



Senior tailback Brian Lockridge hopes to finish his career on defense.

Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



Brooks: 'B-Lock' Will Take A Run At Cornerback

Release: 09/28/2011 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER - Brian Lockridge crunched the numbers and came up with these: nine and eight. The first figure represents the weeks remaining in his college football career, the second is the number of Colorado defensive backs injured since August.

And "B-Lock" probably factored in these stats: Zero carries through four games this season at tailback and just four kickoff returns for 51 yards - although that last entry may increase.

On Tuesday morning, Lockridge approached offensive coordinator/running backs coach Eric Bieniemy and defensive coordinator/secondary coach Greg Brown about a position switch. On Tuesday afternoon, for the first time in his football career, Lockridge was playing defense.

Brown has nearly run out of bodies. Lockridge, a fleet 5-7, 180-pounder, is offering his.

"I wanted to contribute; the last couple of weeks I've been on the sideline doing nothing - and that included the special teams," Lockridge said. "I just brought it to their (the coaches') attention - if you guys can use me, I'm a senior with nine weeks left. If I can do anything to contribute to the team, that would be great."

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Lockridge's first day on defense probably was what he and his coaches expected: "Horrible technique," he said. "But my recovery speed helped me out."

And his learning speed, he believes, also will help absorb Brown's schemes before CU opens its Pac-12 Conference schedule on Saturday against Washington State (1:30 p.m., Folsom Field, FCS Pacific).

"Realistically it is (a lot to learn)," Lockridge admitted. "But I can do it. I have one class, so I can spend the majority of the day with the coaches and studying. Before Friday, I guarantee you I'll have it down."

He'll also have to remember Bieniemy's offense; if the Buffs need a fourth tailback it might be "B-Lock." He'll keep his current number (20) if he plays offense, but change to No. 10 if he's used on defense. (Starting freshman cornerback Greg Henderson has worn No. 20 for the first four games.)

It's only been a day and a half, but Lockridge calls the move "a good change-up for me. When I get the technique down it'll help. And communicating with our safeties (Anthony Perkins, Ray Polk) will help me out a lot. Other than that, it's just playing ball and being active. I'm having fun."

Lockridge arrived in the CU football offices early on Wednesday morning, meeting again with Brown. Head coach Jon Embree admitted the switch to defense wouldn't be easy at this point, but added, "He runs well . . . you just have to limit the things you have him do and go with it. I didn't watch him too much (Tuesday); I was watching what was going on up front rather than the back end. I'll know more (Wednesday)."

Lockridge, of Trabuco Canyon, Calif., played in only five games in 2010 before undergoing season-ending ankle surgery that also kept him out of spring drills. Prior to his surgery he had carried 35 times for 146 yards and a touchdown. Included in those numbers was his first 100-yard rushing game - a 14-carry, 109-yard performance against Hawai'i.

Embree didn't discount Lockridge seeing duty at tailback as the season progressed, but said, "I think right now he just wants to play right now and contribute. He understands the situation over there (in the secondary) right now and wants to be a team guy and help."

Although he was utilized there in the opener, Lockridge had returned just those four kickoffs this season, which appeared to be his niche during his first three years. He entered 2011 in fifth place among CU's career kickoff return leaders, averaging 23.3 yards on 30 returns, including a 98-yard scoring return in 2009.

Embree didn't rule out Lockridge being used again on kickoff returns, an area that finds the Buffs ranked last nationally at 13.8 yards a return. "He's still back there; we're going to look at another couple of guys, too," Embree said. "We're just trying to see who can do it."

Lockridge was honored earlier this month as one of 22 student-athletes named to the 2011 Allstate American Football Coaches Association Good Works Team. He routinely devotes time to playing the piano at Boulder Community Hospital and other community service projects.

