



Quarterback Tyler Hansen play his final CU game Friday at Utah.

Photo Courtesy: Associated Press



Brooks: Embree, Buffs Eye Last Chance To End Streak

Release: 11/25/2011 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

SALT LAKE CITY - The last thing Jon Embree wanted was to have The Streak still intact for the last game. But here he is in the waning hours before Game 13 and his first Colorado football team remains winless on the road.

By now, Embree must feel like the nasty numbers - 24 straight out-of-state road losses since 2007 - have been stamped on his forehead. Although he inherited the bulk of the road defeats from his predecessor, Embree's team has been responsible for half a dozen.

Road Game No. 7 - the most ever in one season for a Buffs team - and the final opportunity to unload The Streak comes Friday against Utah in Rice-Eccles Stadium (1:30 p.m. MST, Root Sports). CU is 2-10 overall, 1-7 in its first Pac-12 Conference season. Utah is 7-4, 4-4 and still working to represent the South Division in the first Pac-12 championship game.

Embree and his staff have tried to facilitate a road breakthrough since before the opener at Hawai'i - a 34-17 loss and, as it turns out, the closest the Buffs have come to an out-of-state win in 2011. Their average margin of defeat on the road this season: 29.5 points.

"It's an issue that I have talked about since Day One," Embree said of the nearly 5-year-old road rash that he referred to earlier this week as "a stain on the program."

"We've let the players know, let the seniors know what is at stake for them," he continued. "We've talked about it every week, about the opportunity that presents itself. We've done special stuff for five or six games. They just have to play. At some point as a player, it is not about what the coaches are doing, you just have to go out there and play."

But playing efficiently, sometimes even energetically, once state lines are crossed obviously is a chore for the Buffs. Embree can only speak to this team's road difficulties and he refuses to blame a "mental block" for its six consecutive losses.

"This is just my first time through it, so I can only go through what I have seen and there have definitely been some missed opportunities," he said. "Some of it is that we have played some really good teams on the road. It is a combination of that."

"Whether or not it is a mental road block or not, you would have to ask those guys. I know our numbers are ridiculous, home and away. The numbers are crazy. I don't try and get too much into it. I'm not a guy that will try and figure out the mental block thing or whatever. To me, I'm excited every time you get to play, every time you get to compete. I would like to think that there are enough guys on this team that it doesn't matter where you are playing, you get to go play."

The "ridiculous" home and away numbers are just that. In their five home games, the Buffs have averaged 25.2 points and 406.2 yards in total offense; in their six road losses, those numbers are 14.1 and 322.4. (Not factored: 360 yards of total offense in a 28-14 win against Colorado State in Denver.)

Junior defensive tackle Will Pericak concedes road games require "a little more mental preparation because the 12th man out there isn't going to be with you. But really, it's just football and you've got to come prepared to play. The whole road losing streak, I don't look much into that. I just say you've got to go win a game."

"I'm not thinking we have to end anything. I'm thinking of what I have to do personally in the game to win. I have to play my best to win a game. If everybody's doing that, the road losing streak is going to end."

For it to end Friday, the Buffs must stop - or at least slow - Utes tailback John White IV, who averages 125.2 rushing yards and is second in the conference behind Oregon's LaMichael James (142.8). Most of the Utes' offense is found in the 5-8, 186-pound White. Utah is last in the Pac-12 in passing (170.4 yards a game) and total offense (311.9 yards a game), but seventh in rushing offense (141.5).

"They run the ball pretty well," Pericak said. "Every week that's a challenge for us. We've got to stop the run, stop their power and their zone (option) - that's what they run. If we can stop that, it gives us a chance."

But this isn't a promising stat heading into this game: The Buffs have slipped to last in the league in rushing defense, allowing 191.8 yards a game. The Utes are No. 2 in the same category, permitting just 97.3 yards a game.

Given Utah's strength against the run, CU will need quarterback Tyler Hansen and the passing game to be on target - and that need is underscored by Utah's 18 pass interceptions, a conference high. "We have to play smart and do our jobs," Hansen said.

Utah's strong comeback in conference play - the Utes entered November with a 1-4 record - has been engineered by backup quarterback Jon Hays, who transferred to Utah last summer when Nebraska-Omaha dropped its football program. Hays (6-0, 212 pounds) took over in early October when starter Jordan Wynn suffered a shoulder injury that required surgery.

