanks in large part to an offensive line that did not allow him to be sacked against Hawaii. In his best game of the year, the junior completed 73 percent of his passes for 200 yards and two scores.

Hansen fittingly predicted Saturday's game to be a "dog-fight," and said his team could gain much from back-to-back wins.

"Since I've been here we haven't really put two games together," Hansen said. "We've gotten a big win then the next week we haven't played so well. Our goal is put two games together and get 2 back-to-back wins."

During his presser before Tuesday practice, Richt had only words of praise for the Buffs starter Hansen.

"He's a very athletic guy – he's actually rushed for over 700 yards in his career," Richt said. "Got a very good arm. He's certainly got an ability to run and throws it real well."

On paper, it seems the Buffs' best chance to get points will be through the air. According to the NCAA's website, the Bulldog secondary ranks even lower nationally than CU's in pass efficiency.

Hansen's foil is redshirt freshman quarterback Aaron Murray. The dual-threat from Tampa is averaging over 200 yards passing per game. Richt, who coached two Heisman quarterbacks during his days as offensive coordinator at Florida State, claimed his freshman is "growing up pretty quick."

Hawkins gave a similar assessment of the opposing signal-caller.

"I think he is getting consistently better," Hawkins said. "I think he has done a nice job for being a young guy. He can run a little bit, and that wide receiver corps comes back into what they were expected to be at the beginning of the season."

A third head coach, known as a legend in Boulder, can be spotted on the sidelines on Saturday. Former CU coach Bill McCartney and his 1990 National Championship team are set to be honored halftime at the game.

This year marks the 20-year anniversary of the school's only football national championship. As they did in their first game at Folsom, the Buffs will wear throwback jerseys from 1990 for every home game of the season.

Hansen said the team's company is motivation for the current squad.

"Having those guys and the amount of pride they show just because they're a Buff – it makes you want to win because of that," Hansen said. "To have them in here and to have them tell stories to you and what it was like when they were playing. It makes you want to have that experience. Once you're a Buff, you're always a Buff."

There are many apparent parallels when comparing the Buffs to the Bulldogs. They both have one national championship, both have the most recognizable mascots in the country, and both have their head coaches in desperate search of a season-saving win.

"They have a lot of pride and a lot of tradition there," Hawkins said. "Mark is a great coach. I don't think they are going to panic by any means, but certainly they are going to screw it down a little tighter. I fully expect that we are going to get their best shot."

Contact CU Independent Staff Writer Michael Krumholtz at [Michael.krumholtz@colorado.edu](mailto:Michael.krumholtz@colorado.edu).

# 1990 flashback: Fifth game of season went down to wire

**By Neill Woelk** Camera Sports Writer One month into the season, nobody could have accused the 1990 Color  
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 10/01/2010 12:02:14 AM MDT

Editor's note: This is the fifth in a season-long series on Colorado's march to the 1990 national championship.

One month into the season, nobody could have accused the 1990 Colorado Buffaloes of being boring.

Each of the Buffs' first four games went down to the wire, with the outcome in doubt right down to the end every week.

Might as well make it five.

With visiting Washington aiming to avenge a defeat at the hands of the Buffaloes a year earlier, it took a Deon Figures interception in the end zone in the final minute of play to preserve a 20-14 Colorado win.

Another week, another heart-stopper.

"We anticipated it being a tough one," said Buff offensive lineman Ariel Solomon recently. "We had embarrassed them in their stadium (45-28) in 1989, and they were obviously gunning for us. We knew they had targeted us."

The Huskies arrived in Boulder ranked No. 12 in the nation while the Buffs had stayed at No. 20 after their narrow win over Texas.

The game began in the same fashion as CU's previous four - the opponent scored first. Washington took the opening drive and marched 80 yards for a touchdown. CU, meanwhile, never got its offense untracked in the first half. Colorado managed only a field goal, but the Buffs' defense held UW in check for the rest of the half as CU trailed 7-3 at intermission.

But the second half started with a bang. The Buffs went 80 yards on just eight plays for the go-ahead touchdown, getting a 15-yard Darian Hagan run for a 10-7 lead.

"It was just another one of those games," Buff linebacker Kanavis McGhee remembers. "One of those you just know was going down to the wire."

Exactly.

CU fans barely had a chance to celebrate the Buffs' first touchdown before Washington answered with a 10-play 65-yard scoring drive to regain the lead. The big play of the drive was a 40-yard pass from Mark Brunell to Mario Bailey.