The secondary's run of injuries began early. CU lost freshmen Sherrard Harrington and Jered Bell to injuries in August, then lost senior Travis Sandersfeld (fractured fibula, Week 2) and sophomore Parker Orms (leg, Week 4). Sandersfeld could be another couple of weeks away from returning, while Orms is listed as day-to-day.

Earlier injuries were suffered by seniors Arthur Jaffee (knee) and Vince Ewing (knee). Jaffee is questionable this week, while Ewing could miss another two weeks after undergoing arthroscopic surgery on Sept. 8. Also, sophomore Paul Vigo is sidelined with a pulled hamstring.

Lockridge is the second offensive player to switch sides in recent weeks. Senior receiver Jason Espinoza also moved to cornerback, but unlike Lockridge, Espinoza has played in the secondary (safety).

"We are what we are," Brown said.

Nonetheless, his defense leads the Pac-12 in two categories - pass defense (183.5 yards a game) and quarterback sacks (14).

WSU STANDS TALL ON THE STAT SHEET: Whatever lineup Brown patches together for the Cougars will face a dynamic offense. WSU leads the Pac-12 in passing offense (380.0 yards a game) and in total offense (539.7) and is in the top six nationally in both categories (No. 4 passing, No. 6 total offense). Plus, the Cougars are second in the conference in scoring offense and No. 5 nationally (49.0 points a game).

"They are tough to contend with; they've got speed, size and ability and outstanding schemes," Brown said. Look at their rankings; that speaks for itself . . . that's pretty good; let me amend that, it's real good. Yeah, that's lights out good. It's a group that can score a lot of points in a hurry."

WSU quarterback Marshall Lobbestael, a senior who stepped in when junior starter Jeff Tuel suffered a broken left clavicle in the season-opening romp (64-21) over Idaho State, is rated the conference's No. 2 passer (319.7 yards a game) but is No. 1 in passing efficiency (180.2 rating) with 10 touchdowns against two interceptions.

"It's right there on film; he's pretty good," Brown said.

The Cougars outscored their first two opponents (Idaho State, UNLV) by a combined 123-28 before being losing badly at San Diego State 42-24. WSU was off last weekend.

Critics have said the Cougars' impressive offensive numbers were inflated by two games against inferior opponents. "You can certainly say that, but they've done it," Brown argues. "They've still put the numbers up, believe me. A lot of teams - no matter who you're playing - with they had those statistics. You could be (competing against) air and be happy with those. The perception among some people is Washington State has been in the basement forever (in the Pac-10). But they've got guys, believe me. We played them last year (at Arizona), believe me, they've got guys."

WSU's trio of starting receivers stands 6-4, 6-4 and 6-1, with 6-4 sophomore Marquess Wilson averaging a national-best 143 yards receiving. He's caught four TD passes.

'J-MO' EAGER FOR HIS CHANCE: Redshirt freshman Josh Moten arrived at CU hoping to get a chance to play quarterback - his position at Narbonne High School in Carson, Calif. But he immediately went to defense and now could find himself getting significant time Saturday against WSU.

"He's another young guy who's trying to get it all figured out and put the pieces together and see how it all fits," Brown said. "He hasn't played much, but he's getting a chance this week in practice."

Moten, an athletic 6-0, 195 pounder, said his main objective this week "is just playing fundamental football at 100 miles an hour - mistake-free. If I can eliminate the mistakes I'll be in coach's good graces."

If there was disappointment at not being given a look at quarterback by the former coaching staff, it passed quickly. "I have no regrets about that - none at all," he said. "I love this position. I love the guys around, love the DB corps, love 'Coach Brownie' - he's a guru on the defensive side. I'm starting to get comfortable with the position - no regrets at all.

"Once I get the playbook down inside and out, I'll be there as a corner. My athleticism will take over from there."

Perkins, CU's senior safety, said he'll be comfortable with whoever lines up at corner this week: "Everybody was recruited here for a reason. Whether you're a freshman, a senior, everybody's gone through two-a-days, everybody's practiced and been in meetings. The guys who are going to step in, I'm fully confident that they'll be ready to compete. It's their time to shine now and I think they're going to do a great job with that."

