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colorado football

Time to put end to the Missour-y

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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BOULDER — Any celebrating by Colorado players of Saturday night's 29-27 victory over Georgia will end when the Buffaloes sit down to watch video of their recent games against Missouri, the upcoming opponent.

During the past four years, Missouri has manhandled Dan Hawkins-coached CU teams by an average score of 44.3 to 10.

"It's like kryptonite or something. They have our number," CU junior quarterback Tyler Hansen said in comparing the Tigers to Superman, at least against the Buffs.

"I don't know what it is. But we have to fix it. We have to have our horns out, as Coach Hawk says."

This weekend's visit by Colorado (3-1) to Missouri (4-0), ranked 24th in The Associated Press poll, will mark the Big 12 Conference opener for both teams. The last time CU played at Faurot Field, the Buffs were blanked 58-0. It

got ugly fast. Missouri jumped out to a 21-0 advantage in the first quarter and led 34-0 by halftime.

Judging by last year's score of 36-17, that meeting in Boulder would appear to have been more competitive. Not so. Missouri raced to a 33-0 lead in the second quarter before shifting into cruise control.

"We have to get the Tigers," Hansen said. "If we beat them, it would be our biggest win of the year so far."

At this point, any CU win on the road would be big. Colorado has not won a true road game (not counting victories over Colorado State at Invesco Field) since Oct. 27, 2007, a 31-26 Buffs victory at Texas Tech.

Colorado looked inept in its only other true road game this season, a 52-7 collapse at California. But scoring 31 second-half points against Hawaii and then defeating a Southeastern Conference team will inject confidence into a team.

"The attitude we have at Folsom Field, somehow we have to find that when we're on the road," Hansen said. "I think if we can get some big plays early, I think that will help us out."

Colorado's running game and the performance of the Buffs' offensive line against Georgia had to be a confidence builder. CU rushed for 235 yards against a Bulldogs defense that entered the game ranked third among SEC teams in rushing defense.



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CU Buffs eyeing ... The Tigers

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For the record: Missouri, 4-0 and coming off a bye week, moved up to No. 22 in the USA Today coaches poll and moved into the Associated Press poll at No. 24.

Who's hot: The 37 receptions by sophomore T.J. Moe are the most in school history through four games.

Who's not: Missouri would like to be ranked higher than seventh among Big 12 teams in rushing offense. Then again, the Tigers had to unexpectedly revamp their backfield after 2008 and 2009 leading rusher Derrick Washington was kicked off the team Sept. 1 after being charged with felony sexual assault.

Key stat: On defense, Missouri's eight interceptions through four games already match the Tigers' total for all 13 games last season.

FYI: With this being the 20-year anniversary of the "Fifth Down Game" in Columbia, there is sure to be a ton of media coverage recounting the officials' mistake that proved pivotal in Colorado's run to the 1990 national championship.



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CU ground game in gear

By Brian Howell
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BOULDER — The University of Colorado football team had a clear plan at the start of its game Saturday against Georgia.

The Buffs ran the ball on their first 10 plays — and on 11 of their first 13 — during their game-opening touchdown drive.

“We wanted to pound the rock early and establish the run game early,” quarterback Tyler Hansen said. “That’s our identity.”

Well, it was on Saturday, anyway.

CU’s going to need a few more performances like this before it can truly claim a strong run game as part of its identity. After all, this is a team that just a year ago ranked 113th out of 120 teams in the country in rushing offense.

While a strong run game may not fully be part of their identity just yet, the Buffs have certainly proven they are better at it than they’ve been in a while.

CU finished with 235 yards on the ground in its 29-27 win over Georgia. The Buffs have had two straight 200-yard rushing games after having just one in the 27 games before that.

“We always want to run the ball,” Hansen said. “We want to run the ball and control the clock and keep their offense off the field.”

Four games into the season, the Buffs are doing that. Their 169.25 yards per game on the ground rank 53rd in the country.

“First it goes down to the linemen,” running back Brian Lockridge said. “If they’re doing well, the whole team is doing well. If we get the running game going, it opens up a lot for the pass game, and that’s what we did (against Georgia). It worked.”

Rodney Stewart has 402 yards (100.5 per game), while Lockridge has had a nice season to this point with 146. Hansen has been great on the run, too. He has just 65 net yards on the season, but take out the yards he’s lost on sacks, and he’s posting 4.9 yards every time he runs.

The turning point for CU’s run game came at halftime of the Buffs’ 31-13 win over Hawaii on Sept. 18. After struggling with all parts of their offense in the first half of that game, the Buffs came out of the locker room that day and ran 33 times for 183 yards in the second half.

Combined with Saturday’s game against Georgia, the Buffs have 418 rushing yards on 80 attempts in their last six quarters.



