

CU Buffs' Stewart is toughness defined

RB has secured his place in Colorado record books

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

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To truly understand what has allowed Rodney Stewart to thrive as the starting running back for a Bowl Championship Series college football team when almost nobody believed he was capable of it, you have to see him on the field.

But not Folsom Field and not any of the other gridirons of the Pac-12 and Big 12 Conferences where he has zigged and zagged his way to 3,305 career rushing yards.

No, you have to see him in your mind's eye on the field at the elementary school around the corner from his childhood home on Brentnell Avenue in Columbus, Ohio.

Picture 10-year-old Rodney Stewart, smaller than most of the kids his age just as he is now. He has the ball in his hands in a game where everyone else on the field is trying to tackle him and prevent him from scoring.

He played it dozens if not hundreds of times each year on that field. He found himself in trouble with his mother more than once for coming home too late after the streetlights had come on.

Most of those he competed against were two or three years older than him and all of them had an edge to them having learned plenty of lessons in toughness on the hardscrabble streets of the neighborhood.

"It kind of de-sensitized me," Stewart said. "It just gave me a tougher way of thinking about things."

Learning to make those guys miss, taught him how to make middle linebackers miss the past four years in Boulder. And being driven into the ground or maybe receiving a bloody lip and or nose back then taught him he could take a beating and still flourish.

"I used to have grass stains all down my school pants, but I just loved football," Stewart said.

Informal polls on various Colorado football message boards this week have Stewart as one of the leading candidates for this year's Buffalo Heart Award. The honor is presented to one member of the Colorado team after the final home game of the year by the fans behind the home bench.

Colorado coach Jon Embree remembers the first time he saw Stewart's toughness. He watched him take a shot in a scrimmage situation last spring and pop right back up. Stewart earned his coach's respect in that moment and has continued to build a reservoir of pats on the back from Embree since.

"I thought, 'OK, this kid has something about him,'" Embree said. "Just his whole attitude. He exudes toughness. You can tell he's that guy. He wants you to pick on him so he can get after you."

"He's just such a good football player, good out of the backfield, good as a pass blocker."

At 5-foot-6, 175 pounds, it is remarkable that Stewart has survived so many hits and tackles at this level where those delivering the blows often have 50, 75 or 100 pound advantages on him. He has missed significant playing time only twice in his career, at the end of his freshman season when a horse collar tackle by then-Texas A&M and now Denver Broncos linebacker Von Miller broke his leg in the ninth game of the season. And last month when he missed two games with a sprained knee.

"I would say growing up with my friends we always competed on who was the toughest," Stewart said. "I think I got being tough, it's a mental thing just from competing my whole life."

Stewart began this season chasing the Colorado career rushing record held by offensive coordinator and running backs coach Eric Bieniemy. It's highly unlikely Stewart will catch Bieniemy with just three games left and still needing more than 600 yards. But Stewart has continued to prove this season that he is one of the toughest players to ever wear the black and gold.

No other non-quarterback has touched the ball more in a CU career than Stewart, who has 754 carries and counting. Stewart has 15 career 100-yard games and 22 rushing touchdowns. But he is more than just a guy who takes a handoff. Only 17 other players have caught more passes than Stewart, who has 82 catches to his credit.

Stewart has put in the work in the weight room throughout his career and it has helped his durability. He is pound-for-pound the strongest player on the team, according to strength and conditioning coach Malcolm Blacken.

"He's unbelievable," senior quarterback Tyler Hansen said. "We were watching film of the SC game and he made some plays that were just, 'How did he do that?' You know?"

"He's just grown every year. The first year he was splitting time with a bunch of guys and he made some great plays. The next year he was just progressing more and more. This year, he's that complete guy. He's the guy that defenses have to focus on and prepare for. You talk about trying to take away their best player. Well, he's our best player."

Stewart's biological father chose not to be a part of his life when Stewart was 5. While that decision hurt, Stewart said he has been fueled more by the people in his life, like his mother, Tiffany.

He said he is thankful for a family friend, Marvin Johnson, who always served as a mentor and helped him stay on a path that eventually led him to college. He said he owes an equal debt to his former step-father, Carl Wade, who held him accountable at home.

It is from them he always has drawn confidence, strength and desire to compete.

"You think about certain stuff when you're not on the field, like, 'Dang, I didn't get as many yards. Am I not really that good?' Stewart said. "But then at the time when I am on the field, I have this attitude like if I'm not getting as many yards, it will come. It's like a challenge when I'm on the field, too.