UMM, THESE DOCS AND COACHES LOOK FAMILIAR: In the Irony Folder, file this: WSU's team physician, Ed Tingstad, is a former Cougars player and a former teammate of head coach Paul Wulff at the school. The same setup exists at CU, where Eric McCarty is the team doc and a former teammate of Embree's.

Might be the only two FBS schools with that situation, and further enhancing the irony is McCarty playing against both Tingstad and Wulff when WSU visited Folsom Field in 1987 (a 26-17 CU win). Embree's last season was 1986.

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SHOW MENU



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CU Buffs' punter brings some kick o' the Irish with one of strangest plays of season

By John Henderson
The Denver Post

Posted: 09/29/2011 01:00:00 AM MDT

Updated: 09/29/2011 10:22:18 AM MDT

BOULDER — Conor O'Neill's Traditional Irish Pub sits on 13th Street just off the Pearl Street Mall but could very well be on a crowded street in Dublin, or in a country village in County Donegal.

Warm, dark wood accents individual rooms lined with cushiony furniture. Dark pints of Guinness with foamy heads fly through the air like it's last call in Galway. The owner, Colm O'Neill, points to one wall for a wee bit of true Irish flavor. There he is, 21 years ago, grimacing in a team photo before winning Gaelic football's All-Ireland Final for ol' County Cork. On another wall, there's his brother-in-law, Maurice Fitzgerald, winning one for County Kerry.

The bloodlines from those two pictures found their way Saturday

to Columbus, Ohio, where one of the most unusual punters in college football made one of the strangest plays of the season.

Using a kicking trick that would probably play out only on the pitches of Ireland, Colorado

freshman Darragh O'Neill, son of Colm and nephew of Fitzgerald, took the snap. He didn't aim downfield. He took a few sideways steps to his left and aimed a left-footed (he's right-footed) line drive right at the back of Ohio State's Bradley Roby, running with his back to the ball.

And, as O'Neill said with a lilt of an Irish accent, "I tagged him."

The Buffs were asleep, though. Ohio State recovered the loose ball on the Buffs' 43 and soon scored its first touchdown in a 37-17 rout. Had CU recovered the ball, it could have been a big early-momentum boost.

"Being able to kick with both feet, the only reason I'm able to do that is because of Gaelic football," O'Neill said.

For O'Neill, CU special-teams coach J.D. Brookhart called it "a little bit of a John Wayne moment." While many punters learn to kick rugby style for direction, Colorado has a guy who only kicked that way well before he ever played American football.

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advantage of it. O'Neill is 19th in the country, averaging 43.7 yards per punt.



Darragh O'Neill, who was an all-state point guard at Fairview High School, is 19th in the country in punting.

An odd path to punting

How O'Neill wound up punting in Boulder is a story of culture clash and blind ambition, with a major dosage of life and death. The O'Neills moved to the U.S. from Ireland when Darragh was 3, and he grew up hearing stories about County Kerry vs. County Cork, the Raiders and Broncos of Gaelic football.

Every summer the family returned to Cork, where Darragh played Gaelic football, which is kind of a violent cross between rugby and soccer, except with a soccer-sized ball they kick to pass. He practiced Gaelic football kicks with Fitzgerald, at the time arguably the best player in Ireland.

"Even just seeing him and how unbelievable he was, just kicking around with him made me better," Darragh said.

Knowledge of Gaelic football in Colorado, however, doesn't go much beyond the Denver Gaels, whom he played with while going to Fairview High School. He made his mark as an all-state point guard who helped lead Fairview to the 2010 Class 5A state title basketball game.

However, college basketball programs thought him too weak and he got only a walk-on offer from the Denver Pioneers. The school's price tag was too steep, so he passed on NCAA Division II offers and came to Boulder to study, figuring his sports career was over.