But the third-quarter fireworks weren't over. Colorado regained the lead for good on its next possession, going 80 yards in six plays. Hagan threw a 35-yard pass to Mike Pritchard to put CU deep in Washington territory, and Hagan scored again from 3 yards out to give Colorado a 17-14 edge.

Colorado then added a field goal early in the fourth quarter, but no one in the stadium thought the lead was safe.

"I just remember thinking it wasn't over," Solomon said. "You just knew something was going to happen."

Actually, lots of something happened - and nobody scored.

First, backup quarterback Charles Johnson (Hagan suffered a shoulder sprain early in the fourth period) directed a drive deep into UW territory, only to see the Buffs fumble the ball away.

Washington then answered with a drive downfield that put the Huskies at the Colorado 7-yard line with a first down and 1:30 on the clock.



On first down, Brunell threw incomplete. On second down, Alfred Williams batted away a Brunell pass. On third down, Figures knocked a pass down in the end zone.

And finally, on fourth-and-goal from the 7, Brunell threw into the northwest corner of the end zone - directly in front of the Huskies' cheering section - only to see Figures intercept the pass to seal the win.

"That was an outstanding football team we beat," said CU coach Bill McCartney after the game. "I'm real proud of our guys."

The victory improved Colorado to 3-1-1 and moved the Buffs back up to No. 12 in the polls. Their preseason hopes of a national title - all but given up for dead after a 1-1-1 start - were suddenly growing new life.

"Coach Mac had a board on the wall with every game in the season on it," Solomon remembers. "After that slow start, he broke the season down for us. He told us we had to take it game by game. He said our dreams and aspirations weren't over. He told us to take his word for it - they weren't over."

"But we needed to start taking care of business game by game."

Five games into the season, the Buffs were indeed taking McCartney's words to heart.

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# 1990 flashback: Q&A with Ariel Solomon

By Neill Woelk Camera Sports Writer  
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 10/01/2010 12:05:29 AM MDT

*Boulder High School grad Ariel Solomon played three years on the defensive line for Colorado before making the switch to offense in the spring of 1989. He played about 200 plays as a reserve in 1989 before starting every game as a fifth-year senior in 1990. Drafted by the Pittsburgh Steelers in 1991, he played six seasons in the NFL. He now lives in Boulder, where he works as a mortgage banker.*

**Q: While you were growing up in Boulder and playing for BHS, did you ever think you'd be playing for a national championship team in your home town?**

A: Honestly, I don't think I ever even dreamed of that taking place. When I was deciding where to go, I knew the program would be solid -- but I don't think I thought we'd achieve that level that quickly.

**Q: Four of the five starting linemen on the 1990 team played in the NFL. What was it like playing with that kind of group?**

A: The interesting thing was that while some of the players we had on that team were top recruits in the country, many players weren't. Joe Garten (a unanimous All-American selection) might be the best offensive linemen in CU history, and he was lightly recruited. I was fairly heavily recruited based on my potential, but to be honest, I struggled for three years. I was floundering on the defensive line, and it wasn't until I moved to offense that I began to play well.

I didn't start until my fifth year, when I stepped in at left tackle. But that year, Joe and I felt like we were the best left side of an offensive line in the country.

**Q: What was the difference between the 1989 and 1990 teams?**

A: We were coming off such a big 1989 season when almost nobody had been able to even compete with us. In 1990, expectations kind of changed -- we were a little older, and we thought we should be a little better. I think maybe we didn't have the same purpose and unity that we had in 1989 with Sal (Aunese) passing.

But I think the biggest thing was the leadership and the experience. In 1990, we had a team that had been together and expected to be successful. When we weren't, we knew it wasn't acceptable. We knew it was time to play to our abilities.

**Q: The game everyone remembers from 1990 is the fifth down game at Missouri. What are your recollections?**

A: I remember there was a lot of confusion as to what down it was. (Center) Jay Leeuwenberg had actually identified that it would be fourth down when we spiked. He voiced those thoughts on the sidelines in the huddle and was quickly told by the coaches to dismiss those thoughts. It was incredibly hectic and chaotic.

As for the play, C.J. (quarterback Charles Johnson) was originally supposed to go to the left. But he checked the play at the line and went to the right because of the defense he saw. I remember a big pile and seeing the referee unpile everyone. It seemed like forever, and they finally put their arms up to signal touchdown -- and we all just wanted to get off the field after that.

**Q: With players like Alfred Williams and Kanavis McGhee on the other side of the ball, what were practices like?**

A: There was definitely a high level of excitement when they'd let the 'ones' go against the 'ones.' There was some hard, hard hitting. And as a lineman, you do a lot of one-on-one and line specific drills against the first team. Let's just say Alfred and I became very well acquainted with each other. I remember telling Alfred -- if you can get past me, you can get past anyone on Saturday. And he'd tell me the same thing -- if you can stop me, you can stop anybody.