Colorado running back Rodney Stewart runs toward the end zone during the third quarter Saturday against Georgia at Folsom Field in Boulder. **Lewis Geyer/Times-Call**

“Confidence is a huge, huge thing, and there’s a lot of ways that comes about,” head coach Dan Hawkins said. “The second half of Hawaii, they started feeling it a little bit.”

The question now is whether the Buffs can keep it up. On Saturday, they visit Missouri. Statistically, Missouri has been OK against the run (ranking 58th), but the Tigers gave up 200 rushing yards to Illinois and 250 to San Diego State.

ONE TO FORGET: On the stat sheet, CU corner Jalil Brown had a nice game against Georgia.

He led the Buffs with eight tackles and pulled down an interception in the end zone.

Brown spent much of his night, however, getting burned by Georgia star receiver A.J. Green.

Green beat Brown for two second-quarter touchdowns, as well as a 50-yard catch in the third quarter that set up another Georgia score. Also on that third quarter drive, Brown was flagged for holding Green in the end zone.

“Not proud at all,” Brown said of his performance. “I gave up some big plays to A.J. Green. I know he’s a great receiver and I had eight tackles and an interception, which is something positive to take, but I know I can play a lot better than I did today.”

Prior to Saturday, Brown had played very well this season.

LIMITING THE FLAGS: CU had been penalized at least nine times in each of its first three games.

Saturday, they were flagged only three times — the Buffs’ lowest total since having two penalties at Nebraska on Nov. 28, 2008.

The difference?

“Practice, and coach yelling,” senior Jimmy Smith said. “That’s exactly what it was.”

EXTRA POINTS: Stewart has rushed for first downs on all seven of his chances on third- or fourth-and-1. ... Stewart has 1,828 career yards, which ranks 22nd in school history. He needs just 172 to become the 17th player in CU history to hit the 2,000 mark. ... The Buffs are 0-4 against Missouri under Hawkins. All four losses have been by at least 15 points.

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

Bufs facing double dose of kryptonite

CU must overcome Missouri on road to extend win streak

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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There is plenty of reason to be excited about the Colorado football team after the Buffs improved to 3-1 with a win over Georgia on Saturday, but some won't be convinced the Buffs have truly turned the corner until they prove they can beat good teams on the road.

Coach Dan Hawkins' program probably couldn't get a bigger confidence boost than if it was able to go on the road this week and put a stop to a 12-game road-losing streak against a Missouri team that has dominated the Buffs for four consecutive seasons.

"This is a great win and everything against a good SEC team," CU quarterback Tyler Hansen said Saturday night in the moments after beating Georgia. "I'm thinking, if we beat Missouri, they've had our number for years, and if we beat Missouri, that would be the biggest win of our season so far."

Domination might not be a strong enough description of how the Tigers have beaten the Buffs. Missouri has won the past four games by the combined score of 177-40. There might not be a Big 12 Conference team the Buffs will happier to have off the schedule when they move to the Pac-10 next year.

Colorado has been Alf Landon to Missouri's Franklin Roosevelt. The Buffs have been BETA to the Tigers' VHS. They are Friendster to Missouri's Facebook. And it hasn't mattered whether the games have been played in Columbia or Boulder.

The Buffs hope this is the year they put a stop to it. But it almost sounds as if they will need to see it to believe it, too.

"It's like our kryptonite or something," Hansen said. "They have our number. I don't know what it is."

The Buffs readily acknowledge they play with a different aura of confidence at Folsom Field than they do on the road. They don't seem to have an explanation for why or an answer for how to fix the problem. It's not just Missouri that has made them look bad.

Colorado hasn't won a road game since Oct. 27, 2007 at Texas Tech. Hawkins has won 72 games as a Division I head coach, but only two of them have come on the road against BCS conference teams. Both were in that 2007 season at Baylor and Texas Tech.

"I think the big thing for us is we just need to keep our resilience that we have at home," tight end Ryan Deehan said. "I feel really good about it right now. We've got a little momentum and we're doing things right right now. We're not making the mistakes we used to make in the past."

The Buffs never had a better opportunity to do so than in their last road game a month ago at California. At least 7,000 Buffs fans swarmed Berkeley, Calif., for the game and filled more than four sections in one end zone of Memorial Stadium.

CU rewarded those fans with a 52-7 stinker.

"We've got to be road warriors," linebacker Jon Major said. "That's what defines a good team. I think this confidence. This swagger from this victory, it won't matter who we play, where we play, at least that's what we need to do."

Nothing will take the steam out of the positive vibe the Buffs and they're fans are feeling right now than laying another egg in Columbia, Mo., this week.

"We've just got to have the home attitude and mentality that we have playing at Folsom and we've got to somehow find that when we're on the road," Hansen said.

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