As a freshman, he sat in the stands at Folsom Field, watching the Buffs struggle to a 5-7 season.

But he loved the spirit in the stands — hey, he's Irish — and told his dad he was thinking of becoming a punter. His dad liked the idea.

"Unless you play goaltender in soccer, no American kid naturally kicks a ball out of his hands," said Colm, wearing a gold CU T-shirt. "That's why Australian Rules or Irish football, you have a huge advantage because how you move the ball is how you punt the ball in American football."

Darragh remembers his first punt going about 15

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yards, but last winter he began working out at 6:15 a.m. four days a week — he calls such drive his Irish "fire in the belly" — in the football bubble. He had a decent spring and a better fall, and he has been a fixture as the starting punter since the opener.

"If somebody had told us six months ago that Darragh would even be on the roster at CU, we thought it'd be the biggest joke of all time," Colm said. "There was no chance."

Began vomiting blood

At one time, there was almost no chance Darragh would live to see college.

Near the end of his sophomore year at Fairview, he mysteriously developed Lemierre's syndrome, a deadly bacteria that attacks faster than cancer. He wound up in intensive care for two weeks. For four days, he was on life support. He finally sat up during a brief recovery, but a blood clot moved from his jugular to his lungs. The clots began hemorrhaging. He started vomiting blood.

"As I was puking, my aunt was giving me an oxygen tube," he recalled. "My eyes were as wide as they've ever been. I see my mom sprint out of the room about to faint. Then 15 to 20 nurses all come in. And I was out."

He woke up about four days later and went on to have a full recovery. One day, he happened to spot an e-mail on his dad's computer. It was dated right after his hemorrhaging.

It said he was given last rites.

"I've been taught never to take a day for granted," he said. "Every day's a bonus."

Kind of like the Buffs finding a rugby-style punter in an Irish kid sitting in the stands. If he keeps developing, maybe his dad will change his pub's name.

How does the Buff & Boot sound?

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college football

Colorado moves RB Brian Lockridge to defense

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 09/28/2011 06:07:37 PM MDT

Updated: 09/28/2011 06:37:08 PM MDT

Colorado running back Brian Lockridge this week moved to the Buffaloes' defensive side of the ball, where he will play cornerback for the first time in his college career.

Lockridge, a senior, asked offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy and defensive coordinator Greg Brown for the change. And they agreed.

Brown said Lockridge will play Saturday against Washington.

"We need bodies," Brown said.

In four games, Lockridge did not get a carry as a tail back. He was eager to get back on the field and help the team, he said.

"It's just one way to contribute to the team. I can contribute — offense, defense or special teams — in some way, shape or form.

Lockridge, at 5-feet-7, 180-pounds, played in five games as a tailback last season before surgery on an injured ankle ended his year and kept him out of spring practices.

"He runs well," CU coach Jon Embree said of Lockridge's switch. "You just have to limit the things you have him do and go with it. I didn't

watch him too much (Tuesday). I'll know more today."

Last week, senior wide receiver Jason Espinoza was moved to cornerback. He also could see some action. Originally a walk-on from Alamosa High, Espinoza had a career-high 13 catches in 2009.

Footnotes First-string center Daniel Munyer, who sprained an ankle against Colorado State and did not play against Ohio State, returned to practice Wednesday in limited drills.

The redshirt freshman remains questionable for Saturday's game against Washington.

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The Field House — Blogs — The Denver Post

SEPTEMBER 28, 2011, 2:46 PM

Former Chatfield star Slavin could make CU debut Saturday

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

BOULDER — It appears tight end Kyle Slavin will become yet another Colorado freshman to play this season.

Assistant coach J.D. Brookhart said Wednesday that he expects Slavin to play Saturday in Colorado's inaugural Pac-12 Conference game, against Washington State. Slavin, 6-feet-4 and 235 pounds, red-shirted in 2010 after earning all-state honors at Chatfield High School.