What it created was a belief that when we lined up on Saturday, the level of competition was going to be a step down most of the time from what we were practicing against during the week.

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# Culture clash at Folsom

## CU, Georgia fans bring different perspectives to following their teams

**By Kyle Ringo** Camera Sports Writer  
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 09/30/2010 08:51:20 PM MDT

It didn't take long for Paul Creighton to understand how obsessed football fans can be in the Southeastern Conference when he completed his career as a tight end at Colorado in 2006 and accepted an opportunity to be a graduate assistant in the strength and conditioning program at Auburn the next fall.

Creighton expected to be an anonymous face at Auburn able to go about his business and learn the ropes of the process of building bigger, faster, stronger players.

But during his first year with the Tigers, a stranger approached him in the grocery store one day, called him by name and began asking about the health and playing status of several players who had been dealing with injuries.

"I was like how do you know who I am?" Creighton said.

Colorado and Georgia fans might experience some culture shock this weekend when the Bulldogs come to Folsom Field for Saturday's game on national television (5:10 p.m., FSN). It is only the second time Colorado has hosted an SEC team. The last time was 31 years ago.

More than 5,000 Georgia fans are expected to attend (the actual number might be closer to 7,000) and 3,000 of them will take part in an SEC style tailgate on campus before watching one of the premier traditions in all of college football -- Ralphie's pregame run around the field.

College towns in the South shut down in many ways on game day with all eyes on what is happening at the stadium. Georgia fans will see a different approach in Boulder where passion for the black, silver and gold runs deep, but it always has competition, especially on beautiful autumn Saturdays.

CU officials are expecting a sellout Saturday for a game that has been dubbed a blackout. If the sellout happens, it will be only the second time Folsom Field has been filled for a game during Dan Hawkins' coaching tenure.

Colorado's stadium holds just under 54,000 fans and is much smaller than the 80,000 and 90,000-seat gridiron cathedrals throughout the South where it's not uncommon for folks to come to campus for the pregame festivities before finding a place to watch it on television because they don't have a ticket.

Georgia fans wanting the full Colorado pregame experience will want to be in downtown Boulder tonight for the Pearl Street Stampede at 7 p.m., with the Golden Buffalo Marching Band, members of the 1990 national championship team and this season's team and coaches parading down the mall.

"I think there will definitely be a culture shock," Creighton said.

Why? He offers another anecdote to explain.

Two nights before the 2007 season opener at Auburn against Kansas State, Creighton was leaving work to head home and get few hours of sleep. It was late and as he drove by the stadium he noticed a man sitting in a lawn chair on a plot of grass across the street from the stadium.

"I was thinking, 'What is that guy doing?'" Creighton said.

When he returned for work the next morning at 5:30 a.m. on Friday, the man in the chair had been joined by another 20 or 30 people all in sleeping bags in the same area. The tailgating had started with people staking their claim to prime real estate for a game that wasn't going to kickoff until Saturday night.

"By Friday night, you wouldn't be able to find a tailgating spot within a square mile of the stadium," Creighton said.

Colorado fans might not be as rabid before the game, but Creighton said when Folsom Field is full and a good opponent is on the west sideline, the atmosphere is as electric as anything he has experienced during a game. But there is nothing like SEC football when it comes to the build up and come down from each week's game.

"Fan-wise they're so much more invested for those fans, and they really live and die by their football teams' experience, which isn't necessarily a good thing or a bad thing," Creighton said. "Whereas here, you get fans who come up from Denver for a good weekend. We win, they're happy and then they go on to the kid's soccer game or whatever. If we lose, they're angry about it for awhile and then they wake up Sunday morning and go hiking all day or something.

"There, it's like they come in Thursday and you have fans game-planning all day Thursday and Friday and if they win, then their whole week is in preparation for the next week's win. If they lose, it's the complete opposite. The town is dead."

Creighton isn't the only man in the Colorado program with some previous experience in the SEC. Offensive line coach Denver Johnson spent three years coaching at Mississippi State in the early 1990s. He said football is a religious experience for many in the south.

"It's certainly as important as mom, apple pie and Uncle Sam," Johnson said. "It's the fabric of the South and it doesn't surprise me that there will be a large contingent from Georgia here."

Colorado secondary coach Ashley Ambrose knows exactly what Johnson means. He grew up in New Orleans and attended games at Louisiana State and Alabama as a kid before a college career at Mississippi Valley State.