Utes offensive coordinator Norm Chow hasn't asked Hays to exceed his capabilities. Touted initially as more runner than passer, Hays has completed 55.1 percent of his throws for 1,081 yards, with eight touchdowns and seven interceptions. His 49 rushing attempts have totaled minus-54 yards, but that figure is diminished by the yardage lost from Utah's 27 quarterback sacks.

Embree said Hays "gives his guys a chance" and manages the run game well behind "a big, physical line. Obviously, that's part of the reason for their success in the run game. You can see (Hays) gets more comfortable the more he's played."

Embree wishes he could say the same for his team's road play, but it isn't so. Hansen calls CU's embarrassingly long string of losses "hard to explain," but he tried with this: "You don't have that home crowd there . . . you do something good and expect to hear some cheers. The young guys especially expect to hear crowd going crazy and it doesn't happen. I think we need to create our own energy and be our own crowd. It's tough; it's something we need to figure out soon."

By late Friday afternoon, either they'll have figured it out or The Streak will be packed up and taken into 2012. It's not baggage Embree wants to carry.

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THORBURN: CU Buffs' road woes won't end at Utah

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 11/24/2011 07:23:07 PM MST

There is actually a coach at Colorado who expects to win on the road.

In fact, a true road triumph doesn't even guarantee Tad Boyle will be smiling on the trip home.

That was the case on Thanksgiving eve when the CU men's basketball team pulled out a 76-73 overtime victory over Air Force at Clune Arena.

Boyle, while grateful for the win, wasn't sure what to think of his team getting rewarded despite committing 18 turnovers and missing six free throws.

"I'm glad we won. But there is nothing encouraging that came out of this game for the Colorado Buffaloes, other than the fact that we have a gritty team and we compete," Boyle said. "I thought we were outplayed for the majority of the game tonight, and we snuck out of here with a win.

"I'm not sure we deserved a win."

Perhaps some day Jon Embree can be as picky. An ugly win for CU Friday at Utah would be a Picasso for the first-year head coach.

The Buffs enter the season finale at Rice-Eccles Stadium against the Utes having lost 23 consecutive road games and 24 straight games played outside the Centennial State lines.

The painful streak began with a 31-28 loss on Nov. 10, 2007, at Iowa State. Hawk-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named and Co. managed to blow a 21-0 halftime lead in Ames.

Still, Kevin Eberhart appeared to force overtime with a clutch 50-yard field goal as the clock was winding down in regulation. The officials ruled that CU didn't get the kick off in time, flagged the visitors for a delay of game penalty, and the ensuing 55-yard attempt was no good.

"I don't know if I do have an understanding of what transpired at the end," H-W-M-N-B-N said. "I will seek an explanation, but I don't know right now. I've been in a lot of bizarre games, this might be close to the top. It's never over until it's over, and not everybody buys into that, but I've seen it all."

What about a 57-yard field goal, coach?

On Nov. 28, 2008, the Buffs had a rivalry road victory over Big Red in hand until Alex Henery's 57-yard field goal gave Nebraska the memorable win over CU at Memorial Stadium.

"It's going to be tough, but I think we have a lot of young guys who have learned how it is going into a hostile environment to fight hard to try and get that win," Cody Hawkins said that Friday after Thanksgiving when asked if the performance could be a springboard for the 2009 season.

CU's next road game was at Toledo on Sept. 6, 2009. The Buffs' already fragile psyche was shattered by a 54-38 drubbing at the Glass Bowl.

"It's the nature of the beast that (fans) want us to win. All I can do is all I can do. We're going to have some supporters, we're going to have some detractors," H-W-M-N-B-N said when asked about the natives getting restless back in Colorado after the pathetic performance. "I can't control what people think, nor am I willing. I know inside our program we're doing things right ... we've just got to grow up a little, get our momentum to turn and it can be way different."

Nothing changed. CU was defeated at West Virginia, Texas, Kansas State, Iowa State and Oklahoma State that season.

After lopsided losses at Cal, Missouri and Oklahoma last fall, CU had an opportunity to finally end the misery on Nov. 6, 2010, in Lawrence, Kan.

CU led by 28 minutes in the fourth quarter and still managed to lose 52-45 to an awful Kansas team.