"Kyle, actually, I think will be more involved this week," Brookhart said. "With the minimal reps he has had, he knows what he is doing."

Slavin was a standout during spring drills but did not see any action in CU's first four games this fall.

"He's still a year of development from where I'd like him to be," Brookhart said. "He's still a little baby-faced. But he plays with a good pad level. It's important to him. He just needs to get stronger."

ARTICLE PRINTED FROM THE FIELD HOUSE

<http://blogs.denverpost.com/colleges/2011/09/28/former-chatfield-star-slavin-could-make-cu-debut-saturday/20793/>

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RINGO: Pac-12 football is can't miss TV

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:09/29/2011 12:00:54 AM MDT

Jon Embree seemed almost giddy Wednesday talking about the wide-open offenses and high-scoring nature of the Pac-12 Conference for a guy who is supposed to love the physical battles and downhill running games he was raised on in the Big Eight and Big 12.

Embree and the Buffs will make their official Pac-12 debut this week in a home game against Washington State, although they previously hosted Cal in a nonconference game this month.

If the Cal game was any indication, and Embree says the 33-30 overtime thriller was, fans can expect to be entertained from week to week in the new league.

"It's shootout football," Embree said. "There's no doubt."

Embree spent three seasons as an assistant coach at UCLA between his time at CU as an assistant and his days in the NFL.

While the Pac-12 might compete in terms of attendance and complete community passion for game days with conferences like the Big 12 and SEC, Embree said it produces some of the best players in the nation every year, particularly on offense.

"The Midwest style, it's about defense," Embree said. "It's the Woody Hayes, 10-7 is a great game. Well, that will get you booed in the Pac-12 if you win a game 10-7. That's the score at the end of two possessions."

Embree said during his final year at UCLA in 2005, the Bruins averaged around 40 points a game, but their average margin of victory was in single digits.

"It was can't miss TV," he said. "You had to stay up and see what was going to happen. It was like that throughout the league."

The Buffs' head coach isn't the only member of the staff with experience in the Pac-12.

Six other members of the staff have coached in the league for at least one season, including defensive coordinator Greg Brown, who served as co-defensive coordinator at Arizona just last season.

Brown took a deep breath and pushed it out in a big sigh when asked about the league and what fans should expect from it.

"As a defensive coach, the thing that hits you right between the eyes and just jumps out at you is the offensive schemes that these coordinators and head coaches come up with," Brown said. "I mean, they're going to test you to the limits."

Brown said CU fans might think they have seen creative offenses from Texas Tech, Missouri, Oklahoma State and Oklahoma in recent years in the Big 12, but he said those programs have nothing on the Pac-12 where six of the teams in the league are averaging at least 35 points a game heading into play this week.

Brown said preparing a defense for some of the offenses in the league each week means spending some time on option defense and each player's responsibilities in a handful of situations, as well as preparing for complex passing games that use the entire 53-yard width of the field.

He said just when a defensive coach begins to think he's catching up, something new jumps up to surprise him on Saturdays.

"Picture this, old-fashioned Wishbone football, but with the ability to option off of any of the front guys, not just the guys with their hands on the ground, and with a variety of people coming in motion in and out of the backfield," he said. "It's hard to find out who is supposed to be where and who is supposed to do what."

First up for the Buffs is a Cougars team averaging 49 points, 540 total yards of offense and 380 yards passing each week.

Stout Stanford

Rodney Stewart better get all the rushing yards he can this week against Washington State.

Running room will be at a premium next week when the Buffs travel to Stanford to face the nation's best rushing defense.

The Cardinal is ranked first in the nation against the run through its first three games. Stanford opponents have rushed 88 times for a total of 108 yards, an average of 1.2 yards per carry.

When Stanford and Oregon meet later this season, the game is expected to decide the winner of the north division, and, in truth, the winner of the Pac-12, because whoever wins will be favored against the south champ.