Ambrose said he it was always football season in the streets where he grew up. He said mild winter weather allowed he and his friends to keep right on playing whereas kids in other parts of the country are forced inside at some point. Ambrose said that just builds more enthusiasm for the sport.

"Usually people in the south, they're doing it all year round. It's just a football thing," Ambrose said. "Whether it's like a passing league or something else, they take it real serious. That's like the major sport in the south. They have a lot of passion for it."

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UGA sports blog (<http://blogs.ajc.com/uga-sports-blog>)

## Emptying the notebook before heading to Colorado ...

11:00 pm September 30, 2010, by Tim Tucker

- An interesting observation from **Mike Bobo** about running back **Carlton Thomas**, the Bulldogs' smallest player: "Carlton has never been in a green jersey his whole career here." Green jerseys are worn at practice by players who have injuries that preclude them from contact.
- **Drew Butler** and **Blair Walsh** can't wait to kick in Colorado's mile-high air.

Butler visited a friend in Denver in May and took the opportunity to punt a few balls while he was there. He said they traveled about 3-5 yards longer and were in the air about two-tenths of a second longer, adding to his hang time. "When it's humid and it's wet here in the summer, the thick air just holds the ball down, but out there, it's crisp and the ball flies," Butler said. "It's fun kicking."

Walsh, whose career-long field goal is 53 yards at Oklahoma State in 2009, said he'd like to try a field goal of 60-plus yards in Saturday's game and will try a kick from 70 yards in warm-ups.

- A 1-3 record is a shock to the system of Georgia fans — and players. "I don't think anybody on the team right now had ever started any season of playing football one and three," defensive lineman **DeAngelo Tyson** said.
- Georgia will be just the second SEC team ever to play a game in Boulder. The only other time an SEC team played there was on Sept. 15, 1979, when LSU beat the Buffaloes 44-0.
- Counting road and bowl games, Colorado has played a dozen games against SEC teams. The Buffaloes are 2-9-1, including a 14-13 loss at Georgia in 2006.
- This will be Georgia's third game against a Big 12 team since the start of last season. The Bulldogs opened last season with a loss to Oklahoma State and ended it with an Independence Bowl victory over Texas A&M. Of course, Colorado won't be in the Big 12 much longer; the Buffaloes join the Pac-10 next year.
- As **A.J. Green** returns from suspension, it's not clear if **Kris Durham**, Georgia's top receiver in Green's absence, will be able to play. Durham suffered what he called a stretched nerve in his neck late in last week's game. Durham said he'll "be fine by Saturday," but coach **Mark Richt** called him questionable.
- Offensive lineman **Trinton Sturdivant** continues to work his way back. He played 20-plus snaps last week. The plan is for him to play more each week.
- **Todd Grantham** has been stressing two things with the defense this week: "start and finish." The defense has given up touchdowns on the opponent's opening possession in the past three games. And then it's tended to play pretty well until struggling again near the end of the games.

"If you go back to the South Carolina game, the score is 14-6 and it's late in the fourth quarter and we can't stop them and get the ball back," Grantham said. "Go to Arkansas; the score is 24-24 and we have had some stops, we do stop them, then we have to go back out for a two-minute drive and we don't stop them then. And then you go to this past game [against Mississippi State] and it's 10-6 late in the fourth quarter and we don't stop them.

"You're going to be in all sorts of games, and whatever has happened up until then . . . you got to finish that game," Grantham said. "That's the thing in the last three games: We haven't finished."



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## Georgia vs. Colorado preview

By [Tim Tucker](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

12:41 a.m. Friday, October 1, 2010

### 3 storylines

**The return of A.J. Green.** Georgia's star receiver will make his season debut after being suspended for the first four games, and he says he has some "catching up" to do. The Bulldogs (1-3, 0-3 SEC) need to get the ball in Green's hands as much as possible against Colorado (2-1, 0-0 Big 12). The Dogs also hope the defensive attention Green draws will open up other aspects of the offense, such as the passing game to the tight ends and the running game.

**A new start.** In its past three games -- all losses, you might have heard -- Georgia allowed the opponent to score a touchdown on its opening possession. With the Bulldogs' confidence already challenged by the losing streak, another poor start could be tough to overcome. Part of the early-game problem has been slowness to adapt to new wrinkles from the opposing offense. "Sometimes if maybe it's a new play, or something that's not exactly the way you practiced it, you've still got to apply your concepts to get through the down," UGA defensive coordinator Todd Grantham said. "If you don't, you can give up an explosive play, like has been happening."

