

CU Buffs' Rodney Stewart wants to leave mark

CU all-time rushing record in reach for Buffs running back

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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Colorado running back Rodney Stewart joined the program four years ago as a soft-spoken, stick-to-himself type shaped by a hard-knocks upbringing in Westerville, Ohio, just north of Columbus.

Gradually he has come out of that shell as he has grown accustomed to his surroundings in Boulder and as his role on the team has expanded.

Heading into his senior year this fall, the shifty 5-foot-6 tailback CU fans have come to love finds himself in unfamiliar and slightly uncomfortable territory. He is suddenly a team leader whether he likes the job or not.

"There are different kinds of leaders," Stewart said. "I wouldn't say everybody in the NFL talks. I like to lead by example, but I do talk, too. I do a little bit of both."

It's a role that goes hand-in-hand with the company he is keeping.

Stewart is on two of the most prestigious preseason watch lists college football has to offer. The Maxwell Award, given annually to the best college player in the nation, and the Doak Walker Award, given each year to the best running back in the country, both honored him this month.

"It means a lot. I put a lot of dedication into this sport," Stewart said. "For anybody to be on that list, I know it means a lot to them. It's a blessing and if I'm fortunate enough to make it that far to what the watch list is saying, that would be even a bigger blessing."

In addition to those honors, it's no secret that Stewart will begin his senior year with a realistic chance at becoming the program's all-time leading rusher. He needs 1,196 yards this season to pass his new position coach and offensive coordinator Eric Bienenmy and he has 13 games to get there as long as he can stay healthy.

No small feat to be sure, but certainly within his capabilities considering he finished last season with 1,318 rushing yards in 12 games.

Stewart said he and Bienenmy have never discussed the record in their seven months together as player and coach. He said he doesn't want to set any goals this year because he doesn't want to aim too high and fallshort and he doesn't want to be perceived as aiming too low either.

But mention the record and he lights up a little.

"Me breaking the record would be great because I could leave something here when I leave," Stewart said. "I don't want to be forgotten. A lot of guys play and want to be good, but when I go out every day, I want to be great. I might work harder than the average person. So for me to leave something here is what the goal is."

Stewart will have more competition for playing time this year than last, especially in the second half of the season when he had virtually none. Fellow senior Brian Lockridge is hoping to be fully recovered from a major ankle injury by the start of the season, redshirt freshman Cordary Allen will be ready to contribute and true freshmen D.D. Goodson and Malcolm Creer might prove difficult to keep off the field.

Stewart won't complain if he is getting fewer carries than he has grown accustomed to, but he plans to make sure those teammates prove they deserve them.

Only Charlie Davis, Bobby Purify, Rashaan Salaam and Bienenmy have gained more yards rushing in a CU uniform that

Stewart. If September goes well for him, Stewart should be one of just four players in the program's history to rush for 3,000 yards in a career by the end of the month.

Stewart, who has come to be known as "Speedy" to his teammates and CU fans, never has been one to boast and he cringes when others compare him to some of the most notable ball carriers in CU history.

"Guys like that I really can't be compared with," Stewart said. "Rashaan Salaam won the Heisman. Eric Bieniemy has won a national championship. I'm trying to get to where they're at."

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CU's football schedule ranks No. 1 as toughest in the country

By **NICK GROKE** |  No Comments



^[1]Cliff Grassmick, Daily Camera

No easy yards coming this season for Eric Bieniemy's offense at Colorado.

Colorado's first season in the Pac-12 Conference netted the toughest football schedule in the country, [according to magazine magnet Phil Steele](#).^[2]

Steele on Monday ranked CU No. 1 in the nation in strength of schedule [in an article on his website](#)^[2], ahead of Iowa State, Baylor, Oregon State and LSU. Based on opponents' collective winning percentage last season, CU ranks 14th in the nation in degree of difficulty, with teams combining for a 98-67 record (59.4 winning percentage).

Steele's rankings, though, take into account road games and power ratings. [Colorado's non-conference slate](#)^[3] includes a road game at Ohio State on Sept. 24 and, by a quirk, a home game against California on Sept. 10.

Steele also lists Nebraska on his “most overrated schedules” list (as he defines as the biggest difference between his ratings and the opponents’ winning percentage). The Cornhuskers’ opponents this year had a 90-62 record last season, 16th toughest in the nation. But Steele ranks Nebraska 47th. For background, [Nebraska’s schedule for its first year in the Big 10](#) ^[4] includes non-conference home games against Tennessee-Chattanooga, Fresno State and Washington, and a road game at Wyoming.

[Colorado State’s schedule](#) ^[5] ranks 103rd in Steele’s rankings and by winning percentage. Air Force is 99th on Steele’s list and 81 by statistics. [Wyoming’s schedule](#) ^[6], which includes a home date against Nebraska in Laramie, is 85 on Steele’s list and 77 overall.

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<http://blogs.denverpost.com/sports/2011/07/18/cus-football-schedule-ranks-no-1-as-toughest-in-the-country/18744/>

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[2] according to magazine magnet Phil Steele.: **<http://www.philsteele.com/Blogs/2011/Jul11/DBJuly18.html>**

[3] Colorado’s non-conference slate: **http://www.cubuffs.com/SportSelect.dbml?SPID=255&SPSID=3850&DB_OEM_ID=600**

[4] Nebraska’s schedule for its first year in the Big 10: **http://www.huskers.com/SportSelect.dbml?DB_OEM_ID=100&SPID=22&SPSID=3**

[5] Colorado State’s schedule: **<http://www.csurams.com/sports/m-footbl/sched/csu-m-footbl-sched.html>**

[6] Wyoming’s schedule: **<http://www.wyomingathletics.com/sports/m-footbl/sched/wyo-m-footbl-sched.html>**

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