Oregon leads the league in rushing at 300 yards per game.

Full house

Speaking of the running game, the team having the least success on the ground in the Pac-12 this season is Arizona, which is slowly introducing a scheme that is an amalgamation of several offenses.

The look has quarterback Nick Foles lined up in the shotgun, flanked by two running backs. A third running back is in back of Foles, giving the scheme a little bit of the feel of the Pistol offense and a lot of its options combined with an option offense.

The Wildcats stole the idea from Oklahoma State, which used it a little in 2010 and tweaked it some this year.

The Cowboys trounced the Wildcats 37-14 in Week 2. Arizona has a future NFL quarterback in Foles, but it has been too one-dimensional this season and is desperate to improve on the ground where it is averaging just 62 yards a game.

Numbers game

18 -- The number of plays covering 25 or more yards by the Oregon offense in the past three games after having zero such plays in the season opener against LSU. The Ducks had 57 plays of 25 or more yards in 2010.

Who's hot?

Oregon State linebacker Feti Unga recorded 14 tackles in a loss to UCLA and leads the conference averaging 10.5 per game. A bright spot for the winless Beavers.

Who's not?

USC ball carriers have fumbled a league-worst six times in the first four games and the Trojans lead the conference with nine turnovers.

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Paul Richardson vows to get back on track for CU Buffs

Promising receiver held in check last two games

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

Posted:09/28/2011 07:50:11 PM MDT



Offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy asked Colorado wide receiver Paul Richardson before Tuesday's practice why he hasn't been himself over the past two weeks in games.

Richardson caught four passes each in games against Colorado State and Ohio State for a total of 65 yards. He also dropped three passes and never really threatened those defenses.

Richardson didn't have an answer for Bieniemy at the start of practice, but by the end of the session he approached Bieniemy and told him he hasn't been focusing the way he needs to and he vowed to do better.

"I'm ready," Richardson said when asked about this week's matchup with Washington State at Folsom Field on Saturday. "It's another challenge that's laid before me and I'm going to knock it down."

Richardson said he has done his best to handle the expectations and pressure on him. He said he feels like he has to be the spark that gets the offense moving earlier in games. The Buffs have struggled with slow starts in each of their first four games.

The 19-year-old exploded for career highs of 11 catches for 284 yards and two touchdowns in an overtime loss to Cal three weeks ago.

Since then defenses have clamped down on him, challenging other players to beat them.

Richardson said both CSU and Ohio State used the same approach to slow him down. They had a cornerback play him tight at the line of scrimmage with safety help in back and a linebacker playing wide to take away short slants where he can catch and run.

"It's a lot of respect, but at the same time I have to be able to be that playmaker and that guy that goes out there and despite whatever the defense has out there, I've got to be able to make those plays," he said.

Richardson is averaging 18 yards per catch and is a threat to score from any point on the field once the ball is in his hands.

Coaches have been trying to put him in position to get more opportunities by moving him around in the offense to counter those moves by defenses.

They plan to continue using him in the slot and in other creative ways beginning this week against the Cougars, who are allowing 254 yards passing and rank 92nd nationally in pass defense.

"I disappeared for two weeks and my team needs me to step up, especially this week because, I mean, we're 1-3," Richardson said. "I've been doing well with the responsibility that I've taken in, but it's time for me to come out and have another breakout game."

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CU Buffs notebook: RB Brian Lockridge practices at CB

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:09/28/2011 08:12:43 PM MDT

Colorado senior Brian Lockridge never had played defense on the football field in his life before this week when he volunteered to switch from tailback to cornerback.

Bodies are sparse at CU because of a rash of injuries.

The depth issue that led to the position change could force Lockridge into action as soon as this week as the Buffs face a Washington State offense that routinely uses four wide receiver formations.