"What makes me a good competitor is I'm always fighting, I don't want to say physically, but there is always a challenge I'm trying to overcome."

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CU to fans: Come to games earlier

Late-arriving crowds cause traffic delays at and around stadium

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 11/10/2011 08:09:57 PM MST

Fans of University of Colorado teams need to change their culture and arrive at games earlier, associate athletics director for game management and operations Tom McGann said.

Aside from crowded entrances to the stadium close to game time and one attention-starved fan bolting onto the field and disrupting the action briefly, the first Friday night football game in University of Colorado history last week went smoothly from an operations standpoint.

That is good news because the school definitely will be hosting more Thursday and Friday night football games in the future now that it is part of the Pac-12 Conference.

Part of the league's new television contract with ESPN and Fox Sports calls for eight Thursday and Friday games each season. That doesn't necessarily mean CU will play in one of those games each season, but there also might be seasons in which the Buffs have more than one weeknight contest.

McGann said one of the few problems last week when the Buffs hosted USC was too many fans, especially students, arriving just before kickoff or just after the game had started. It is a familiar problem that happens frequently for Saturday games, too.

It's also a problem the school can't do much to fix outside of asking fans to come earlier. There are only so many gates and so many workers available to man those entrances.

"We had 5,000 people in the stands 30 minutes before kick," McGann said. "I can't move 45,000 people in 30 minutes. Be in before Ralphie. Be in for the band. The band is awesome. The band plays at that 17-minute mark. Come see who we honor. See the senior day. We're just trying to put more stuff earlier in the pregame to get more people there early.

"When I go to a Broncos game, I go an hour early because I want to make sure I get in. We've just got to get that cultural change. That's all. It's got to be a cultural shift."

McGann said the school assembled a committee last summer when the game was moved to Friday night. Staffers from all over campus worked together to limit the effect a Friday night game would have on a campus just winding down business for the week. Previous experience for a Thursday night game against West Virginia in 2008 helped.

Many fans were not able to park in their usual spots on campus, but the school made space available on the east campus where about 1,000 cars were eventually parked. The norm is 300 for a Saturday game. Those fans were able to take shuttles to and from the stadium.

"Raising people's expectations, knowing it's coming and making the proper planning, I received -- I should knock on wood -- I received really no complaints from campus about the Friday night game," McGann said.

CU students are almost always a late-arriving bunch. Aside from a few hundred diehards, vast portions of the student section often don't fill up until late in the first quarter or into the second quarter regardless of the day and time of games.

McGann said he visited the student gate about 20 minutes before kickoff last week and there was a very short line to get into the stadium. He said 10 minutes later, a more substantial line had formed and 10 minutes after kickoff he estimated 5,000 students were standing in line.

"They really all came at the same time," McGann said. "So the student gate was tough. We really had to almost re-man it. ... We had a wave of people come early and then a lull and then a wave of people came late."

CU hosts its final home football game of the season Saturday, but it is just tipping off the basketball season tonight.

Last season there were often epic traffic jams on game nights at the Coors Events Center caused by the same core issue. Too many people arrived at the arena at or near game time causing delays. The school and campus police hope to avoid those problems this year by encouraging fans to arrive earlier whenever possible.

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1-9 Buffs share company among CU's other terrible teams

By John Henderson
The Denver Post

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CU head coach Jon Embree watches his Buffs lose to Washington State earlier this season. (Hyoung Chang, The Denver Post)

BOULDER — If first-year coach Jon Embree wants some solace — however temporary — in this 1-9 season, he can always thumb through yellowed pages of Colorado football history. (This isn't Alabama. The pages are pretty yellowed.)

He could look at the box score from that 1980 team that lost to Oklahoma 82-42 — at home.

He could see how a 1962 team ravaged by NCAA probation got walloped over three straight weeks, 150-6.

Hey, he could even look to his sophomore year in 1984, when the Buffaloes went 1-10 while a teammate clung to life.

Yes, with Colorado clinching its sixth straight losing season, matching a school low from 1979-84, it's time to take an ugly look back at the worst teams in school

history.

How does this team rank? You can put it in the bottom five. It has already given up a school-record 28 touchdown passes. Entering Saturday's 12:30 p.m. game against Arizona (2-7, 1-6 Pac-12), Colorado's 447.2 yards allowed per game are the second-most in school history. CU is getting beaten by an average score of 39-19.

Yet if you see the bottom feeders of the record book, parallels emerge. The 1962 team was on probation, and Bill McCartney's 1982 and 1984 teams were part of the rebuilding project left from the Chuck Fairbanks disaster from 1979-81.

