



Toney Clemons hopes for a better outcome in his third encounter with Ohio State.
Photo Courtesy: Associated Press



Brooks: More Focused Clemons Draws Bead On Buckeyes

Release: 09/19/2011 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER - Toney Clemons' sweet memories of Ohio State are scarce. As a kid growing up in New Kensington, Pa., northeast of Pittsburgh, the Buckeyes didn't make his "fave five" - even when they invited him to their Junior Day as a 2007 football recruit.

"For a Pittsburgh guy, Ohio and PA (Pennsylvania) are always rivals in everything - and definitely sports-wise," Clemons said.

"That (Ohio State) was a team I grew up always wanting to play against when I was little. I was fortunate to get a chance to do it - twice."

And twice he was beaten. Clemons played two seasons at Michigan (2007, 2008) before transferring to Colorado in 2009. In '07, his freshman season in Ann Arbor, Ohio State visited and returned to Columbus with a 14-3 win. The following year, Michigan tripped to "The Horseshoe" and left trampled, 42-7. Clemons, who played in 19 games (three starts) while at Michigan, didn't have a stat in either game against the Buckeyes.

Nonetheless, two losses - especially one by 35 points to a bitter rival - are stats that tend to stick with you. He gets another trip to Columbus and a third chance against Ohio State Saturday when the Buffaloes play the Buckeyes (1:30 p.m. MDT, ABC/ESPN2).

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"I want to go out there and make some plays," Clemons said.

For the first time in three games this season, Clemons did exactly that last Saturday against Colorado State, catching three passes for 65 yards - one for a 44-yard touchdown - and returning a kickoff 33 yards - the longest for the Buffs this season.

It was the kind of game he needed, the kind of game his coaches needed to see from him. If there was a break-in period for all of CU's returning players with the incoming coaching staff, Clemons' appeared to stretch about a month beyond the norm.

His productivity (or mostly the lack thereof) in August didn't inspire the kind of confidence the new staff wanted in a senior who had been a vocal leader last fall, when he averaged 11.2 yards on 43 receptions (three TDs) and 25.5 yards on 10 kickoff returns. His preseason camp was littered with mental errors and dropped passes, and he was benched during the opener at Hawai'i for allowing those mistakes to seep into the regular season.

The following week, he met with head coach Jon Embree and receivers coach Bobby Kennedy - face-to-face, heart-to-heart encounters that all agreed were productive, although in the following week's game against California he had only one catch for nine yards. But his performance against CSU appeared to restore his confidence in himself and return him to quarterback Tyler Hansen's radar.

Still, Clemons didn't leave Denver last Saturday afternoon satisfied. "I think could have done better," he said. "I mean, it was good to go out there and get my feet wet and do what we did against a good opponent like that in a rivalry game and get Embree the win.

"But personally, I wasn't satisfied. I left a lot of plays on the field - blocking-wise, return-wise and receiving-wise that I have to clean up before Ohio State. Going in there, you've got to be on your 'A' game at all times. There's a lot of stuff there for me to learn from."

When I asked "T-Clem" to recall the CU staff's reaction to his game last weekend, he said, "It was the same . . . they've been supportive the whole time. That's one thing I'll say through it all - they're character guys. They weren't down on me whenever I was going through whatever I was going through, and I wasn't down on them either.

"They were happy to see me go out and play and have fun - and I *was* having fun. That was the biggest thing they harped on, me going out and being the guy they saw on film from last year who looked like I was having fun playing. I was energetic, and they see me as a guy who can bring that kind of energy to our offense whenever we're struggling . . . they're happy for me to go out and perform well, but they were happy to see me have fun."

At the height of Clemons' mid-August doldrums, Embree on more than one occasion called players out for a lack of focus that Embree believed was resulting in errors. Clemons apparently wasn't accustomed to being repeatedly singled out like that, or getting his practice "reps" and playing time curtailed because of mistakes.

"It was really just tough love from the coaching staff," he said. "It wasn't negative, it was really just tough coaching. They were real critical of me and were expecting me to go out and play not perfect, but pretty flawless. When I wasn't doing it, it kind of hit me hard, the way I took it . . . it was just tough love and it took me a while to realize that.

"I learned from it. I learned a lot about the coaches from it - about how they really see me as a player and as a person, my values. They challenged me every single day and I expect the challenge to be even greater now because those are the kind of guys they are. They want to see me do well, they want to see me reach my goals and my full potential. That's how they've got to do it at times, by being tough on their players. I learned from it, I grew from it. It was just another stepping stone for me.

"I thought I could always take criticism, but no matter how good I thought I was playing, I learned I can always do better. That's something I've known, but also something that I've never been put to the test on until this staff

came around and put it to the test. I really learned that no matter how well I think I'm playing there's always something to improve on. That's the kind of player I've always been anyway. I'm glad they put me through it when they did."

Embree has noticed "more focus, intensity and a sense of urgency" from Clemons. But he wants/needs the CSU game to be a launching pad for Clemons. The Buffs' most productive receiver through the first two games was sophomore Paul Richardson, with astronomical totals of 14 catches for 333 yards and four TDs.