Lockridge said he is approaching his four days of practice on defense as if he will play in this week's game and both head coach Jon Embree and defensive coordinator Greg Brown said CU fans shouldn't be surprised to see Lockridge in the secondary against the Cougars.

"Athletically, thank god, I can make that transition," Lockridge said. "I'm quick on my feet. Technique, I don't have any. I've never played defense in my life.

"I'm excited. In my head, I'm making it smaller than what everyone is thinking it to be. I just know I need to hurry up and learn real fast."

Lockridge and true freshman cornerback Greg Henderson both wear the No. 20. If Lockridge is used this week, he will switch to the No. 10.

In his first two practices at defense this week, Lockridge said he has been asked to cover wide receivers Paul Richardson and Toney Clemons numerous times.

He said he enjoys the challenge and believes it already has made him better.

"The last couple weeks I felt like I hadn't been contributing to the team as much as I want to do, especially senior year," Lockridge said. "When the opportunity came up to go to defense, definitely I took it."

Solid numbers

As beat up as the Colorado secondary is, it's tough to tell by looking at the numbers.

CU ranks first in the Pac-12 Conference in pass defense and sacks. The Buffs are allowing less than 190 passing yards a game and are averaging 3.5 sacks.

"Hey, for four games that doesn't mean much," Brown said. "We'll see where we're at after 13 games. It's just a number right now. We're dying to go get a win. Let's play some total defense."

Brown put more stock in the sack totals and his team's ability to rush the passer.

"We've got some ends that can come off the ball, we've got some big guys inside to get some push and we've got some backers and DB types who can blitz," he said. "It's a little bit of everything."

Shades of Gray

When Colorado wide receiver Logan Gray decided to transfer from Georgia for his senior year, he chose CU because his brother goes to school here and he thought he could make a bigger impact than what he contributed in Athens in 2010.

It's still early, but so far it hasn't worked out.

Gray has caught just two passes for 26 yards in four games while earning one special teams point.

The lack of productivity isn't because he hasn't been on the field. Gray said he has played about as much as he expected to in the first month of the season.

"I think different plays have just kind of worked out in different ways," Gray said. "Sometimes Tyler might have pressure on him and he has to get out of the pocket. Whatever the reason may be. I'm not stressing over it though. I'm just trying to keep on grinding and keep on pushing and I think good things will come."

Gray is a former quarterback who made the transition to wideout while still at Georgia. His diverse skill set figured to be used in creative ways by CU coaches to keep opposing defenses guessing but that hasn't materialized yet either.

Embree said Gray has been one bright spot on special teams and some of his repetitions in practice have been taken away by Richardson when he moves to the slot. Embree said Gray is playing faster in the offense and will continue to see more opportunities as the season progresses.

Notable

Center Daniel Munyer practiced on Wednesday and is probable after missing the Ohio State game with a sprained ankle.

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Posted on Wed, Sep. 28, 2011

Washington State (2-1) at Colorado (1-3) (ET)

By Sports Network
The Sports Network

FACTS & STATS: Site: Folsom Field (53,613) -- Boulder, Colorado. Television: FCS-Pacific. Home Record: WSU 2-0, Colorado 0-1. Away Record: WSU 0-1, Colorado 0-2. Neutral Record: WSU 0-0, Colorado 1-0. Conference Record: WSU 0-0, Colorado 0-0. Series Record: Colorado leads, 4-2.

GAME NOTES: Colorado will take part in its first-ever Pac-12 contest when the Buffaloes host the Washington State Cougars this Saturday afternoon at Folsom Field.

The Cougars managed to open their season with back-to-back wins for the first time since 2005. The team did so in convincing fashion by clobbering Idaho State and UNLV by a combined score of 123-28. However, Washington State could not carry over the momentum into its third game and was crushed by San Diego State on the road, 42-24. Coming off a week of rest, the Cougars will look to get back into the win column and open league play with a victory for the first time since 2006.

