

Deep Ducks bringing high-powered offense to Folsom Field

Helfrich leading Oregon offense under Kelly

By **Ryan Thorburn** Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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Wounded Ducks.

No. 9 Oregon will limp into Folsom Field for this Saturday's game against Colorado.

Even if superstar running back LaMichael James (dislocated elbow) and starting quarterback Darron Thomas (knee) miss the game, the visitors from Eugene will be heavy favorites against the bruised and battered Buffs.

Reserves Kenjon Barner (171 yards, one touchdown) and De'Anthony Thomas (73 yards, two touchdowns) -- who would be starters on most teams -- shredded Arizona State's defense late Saturday to lead Oregon to a 41-27 victory.

Backup quarterback, Bryan Bennett, marched the mighty Ducks on four scoring drives in the second half against the Sun Devils, who still lead the Pac-12's South Division.

"We've had a lot of guys offensively, defensively, on special teams unfortunately go down," Oregon offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich told espn.com after the game. "It's next guy in."

Helfrich was Dan Hawkins' offensive coordinator at CU from 2006-08. The Oregon native wisely abandoned a sinking ship in Boulder to become Chip Kelly's right-hand man.

The Ducks led the nation in scoring (47.0 ppg) and total offense (530.69 ypg). Oregon is currently third nationally in scoring (48.7 ppg) and eighth in total offense (539.0 ypg).

Meanwhile, CU's injury-plagued defense is coming off a sad performance in Seattle. Washington piled up 562 yards during a 52-24 victory over the Buffs.

The only teams that have been able to stop the Ducks recently reside in the SEC.

"Speed and tempo," CU defensive coordinator Greg Brown said when asked what makes Oregon's offense so productive. "They use every inch of the field. The spread you out and use every inch of the field from sideline to sideline."

Brown was the co-defensive coordinator at Arizona last season when the No. 1-ranked Ducks traveled to Tucson to face the No. 20 Wildcats.

Thomas passed for 148 yards and three touchdowns and ran for another score, and James rushed for 126 yards and two touchdowns to lead Oregon to a 48-29 win en route to the BCS national championship game.

"They have great coaches. Last year when we matched up with them, Arizona had a bye, Oregon had a bye," said Brown, who was CU's secondary coach when Helfrich was on the staff. "Mark and those guys did a better job than we did of preparing, and they beat us."

CU quarterback Tyler Hansen is still close to Helfrich, who mentored him through some growing pains early in his career.

"What they're doing at Oregon, you could see that vision when coach Helfrich was here. We just didn't have the personnel," Hansen said. "It's been fun to see his offenses do so well the last few years. That's the vision he had for us."

CU basketball coach Tad Boyle was a young assistant at Oregon from 1994-97. He watched as Rich Brooks was succeeded by offensive coordinator Mike Bellotti and expectations for Oregon football were raised.

Kelly served as Bellotti's offensive coordinator before taking over as head coach in 2009 and leading the Ducks to the Rose Bowl during his first season.

"They've got a lot of continuity in their football program, which I think has served them well. They have a lot of loyal guys," Boyle said. "They were always fun to watch offensively. They were very creative and it was fun to go to the games because there would be trick plays, fake field goals, fake punts, they would push the envelope offensively.

"They're much more athletic now. I think speed is kind of their deal now. I'm not a football guy, but just watching you can tell that. They do think outside the box and they're innovative."

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CU Buffs' Rippy may be out for season

By John Henderson
The Denver Post

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SEATTLE — In order for Colorado to keep from falling from the Pac-12 into the Pac Ocean, the defense must improve in a hurry. And a lot.

How does it do that when every Saturday a young, terribly inexperienced, injury- and suspension-depleted roster gets barbecued by the best quarterbacks in the land?

One way that won't work: Have arguably your best player, linebacker Doug Rippy, go out with a knee injury. Rodney Stewart, the school's No. 2 career rusher, also hurt his knee at Washington and is surely out for Saturday's home game with Oregon.

The pair will learn the results of their MRIs today, and a Colorado official said Sunday that Rippy's "looks like a serious injury." He could be out for the season.

The Buffs have lost nine cornerbacks, a position that was already one of the least experienced in the country. Over a six-week period, Colorado will have faced five of the top 20-rated quarterbacks in Stanford's Andrew Luck (third), Washington's Keith Price (fifth), Oregon's Darron Thomas (11th), USC's Matt Barkley (19th) and Arizona's Nick Foles (20th).

Throw in Arizona State's 6-foot-8 Brock Osweiler, who has already thrown for nearly

2,000 yards, and you have a gauntlet that would challenge Alabama.

Having to learn on the job is the likes of former walk-on Jason Espinoza, who switched from receiver to cornerback only three weeks ago.

"There's nothing magical you can tell them," said first-year coach Jon Embree, whose Buffs are 112th nationally in pass efficiency defense. "We have what we have, so we have to understand that when you're out there, know what you can't do as a player. If you can't run, then come up and jam the guy."

"If you can run, then run. Whatever it is you do well, you do that, and whatever you struggle with, try to keep yourself out of that situation."

How depleted is the cornerback corps? The veteran is Greg Henderson. He's a true freshman. He has started seven games.

"You've just got to practice hard," Henderson said. "Just gain experience with every game. We're young. We're going to make mistakes. We just have to make more plays than mistakes."

Colorado (1-6, 0-3 Pac-12) may catch a break if Thomas is sidelined with the knee injury he suffered Saturday. Losing Rippy, however, puts

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even more pressure on the secondary.

The Buffaloes should get their best pass rusher back when Josh Hartigan returns from a shoulder injury, but the young corners need more help than one player. Maybe they need another year.

"The more mistakes you're going to make, the better you're going to get," said junior safety Ray Polk, who is playing through ligament damage in his wrist. "The thing is you've got to keep your head up and learn from your mistakes. If you go into self-pity, you're not going to get any better and you're not going to help the team get any better."

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