Against the Rams, Richardson slid back to earth, catching only four balls for 27 yards. Clemons and Kyle Cefalo, who caught a 24-yard scoring pass from Hansen, provided compensation, as did tailback Rodney Stewart with seven catches for 93 yards. But the entire receiving corps needs to be at its best for the Buckeyes.

For several reasons, Clemons calls Saturday's game "real personal." His former Michigan connection is one; another is a cousin on the Ohio State roster - junior running back Jordan Hall, who might have been the Buckeyes' lone offensive bright spot in a 24-6 loss Saturday at Miami that dropped Ohio State out of the Top 25 for the first time in seven years.

Hall, of Jeannette, Pa., accounted for 123 total yards against the Hurricanes, including 87 rushing (14 carries), two punt returns for 32 yards and one 4-yard reception. It was his first significant playing time this season.

"It'll be fun to compete against him," Clemons said. "He's a good athlete."

Clemons probably could have joined Hall in Columbus. His Junior Day campus visit was for the '07 spring game, where he encountered "that sea of red. Before that I wasn't too interested; I was sold on Michigan since I was little. That (trip) almost swayed me, but in the end I just couldn't see myself doing it. I just couldn't see myself in that uniform."

He expects to have a multitude of family members and friends in "The Horseshoe" on Saturday. Laughing, he said, "The City of Pittsburgh will be in Columbus. My family, some of my old coaches will be out there. For them, it's going to be like my senior game, my homecoming game. They're all excited for it, too ... it'll be a great experience for all of them to come and watch me play."

If he continues to play to his capabilities, as he began doing against CSU, it will be a better afternoon for all - the Buffs included.

BUFF BITS: Sophomore left tackle David Bakhtiari, who has missed the last two games with a left knee injury, pronounced himself "100 percent ready" Monday afternoon and said he will play Saturday at Ohio State. Bakhtiari has been replaced by junior Ryan Dannowitz and freshman Alex Lewis ... Embree said Dannowitz, who was slowed by a knee sprain two weekends ago against Cal, could again be the first sub in at either tackle The O-line has been the Buffs' "hot spot" for injuries through the season's first three weeks. Embree said redshirt freshman center Daniel Munyer is "day-to-day" with an ankle sprain, leaving sophomore Gus Handler to man the position if Munyer is unavailable. Munyer and Handler have shared snaps for most of the first three games. Senior Shawn Daniels, who was expected to compete for the No. 1 center job, has missed the first three games with a leg injury suffered mid-way through preseason camp. Embree said Daniels still "is a few weeks away" from returning ... After his first win as CU's coach, Embree said congratulations came from "a lot of people" - including former Buffs head coaches Gary Barnett and Bill McCartney, CU assistant Gerry DiNardo and ex-college coach/NFL journeyman Chan Gailey ... The entrance to CU's lower practice field is getting a facelift. Three tall flagstones resembling the Flatirons flank either side of the main gate, with "IT STARTS HERE" inscripted on the left set and "THE PRIDE AND TRADITION OF THE COLORADO BUFFALOES WILL NOT BE ENTRUSTED TO THE TIMID OR THE WEAK" on the right set. Embree said the idea for the rocks came from Jason DePaepe, CU's athletic turf manager, and Conley Smith, a former teammate of Embree's who owns a local landscape business. Smith also donated buckets full of symbolic bricks to Embree in August when camp opened ... CU's 28-14 win over Colorado State was judged significant enough by Embree to be the first "big-game" brick for the hallway outside the Buffs' locker room in the Dal Ward Athletic Center. Scores, dates and other significant stats of CU victories over the years will be restored on other bricks - about 52 of them - in the hallway. The

scores were painted over under the former coaching regime. Embree said restoration of the bricks would begin by Friday The Buffs will have a walk-through at "The Horseshoe" on Friday after landing in Columbus.

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Recruiting trip to Ohio State helped Jon Embree become a CU Buff as a player

By Natalie Meisler
The Denver Post

Posted: 09/20/2011 01:00:00 AM MDT

BOULDER — Give legendary Ohio State tight end and two-time Super Bowl champion John Frank an assist for steering Colorado coach Jon Embree to CU as a player in 1983.

Embree, a highly sought athlete out of Cherry Creek High School, took his first recruiting trip to Ohio State. Frank, a freshman, was his recruiting host.

"It was real interesting," Embree said after practice Monday. "We talked about making the decision and it was late in the recruiting process.

"He told me he would have went to Pitt if Pittsburgh offered him because he's a Pittsburgh guy. He thought if you had a chance to play at home, that should mean something."

Asked if Frank ended up recruiting him to Colorado, Embree said, "a little bit."

Now, Embree brings his CU football team to Columbus, Ohio, to play against the Big Ten's Buckeyes on Saturday.

Another interesting note about Embree's

recruiting trip to Ohio State: He roomed with Tommy Streeter, who joined Embree at CU, where they became roommates.

The trip's highlight had nothing to do with football. As part of a time-honored recruiting tradition, the football recruits attended a basketball game.

"Ohio State was playing Indiana and Indiana was (ranked) No. 1," said Embree, a standout basketball player at Cherry Creek. "I was walking around the arena looking at pictures and this guy comes behind me and said, 'That guy on the right was awful.' "

Embree didn't recognize the player in the photo.