But Eddie Crowder took over in 1963 and had

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them in a bowl by 1967, and McCartney won a 1990 national title.

If Colorado loses out, its 1-12 record will be the worst in 121 years. But it won't be the worst team. We're not talking about that inaugural 0-4 squad in 1890, which got outscored 217-4, including a 103-0 squeaker to Colorado Mines.

Said Colorado's longtime sports information director Dave Plati, "We're still trying to figure out how they lost 103-0 when touchdowns were only four points."

No, we're talking a more modern time, one many still remember by one name.

"Fairbanks," Larry Zimmer, the voice of Colorado



CU's Derek Fullmer can't watch as a 38-6 loss to Kansas State ends 1-10 season in 1984. (Denver Post file)

football since 1971, said. "I thought that's the most hapless team I've ever seen."

On that note, let's take a look at the other four worst teams, in order of stench:

1980: How low can you go?

Fairbanks' second year ended 1-10 and included a 41-22 home loss to a Drake team that would drop to Division I-AA the next year. No other Buffs team has given up more than the 464.4 yards per game in 1980.

They opened the season against UCLA in the L.A. Coliseum and fell behind at halftime, 56-0. Then-UCLA basketball coach Larry Brown came on Zimmer's broadcast at halftime and said, "Hey, I'll take 56 points at the half any day."

Of the 28 recruits who came in under Bill Mallory in 1978, only four remained by 1981, the year after Fairbanks left.

The darkest moment came on Oct. 4 when Oklahoma came to Folsom Field and put up 875 yards in that 82-42 win.

"I just remember their backup quarterback had three rushes for 150 yards," said Doug Krahenbuhl, 51, a guard on that team and who owns an oil and gas company. "It just seemed like every time they'd get the ball, they'd do one or two plays and they'd be running 70 yards for a

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touchdown."

1962: Scandalous season

Colorado football seemed ready to soar under Sonny Grandelius until the NCAA didn't take kindly to him recruiting players on other college teams. The ensuing probation turned over nearly the entire lineup, and the Buffs went from 9-2 in 1961 to 2-8.

Rhodes Scholar Joe Romig, a guard-linebacker on Grandelius' teams, was a grad student in physics in 1962. He sat in the stands and watched a team shredded by ineligibility play under interim coach Bud Davis, who was the dean of students. In consecutive weeks they lost to Nebraska 31-6, Oklahoma 62-0 and Missouri 57-0.

Recruiting other schools' players wasn't the only violation.

"We had offseason practices," Romig said. "In the spring we had a noncredit class called football lab. We'd go over and hit in the rifle shed. Coaches would show up in hooded jackets."

1982: McCartney's first test

McCartney didn't get hired to replace Fairbanks until June 10, all but nullifying his first recruiting class. The

Buffs went 2-8-1 and were a comedy offensively. They averaged only 279.5 yards a game. Quarterback Randy Essington threw two touchdown passes and 13 interceptions.

Buffalo chips

A look at what could be considered the five worst teams in Colorado football's 121-year history:

Year	Record	Yards allowed	Yards Gained	Games vs. top 25
1962	2-8	386.2	250.0	2
1980	1-10	464.4	323.3	3
1982	2-8-1	396.7	279.5	3
1984	1-10	395.2	293.5	4
2011	1-9	447.2	340.0	2

(The Denver Post)

"We put an offensive coaching staff together and took some of the best of each of their ideas," McCartney said. "In retrospect, that wasn't a good idea."

Fairbanks left him no personnel but did leave advice that would eventually lead McCartney to the 1990 national title.

"He said to me, 'Let me tell you what I'd do different if I had to do it over again,'" McCartney said. " 'I'd recruit California and Texas. I did not know that when I got here.' "



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1984: Reinhardt's tragedy

This makes the list almost by default. In Week 2, star tight end Ed Reinhardt fell into a coma after a hit in a loss at Oregon. Doctors didn't give him much chance to live.

The Buffaloes sleepwalked through a 1-10 season.

"It was devastating," McCartney said. "It was crushing misfortune. I'll never know how we got through that. We went to Notre Dame (the following week) and Gerry Faust was the coach. My guys didn't want to play. And neither did I."

They beat an Iowa State team that finished 2-7-2. They were outrushed 257.1 yards per game to 59.7. They gave up 54 sacks.

"How bare was the cupboard?" said Embree, the leading receiver that season. "Let's just say we had some unique players."

Arizona won't win Saturday by 82-42, let alone 103-0. When this long season finally ends, Embree must go back and look at history to see what Crowder and McCartney eventually did.