**The turnover issue.** Fumbles by tailback Washaun Ealey inside the opponent's 5-yard line were critical plays in the losses to South Carolina and Mississippi State. Georgia is not good enough to overcome those types of giveaways. Coaches say Ealey's fumbles will cost him the starting role at Colorado and reduce his playing time. On the other side of the turnover equation, Georgia's defense needs to force more than in the past three games (one fumble recovery and one interception, neither of which was converted into points by the Georgia offense).

### A Georgia win would ...

Halt the Bulldogs' longest losing streak in 20 years.

Improve the Dogs' record under coach Mark Richt in nonconference games to 40-4.

### A Colorado win would ...

Fuel the fury in Bulldog Nation.

Complete a happy occasion in Boulder, Colo., where the Buffaloes are celebrating the 20th anniversary of their share of the 1990 national championship.

### Keep an eye on ...

**For Colorado:** Cornerbacks Jalil Brown and Jimmy Smith have caught the attention of Georgia players and coaches on video. "Two awesome corners ... who can lock guys down," offensive coordinator Mike Bobo said.

**For Georgia:** Green, naturally. It'll be interesting to see him work against Colorado's corners and start trying to make up for lost time.

### The numbers game

#### 14-8

Georgia's all-time record vs. Big 12 teams. (Note: This is Colorado's final season in the Big 12 before moving to the Pac-10 next year.)

#### 2-9-1

Colorado's all-time record vs. SEC teams.

### The history book

**Series record:** Georgia leads 1-0.

**Last game:** In the teams' only previous meeting, Georgia trailed for almost the entire game before rallying for a 14-13 victory in 2006 in Athens. With the Dogs down 13-0, quarterback Joe Cox came off the bench to throw two fourth-quarter touchdown passes.

### The bottom line

Georgia is a 4 1/2-point favorite and absolutely desperate for a victory.

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Find this article at:

<http://www.ajc.com/sports/uga/georgia-vs-colorado-preview-649845.html>

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Bulldogs lose fourth in a row despite Green's return

Hamstring hinders Green

Dent making his mark

Georgia's 'Bubba' could fill 'Boo' role

Colorado's Hawkins is hotseat survivor

## Hawkins focused on this season

BY: [ROGER CLARKSON](#) | OCT 1 2010

FOOTBALL 0

Colorado coach Dan Hawkins took time to talk with the Athens Banner-Herald about a wide range of topics on Thursday. Here's what he had to say:



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Q: Georgia coach Mark Richt said that he has known you for several years. How did you meet?

A: I believe the first time we met was one of the Nike coaches trip. I can't remember where it was at, we've been on so many of them. It was Mexico or Aruba or somewhere warm. We talk periodically. When we were at Boise we recruited his kid (Jon) for a little bit.

Q: How odd does it feel to play in your final season in the Big 12 before moving to the Pac-10?

A: We don't really think about it too much. We coaches just play it week to week. That's next year. This year is this year. We just play the schedule the way it lays out.

Q: How excited are you to change conferences?

A: I think it's great and it's awesome and all that. But that's next year. You're not working on articles for next year's paper. That's kind of how we look at it. It's a great opportunity and all that, but we've got a full slate of games to play this year.

Q: You've played Georgia in Athens twice, once with Boise State and once with Colorado. How do those games compare?

A: It's hard to compare. They're totally different circumstances and outcomes. It was five years ago obviously when we were down there the last time. We obviously have tremendous respect for Georgia and coach Richt. I think it's one of the great programs in the country and one of the classiest programs so you have a lot of respect for the whole Bulldog football program.

Q: There has been some uncertainty about your job security. How will losing to California 52-7 earlier this season affect your future?

A: I don't get caught up in that. I really don't. I don't think most coaches do. That's just chatter on the outside. You just keep your head down and keep plugging. That's what we do.

Q: How do you keep your team focused on the season and not the outside distractions?

A: They're great. They're awesome and they've always been awesome. Our staff is, too. That's the world you live in, not the world we live in. We're not hanging out on the chatroom boards and getting all the noise going on out there, man. You just stay focused on the task at hand and I think that's the way every coach does it for the most part.

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Colorado



UGA Bulldogs

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## dog tweets

[marcweiszer](#) New blog post (from late last night): Colorado postmortem  
<http://bit.ly/cb7318> #UGA #Dawgs 2 hours ago

[marcweiszer](#) #UGA game story: Bulldogs lose fourth in a row even with Green's return  
<http://bit.ly/drzNO5> ; Cramps curtail Green  
<http://bit.ly/cBPIh0> 3 hours ago

[abhports](#) I was trying to think of something positive to say with last tweet of night... crickets... They looked good with A.J. on field, I guess. 9 hours ago