"I turned around, it was Bobby Knight," he said of one of Ohio State's most illustrious basketball alums. "Ohio State beat 'em. They beat No. 1. It was a memorable trip."

Bakhtiari back. CU offensive tackle David Bakhtiari said his knee felt great after Monday's practice. He missed the last two games because of a sprained knee. "I'm 100 percent ready to go," he said.

Freshman center Daniel Munyer had his injured foot in a protective boot. Embree said Munyer

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Home improvement. Three upright sandstone slabs are on each side of the entrance to CU's practice fields. Team mottos, a Buffs helmet and the CU locked-letters logo are featured on the landscaping.

Embree said an old teammate, Conley Smith, is in the landscaping materials business and is responsible for the addition with help from Jason DePaepe, who is with the facilities and grounds department.

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CU Buffs' win over Colorado State another brick in the wall

First victory under coach Jon Embree restores tradition at Dal Ward Center

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

Posted: 09/19/2011 02:33:21 PM MDT



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The bricks are back.

It took two games more than Colorado coach Jon Embree would have liked, but when his team defeated Colorado State on Saturday in Denver, it restored a tradition in Boulder that had been cast aside in recent years.

Former coach Bill McCartney began painting bricks with the scores of big wins outside the team's locker room in the 1980s. The tradition carried on under former coaches Rick Neuheisel and Gary Barnett and became a source of pride for the players who helped add a brick or two to the wall during their careers.

The tradition eventually moved to a wall in a hallway just outside the locker room in the Dal Ward Center and that wall was painted over under former coach Dan Hawkins.

When Embree was hired to replace Hawkins in December, he said it was a priority to him to see that the wall and the tradition

were restored, but he refused to bring it back until this season's team had a brick of its own to add.

Embree's first challenge to his team when he was hired was to earn a brick. After failing to do so at Hawaii and against Cal in the first two games of the year, the Buffs finally came through against the Rams.

The bricks will begin to be painted on the wall possibly as soon as this week, Embree said.

The Buffs could earn a second brick as early as Saturday when they travel to Ohio State where they hope to end an 18-game road losing streak against the Buckeyes, who fell out of the top-25 this week for the first time in seven years.

CU hasn't won a road game since Oct. 27, 2007, at Texas Tech, and ending its skid won't be easy against the Buckeyes, but if it was easy, it wouldn't be worth a brick.

Ohio State is 54-5 at home since the start of the 2002 season.

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Ball staying in CU Buffs' hands

Bufs go for record of three games in row without a turnover

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

Posted:09/20/2011 12:00:21 AM MDT

The Colorado football program has a chance to make history this weekend in Columbus, Ohio, against Ohio State.

No, this isn't another story about the 18-game road losing streak the Buffs will be lugging to the Midwest with them. We're talking about a genuine history-making opportunity here.

The Buffs haven't committed a turnover in their past two games against Cal and Colorado State. The CU record book compiled by sports information guru Dave Plati says the program has never gone three consecutive games without committing a turnover.

"Obviously coach emphasized that right away, and all football coaches do, but they really emphasized it," wide receiver Kyle Cefalo said. "That is something in the past that has really hurt this team, throwing interceptions and fumbling the ball just at the wrong times. It can significantly change games, but as long as the ball is in our hands, we can stay out there.

"They really put it in our head and I think this team really focused on it."

Colorado is tied with eight other programs atop the NCAA rankings for fewest turnovers in the early going this fall.

The only turnover the Buffs have committed came late in the season-opening loss to Hawaii when quarterback Tyler Hansen threw an interception to a defender he never saw.

Hansen has played a big part in the Buffs taking better care of the ball so far.

He came into this season having thrown 17 interceptions and 15 touchdown passes in 20 career games. In three games as a senior, he has thrown seven touchdowns and one interception in 111 passing attempts.

He brings a streak of 81 passes without an interception into Ohio Stadium.

Hansen credited quarterback coach Rip Scherer for helping him understand when and where it is appropriate to take chances with throws and when to throw the ball away or make a play with his feet.

Hansen said he was more likely to throw interceptions earlier in his career because he was still learning to play the position at the college level.

"Part of growing up is learning and taking those chances and making mistakes and learning from them," he said. "I think now I am a smarter player. I know where to go with the ball in certain situations and I think that has helped us out so far."

Colorado coaches are like most in their profession. They use different punishments and motivational tools to encourage players to take care of the football.

Coach Jon Embree said he generally relies on assistant coaches such as offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy to correct turnover problems.

"Fumbles, that is hammered home cause you've got to protect the football, and I think we've done a pretty good job of that," Embree said.

A split second later, he noted that the CU defense has to do a better job of creating turnovers. CU has take the ball from opponents only three times in three games.

The Buffs face an Ohio State defense that has managed just four takeaways so far this season. But it's also a stingy defense that is allowing only 15 points a game.

The Buckeyes also play with more intensity in front of their home crowd, which usually numbers around 100,000 fans.

Points figure to be at a premium Saturday and taking care of the football will be as important as ever.

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