"There's no way we should have lost that football game," senior wide receiver Scotty McKnight said following the epic collapse that led to Brian Cabral taking over as interim head coach for the final three games. "I hate losing, but if a team's better than us I'll give hats off to that team. But right now ... we're a way better football team (than Kansas). We basically just shut down."

Embree tried to open up new ways of thinking about playing on the road. Despite all of motivational tactics, the 2011 Buffs haven't been able to shake their losing mentality.

CU hasn't even been competitive, losing by 17 points at Hawaii, 20 points at Ohio State, 41 points at Stanford, 28 points at Washington and 34 points at Arizona State.

Tyler Hansen guaranteed a victory last week over UCLA. One gullible scribe even bought into the Buffs' false bravado and predicted the Buffs would end the skid with a breakthrough win at the Rose Bowl.

The Bruins won 45-6.

Anyone can be fooled once. I'm thinking 25 consecutive road losses is an undeniable trend.

Utah 38, Colorado 20.

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CU football

Jon Embree's CU Buffs facing dubious marks

Loss to Utah would add up to most in school history

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

Posted: 11/24/2011 07:20:43 PM MST

If the Colorado football team loses its season finale today at Utah, the 2011 Buffaloes will be considered the worst team in school history in at least one respect.

No previous group of players and coaches in Boulder have lost 11 games in a single season since the program was founded in 1890. Only three teams prior to this year were unfortunate enough to lose 10 times in one autumn. And the very first group of Buffs 120 seasons ago is the only team to go winless in CU history.

Of course it is a fools errand to compare a team from one year to a team from the next, let alone comparing them across the decades. Who is to know whether that 1-10 CU team in 1980 would beat this year's Buffs, or how the 1984 1-10 Buffs would fare against the 2006 2-10 squad?

Statistics might help answer which is the worst team, but even then one is comparing different styles of football on both sides of the ball as well as different rules being in effect. Perhaps points scored for and against would be the best indicator. This year's team has allowed 461 points and scored only 240.

The 1980 team lost eight games by 20 or more points. By comparison the 1984 team lost only four times and the 2006 team lost only twice by such wide margins. This season's team could match that 1980 team. A blowout loss Friday by 20 or more would be the eighth of the season for coach Jon Embree's team.

The fact that the 2011 Buffs have a chance to lose 11 games is due, at least in part, to a quirk of the schedule. They played at Hawaii this year allowing a 13th game on the schedule and the possibility of an 11th loss today.

Avoiding that 11th loss today would also put a stop to other ugly numbers haunting the program.

The most significant of them surround the road losing streak.

CU hasn't won a road game in 1,490 days, more than four calendar years. The Buffs' last victory on the road came on Oct. 27, 2007 and if the streak continues into next season it will be 1,785 days old when the next opportunity to end it arrives on Sept. 15 at Fresno State.

Embree and his Buffs have talked all season about ending the streak, but they haven't come close in any of the six previous times they have left the state. The streak stands at 23 consecutive road games and 24 games played outside the state.

"You don't want to lose your last game, period," said Embree, who lost his final game as a Buff in the Bluebonnet Bowl against Baylor. "For some of these guys, it is their last game, your last game. There are 28 guys graduating, maybe 24 or 25 of them that this is their last game; your last chance, your last opportunity."

Friday's game features a CU team with a senior class that is trying to avoid losing its 34th game (since the start of the 2008 season) and a Utah team with a senior class that has a chance to leave its program as the winning class in school history.

"I think guys will play hard," quarterback Tyler Hansen said. "Sometimes playing hard isn't good. Sometimes you play it too hard you make some errors here and there, you over run some things. So we've got to play smart. We've just got to do our job."

While the Buffs have nothing for which to play other than ending the streak and finishing on a winning note, Utah needs a victory to keep its hopes alive of winning the Pac-12 Conference South Division and playing at either Stanford or Oregon next week in the inaugural conference championship game.

Utah is the hottest team in the Pac-12 at the moment. The Utes have won four conference games in a row after starting out 0-4 in the league. Coach Kyle Whittingham's team has rallied behind backup quarterback Jon Hays, who has gone 5-2 since taking over the starting role when Jordan Wynn suffered a season ending injury.

In some ways, the Utes have become the team the Buffs had hoped to this season. They play stout defense and run the ball down opponents' throats.