It is safe to assume coach John Embree wanted his tenure at Colorado to get off on a better note, but instead his team is just 1-3 in four games. The lone win came against rival Colorado State, but that is the lone bright spot thus far for the Buffs. Colorado was dismantled on the road by Hawaii and Ohio State and suffered a slim loss at home to California. Now the Buffs will get a taste of Pac-12 life because after this matchup the team will be on the road against Stanford and Washington.

The Buffaloes own a 4-2 edge in the all-time series, but this will be the first meeting since 2004. In that last matchup Colorado narrowly defeated the Cougars by a 20-12 margin.

The Cougars opened the year with Jeff Tuel under center, but early in the first game the quarterback suffered a collarbone injury and had to be replaced. Losing a starting quarterback is never a good thing for a team, but the Cougars have not only persevered without Tuel, they have flourished.

Behind the play of Marshall Lobbestael, the Cougar offense is averaging 49.0 ppg, which is amazing since the team hadn't posted more than 20.0 ppg over the previous three seasons.

That success is largely due to Lobbestael's play, as the signal caller has thrown for 959 yards and 10 touchdowns. Lobbestael has not done it all on his own though, as coach Paul Wulff also possesses a solid ground attack that is averaging 159.7 yards per matchup.

Unfortunately the ground game was bottled up against San Diego State, as the team finished with just 51 yards on 1.8 yards per attempt. With the running game hitting a wall, Lobbestael had to do everything he could to keep WSU in the matchup.

The quarterback threw for 368 yards and three touchdowns in the contest, but was intercepted twice and sacked six times. Marquess Wilson had a game to remember for the Cougars, as the wideout finished with 236 yards and two touchdowns on six receptions. Wilson has been the best option for Washington State thus far, as the wideout is leading the team in receptions (15), yards (429) and touchdowns (four).

The defense for coach Wulff allowed just 28 points through the first two games, but fell apart against San Diego State. The Cougars were ripped to shreds by San Diego State's ground game, allowing 227 yards and four scores on 5.7 yards per attempt.

Despite the poor effort, the Cougars are still limiting the opposition to just 116.0 ypg, which is significantly better than the previous three seasons in which the team surrendered well over 200.0 yards per contest.

The defense also had trouble against the pass in the loss, allowing nearly 300 yards and two scores. This could become a problem area for coach Wulff's defense because the front line is not getting much pressure. In the loss, Washington State did not record a sack and has only seven thus far. If Washington State is unable to get pressure this Saturday the defense could be in trouble because Colorado possesses a dangerous passing attack.

That passing attack is being led by Tyler Hansen, who has been sensational through four games. Even though the team only has one victory the blame does not fall on the shoulders of Hansen, who has thrown for 1,150 yards and nine touchdowns against just one interception.

Running back Rodney Stewart is leading the team with 23 receptions, but Paul Richardson has proven to be Hansen's go-to guy down the field. Richardson already has four touchdowns for Colorado and that comes along with 398 yards on 22 catches.

Stewart might be successful catching the ball out of the backfield, but running it has been a different story. So far Stewart only has 278 yards rushing and has yet to score on the ground.

Colorado's inability to run the ball was evident in the team's loss to Ohio State, as the Buffs finished with just 76 yards. With the ground game hitting a wall once again, the team's chances at a win fell in the lap of Hansen. The quarterback threw for 238 yards and two scores, but that wasn't nearly enough to get Colorado the victory because the defense was unable to stop Ohio State.

The Buffs were gashed for 226 rushing yards and two touchdowns on 4.8 yards per carry. That lack of success against the run will not lead to many wins for coach Embree, or his team.

The Cougars took a major step backwards in their last game, but they have had an extra week to prepare for this matchup and should be ready to roll. Colorado is home, but the team has some holes defensively. Expect Lobbestael and company to exploit those weaknesses.

Sports Network Predicted Outcome: Washington State 31, Colorado 24

Game Date and Time

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