In other words, just turn the page.

Three questions for Colorado

1. On Senior Day, will Colorado's seniors rise to the occasion? For the last time, one of CU's largest senior classes in memory — numbering 28 — will walk down the ramp at Folsom Field. That includes projected starters Toney Clemons (WR), Ethan Adkins (OG), Ryan Miller (OG), Ryan Deehan (TE), Tyler Hansen (QB), Rodney Stewart (TB), Evan Harrington (FB), Curtis Cunningham (DT), Josh Hartigan (LB), Patrick Mahnke (LB) and Travis Sandersfeld (DB). Fond memories of their final season have been few. Winning Saturday would salvage a good one.

2. With the return of defensive backs coming off

injuries and suspensions, can Colorado afford to blitz more often and put pressure on Arizona senior quarterback Nick Foles? In a conference that features a litany of marquee quarterbacks with Andrew Luck (Stanford), Matt Barkley (Southern California) and Darron Thomas (Oregon), it may surprise even the most avid college football fans that Foles tops the Pac-12 in average passing yards per game (361.7) — by a wide margin.

3. Will CU receiver Paul Richardson get back into the swing of things and flex his explosiveness? Richardson returned to the field last week against Southern Cal after missing the previous four games with a knee sprain. He looked rusty, however. Against the Trojans, Richardson managed just two catches for a total of 18 yards. CU needs its fastest player to put pressure on a banged-up Arizona defense. *Tom Kensler, The Denver Post*

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UA football: Assistant knows CU from inside

Ryan Finley Arizona Daily Star | Posted: Friday, November 11, 2011 12:00 am

A full-time assistant coach at age 25, Ryan Walters is both a footnote in Arizona Wildcats history and a punch line to the kind of schtick he long ago got tired of hearing.

The UA's secondary coach is so young ...

How young is he?

Walters is *so* young that he has a killer scouting report on Colorado heading into Saturday's game against the Buffaloes in Boulder, Colo.

Not because he has watched hours of game film - although he has. It's because Walters played at CU alongside quarterback Tyler Hansen, tailback Rodney Stewart and a handful of other Buffaloes stars just a few short years ago. In fact, he started 33 games at Colorado from 2004 to 2008.

Walters came to Arizona as a graduate assistant in 2010, and was promoted to secondary coach last spring when Greg Brown left to become the defensive coordinator at - where else? - Colorado, and Duane Akina joined, then left, the Wildcats' coaching staff.

Walters, who will turn 26 on Jan. 21, remains the youngest full-time coach in modern UA football history and is the second-youngest assistant in the Pac-12. Utah quarterbacks coach Brian Johnson, 24, is a year younger.

Walters admitted that this weekend's trip to Colorado will be "weird," but knows exactly where his loyalties lie.

"I'm not conflicted at all. I'm going to try to go out there and get the win," he said. "I know those guys pretty well. Hopefully, that translates to good schemes on our end."

The Star talked to Arizona's oh-so-young assistant about his weekend trip, Colorado's elevation and running with Ralphie.

Here's what he said:

On Boulder, and game day at Folsom Field: "I had a great time there. The atmosphere is awesome. It's a great stage to play the game: the mountains in the background, the whole vibe, Ralphie (the buffalo) running out. There's good tradition there."

On how CU has changed over the years: "Obviously, that program's been struggling as of late. It's a little different than it was in the '90s, to say the least. So in that aspect, it's different. But the stage and the venue are awesome, and the crowd's right on top of you on the short sidelines. It's a scenic place, a beautiful campus with beautiful scenery."

On the elevation at Folsom Field, the third-highest stadium in major college football: "Everybody talks about it when they go there, but once the whistle blows, nobody is thinking about whether or not they can breathe. It's, 'Where do I line up? Who do I tackle?' Those things."

On whether the elevation affects opponents, or if it's overrated: "If you're playing a sport like basketball, you might be a little more affected because you're constantly on the move. In football, you get so many breaks between plays. ... The only time you can really tell is when you get a long series or something like that. You just gotta go play, man. It's not as hyped up as you would think; just go out and play."

On Ralphie, the charging buffalo who leads CU's team onto the field: "It's up there, man. That's a special deal, to have a mascot that's that big being able to contain and run him on the field. It's good for the fans, it's good for the atmosphere, and I think it's good for college football."

Up next

- What: Arizona at Colorado
- When: 12:30 p.m. Saturday
- TV: Fox College Sports (check your channel lineup for availability)
- Radio: 1290-AM, 107.5-FM