Utah running back John White has rushed for more than 100 yards in four straight games, carrying the ball no fewer than 27 times in each of those contests. He's coming off a performance last week in which he carried the ball 42 times for 186 yards. He also caught a pass for a 43-yard touchdown.

"He runs through tackles well," Embree said. "You can't arm tackle him, and he has enough speed to finish it once he gets through."

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Ryan Miller savors his last chance to play for CU

Posted: 11/25/2011 01:00:00 AM MST
Updated: 11/25/2011 01:14:24 AM MST **By Tom Kensler**
The Denver Post

Posted: 11/25/2011 01:00:00 AM MST
Updated: 11/25/2011 01:14:24 AM MST

Ryan Miller paused and caught himself from becoming overcome with emotion while talking about Colorado's game today at Utah. It will be the Colorado senior guard's last as a college football player.

A 6-foot-8, 295-pound teddy bear? "I wouldn't go that far," junior linebacker Jon Major said. "Ryan is a pretty intense guy."

A team captain, Miller said "it's crazy" how quickly five years can fly by.

"To play for the black and gold, it means a lot. I've really grown up as a person," he said earlier this week. "You understand priorities, what holds more value. That goes for football, as a college student, in life."

Although Colorado never compiled a winning season during his stay, Miller said he has absolutely

no regrets about not picking Notre Dame or Miami or Southern California or Oklahoma or Nebraska after earning 2006 high school All-American honors at Columbine. An Internet

recruiting site ranked Miller as the nation's 23rd-best prospect, regardless of position.

He took an official visit to Notre Dame, but there was never much doubt about where he wanted to play. Five days after touring South Bend, he committed to Colorado — during the middle of his senior season at Columbine.

"This is CU. This is home. This is the Flatirons," Miller said. "This is where I wanted to play since I started watching college football. I'd do it again."

Oh, Miller does have one regret: Among players on the current roster, only Miller and senior tailback Brian Lockridge played in a bowl game. Both were freshmen at the 2007 Independence Bowl in Shreveport, La. Alabama, in its first season under Nick Saban, jumped out to a 27-0 lead but won by just 30-24 as Colorado controlled the final 2 1/2 quarters.

"The bowl game was fun, and I feel bad for guys like Tyler (Hansen) and Rodney (Stewart) who never got that chance," Miller said.

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"That's on me. That's on the team to not have gotten another opportunity. But the record hasn't shown the fun we have had as a team. It's been a blast playing college football."

It's also been a challenge. Miller played for three offensive line coaches: Jeff Grimes (2007-08), Denver Johnson (2009-10) and now Steve Marshall.

Miller became a starter at right offensive tackle as a freshman and has been a regular in the lineup since. He was granted a medical redshirt in 2008 after suffering a season-ending leg fracture against Florida State in the Buffs' fourth game. Miller made a permanent switch to right guard before the 2009 season.

"You definitely learn different parts of the game from different coaches," Miller said. "You might not see something from one coach, but another coach might explain it better. In that regard, I feel it's helped me a lot.

"But as far as cohesiveness on the offensive line (with three coaches), it's been difficult. You get used to one guy's playing style and what you're supposed to do, and then you have to completely change that."

Miller said he has become more of a student of the game this season under Marshall, who is in his 32nd year of coaching. That includes six years in the NFL as an assistant coach with Houston (2002-05) and Cleveland (2007-08).

"With Coach Marshall, you get the pro side of it," Miller said. "Playing under him, I've really learned that, 'If it's this type of coverage, they

can't really leave that side of the field open so they're probably bringing (a pass rush)

Blog: CU Buffs



The Denver Post's sports reporters contribute analysis, notes and minutiae on this blog dedicated to CU athletics.

from this side.' You understand different flows, how to play against different guys, different angles."

Marshall said he could tell right away that Miller has a lot of "want-to" in him. The coach also praises Miller's consistency. Miller was called for two penalties last weekend in the loss to UCLA, but they were only his second and third flags of the season.

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Marshall believes Miller will get a shot at playing in the NFL. He has good straight-ahead speed and works hard to improve his lateral quickness.

"Ryan is a prospect in the NFL both at tackle and at guard," Marshall said. "The NFL will decide which one suits him best. His feet are plenty good enough to play either one in the NFL.

"He's got a great work ethic. He's obviously got the physical body you're looking for. He's going to keep working. He's an accountable guy, a dependable guy. That's what the NFL is all about."

Marshall also expects CU left guard Ethan Adkins (6-4, 290) to get invited to an NFL camp. Adkins is a former Douglas County High standout.

"I've always talked about playing in the NFL," Miller said. "I think having played both guard and tackle will help. But we've got Utah right now. That's what's on my mind. This is our last dance. I'm going to play lights out."

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Three questions for Colorado

1. Which running back has the bigger game: Colorado senior Rodney Stewart or Utah junior John White? Both teams depend on their featured running back, so this individual battle could, almost by itself, determine the outcome of the game. White, a 5-foot-8, 186-pound junior college transfer, ranks second among Pac-12 players in rushing with 125.2 yards per game, trailing

only Oregon's LaMichael James (142.8). Stewart (5-6, 175) ranks seventh among the league's rushers (81.9) and needs 41 receiving yards to become the 27th major-college player in NCAA history to have 3,000 yards rushing and 1,000 yards receiving.

2. Will Colorado's defense hold down Utah's scoring and give the Buffs a chance? In four previous Pac-12 road games, Colorado has been crushed by an average score of 48-13. Each of the four opponents was able to put at least 45 points on the board. CU simply lacks the offensive firepower to keep up in a shootout.

3. Can CU finally put an end to its 24-game road losing streak for games played outside the state of Colorado? That includes the loss to Alabama in the 2007 Independence Bowl at Shreveport, La., and dates to an Oct. 27, 2007, win at Texas Tech. If Colorado fails to win today, it will mean that more than four full seasons have passed since the Buffs last won on the road. *Tom Kensler, The Denver Post*



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Deseret News

Utah Utes football: Buffaloes again pledge to end streak

By Jody Genessy

Deseret News

Published: Friday, Nov. 25, 2011 12:22 a.m. MST

SALT LAKE CITY — It's been a long road for the Colorado football team.

In fact, success away from the Centennial State has been as nonexistent for the Buffaloes as noontime bargains will be for Black Friday shoppers who sleep in Friday.

For those who are counting — and Colorado's seniors are — this program hasn't won a road game in four seasons.

The last one came at Texas Tech in 2007.

Twenty-three road losses ago.

"It's crazy," Colorado first-year coach Jon Embree said, "but that's what we're staring at right now."

Added Embree: "I really haven't discussed with the players the path of what has happened, why they think this is or isn't. My whole thing has been we have this stain on the program and we have to get it off somehow."

Senior David Goldberg believes the Buffaloes will find the detergent and elbow grease Friday at Rice-Eccles Stadium.

At least he hopes so. The defensive end is one of 26 Colorado seniors who've never experienced a victory as a visitor.

"Speaking for the seniors, we aren't going out on a losing note," Goldberg told the Denver Post this week. "We're going to end that (road) losing streak."

Bold prediction considering Colorado lost its previous six road games (not counting its rivalry game against Colorado State in Denver) this season by an average of 29.8 points. Its closest road loss was a 34-17 defeat at Hawaii.

Not to mention the former Big 12 squad is taking on a red-hot Ute team that has won four straight and is scrapping for a spot in the Pac-12 championship.

"They said they're going to stop their losing streak this week, so we've got to get after them," Utah running back John White IV said. "They're coming out there to stop something and to kill our shine, so we've got to come out there and bust them right in the face and get after it."

Embree knows snapping the road streak in Utah will be a challenge. He respects the Utes' offensive and defensive lines, White and especially defensive back Brian Blechen, whom he said can "single-handedly wreck things for you."

But he's hoping his football players will find a way to win for the team's seniors. He's reminded his outgoing guys this is their last chance to make a memory — and perhaps their final football game ever.

Embree's message to his seniors: "When you talk to your kids when they're growing up and they ask ... what it was like when you played, what are you going to tell them?"

Are you going to tell them, 'Well, daddy never won on the road.'

"Or," he added, "are you going to say, 'You know what? It was a difficult time, but we had this streak and our last game we won it and here's what happened.'"

Colorado lost to UCLA last week, 45-6, after beating Arizona, 48-29, for its second win the previous week. The Buffs (2-10, 1-7 Pac-12) have lost at Arizona State, Washington, Stanford, Ohio State and Hawaii.

Utah (7-4, 4-4) has won three of its five home contests this season.

"At the end of the day," Embree said, "to end the streak you have to play better than the team you're playing."

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