



COLORADO BUFFALOES

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Nick Hirschman isn't looking to this spring or next fall -- only Friday at Folsom Field.

Photo Courtesy: Associated Press



Brooks: Hirschman's Focus On Sr. Win - Nothing Else

Release: 11/22/2012 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER - Nick Hirschman's head is clear, his mind bright, his spirit goofy. That's what his Colorado teammates have come to know and more often than not love about him.

Hirschman could be viewing Friday's game against Utah as a launch platform for spring drills and beyond. But he's not, although he is due to make his second start of the season at quarterback, returning from a concussion that sidelined him for last week's loss against Washington.

Come spring, CU's severely unsettled QB position will have a roomful of competitors - six, including Hirschman, with at least one more on the way come fall. So, wouldn't it be fortuitous for Hirschman to treat this season's final game as perhaps a chance to create some separation for the future?

If it happens, so be it . . . but don't even suggest it.

"No, that's too far away to look at it like that," Hirschman said. "All of us on this team are focused on getting this win, a home win, a win for the seniors. Our minds aren't anywhere but there right now. This game is really about the seniors rather than all of us in that auditorium."

BUFFALO EXTRAS

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CU's 2012 senior class is among its smallest, numbering only eight. They are: linebackers Jon Major and Doug Rippey, defensive lineman Will Pericak, safety Ray Polk, receiver Dustin Ebner, tight end Nick Kasa and offensive linemen Ryan Dannewitz and Eric Richter. Also, a trio of fourth-year juniors will say goodbye to Buffs football on Friday - receiver Jarrod Darden, tight end DaVaughn Thornton and kicker Zach Grossnickle.

CU coach Jon Embree called the 2012 senior class "not a vocal group by any stretch of the imagination, which is OK. They're more lead-by-example players. How they worked and how they prepared week-in and week-out, a lot of them playing not quite being 100 percent, all those things were good for the younger kids to see."

Hirschman, a third-year sophomore, was among those who took notice. The departing players, he said, have "put in four or five years of work here and unfortunately didn't have a lot to show for it due to bad circumstances and things of that sort. A great way to honor them is to go out and get them a win on their Senior Day. That's the main goal of this team right now."

Before suffering a concussion at Arizona two weeks ago, Hirschman was operating more efficiently than at any time during his CU career. He left the game in the third quarter having completed 12 of 13 passes for 123 yards with one interception.

"I think I've been around that level since the beginning of the season and just continued to grind and wait for my opportunity to play," he said. "I finally got the opportunity to start and just tried to run with it, make plays and manage the offense."

This week in practice, he said he was "feeling normal again . . . it's nice to not be in a haze anymore. It was good to get back to practice; I just hope we can get a win this week."

Embree called Hirschman "fine from a concussion standpoint," but added this joking disclaimer: "It's hard to tell, he's goofy so you don't know if it is the concussion or if it is just him. He's a great personality."

But Embree agreed that the Arizona game was a huge uplift for Hirschman's confidence: "Yeah, without a doubt. It was good for him. He's been grinding and competing, waiting for his chance and he got it, and he is a classic example of when a guy that's got his opportunity is ready to take advantage of it. Last year when his opportunity came, he wasn't ready, at the Arizona State game. I think he learned a valuable lesson from that, on what prepared really means. He remembered it and embraced it instead of shrinking from it and he's done well."

To finish well Friday, Hirschman will have to solve a Utah defense that ranks third in the Pac-12 Conference against both the run (129.7 yards) and the pass (228.8). The Utes 'D' is anchored by perhaps the nation's best defensive tackle - senior Star Lotulelei.

The 6-4, 320-pounder's four fumble recoveries rank him second nationally this season. He's also Utah's tackle-for-loss leader (nine) and sack leader (four). Throw in his three forced fumbles and the same number of pass breakups, and it's clear why Hirschman says, "We're going to have to play our best to handle him."

Hirschman will direct a CU offense that limps into its final game ranked a solid last in almost every major Pac-12 offensive category. The Buffs are No. 12 in scoring (16.3 points), total offense (292.3) and passing offense (182.2). They are No. 11 in rushing offense (110.1). (Defensively, CU has tumbled into the abyss; the stats have redefined ugly.)

A 34-24 home loss to Arizona last weekend eliminated Utah (4-7) from postseason consideration for the second consecutive year. Last November in Salt Lake City, the Buffs played the villains, upsetting the Utes 17-14 in CU's first out-of-state win in 24 tries.

In a payback scenario of sorts, a Utah victory Friday would make this CU team (1-10) the first in recent history to go winless at Folsom Field. Hirschman said that's a no-no: "We don't want that. We have to come out fired up, aggressive and loose, just go out and have some fun and get a win."

It's the least that can be done for CU's long-suffering seniors and the accompanying trio making its final Folsom appearance. Addressing the sheer finality of it, Embree said, "It's the fact that this group will no longer be

together after Friday at 4:30. That's it. What I've tried to get the seniors to understand is: athletes don't understand the end.

"Coach wants your playbook, that's when it's like, 'Wow, now what.' You walk out the building, that's it, you're done. There's no going back. There's no one more time."

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Colorado in midst of seven-game skid, scoring drought

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

DailyCamera.com

The Colorado football team put an end to one absurd streak the last time it faced Utah. The 2011 Buffs finally overcame a 24-game road-losing streak in Salt Lake City last season to send off 28 seniors with a victory.

This season's young team will try to end several more ugly streaks today when the Utes visit Folsom Field for the first time 51 years.

The Buffaloes haven't scored a touchdown on their home field in the past 150 minutes, 24 seconds dating back to the second quarter of the Oct. 11 game against Arizona State. CU has managed to score just three points at home during that span. They were shut out in the second half against the Sun Devils, shut out in the entire game against Stanford and held to just a field goal last week against Washington.

The Buffs also bring a seven-game losing streak into the game and all of those losses have been blowouts. Most have been uncompetitive in the second half. Another loss today would drop CU to 1-11 this season and would make this the worst season of football since the Buffs' first season in 1890 when they were winless at 0-4.

CU will also say goodbye to eight seniors and three fourth-year juniors in a pregame senior day tribute.

CU has given away tickets to the game in hopes of avoiding an embarrassingly small crowd with students away from campus for the holiday and apathy and anger growing among the rest of the fan base. CU has "distributed" about 41,000 tickets for the game meaning this won't be the first time since the 1980s a crowd of less than 40,000 is announced.

CU is expected to make significant changes to its coaching staff when the season ends, but some of those changes might not be announced until later in December. So today will be the final time this staff as it is currently constituted will be together on the sideline.

The Buffs needed a road win and earned one a year ago and this Utah team finds itself in the same position today, having lost five straight on the road this season. Coach Kyle Whittingham's program won't be going to a bowl game for the first time in a decade.

Both teams hope to run the ball well, but it might be easier for the Utes behind running back John White, who has four-straight 100-yard games and needs 127 yards to reach 1,000 for the second straight season.

CU freshman running back Christian Powell will likely miss the final game of what has been a strong rookie season because of a concussion.

Sophomore quarterback Nick Hirschman is back under center for the Buffs today after missing last week's game with a concussion.

Follow Kyle on Twitter:

@KyleRingo

Colorado Buffaloes hope to salvage season with win over Utah

By John Henderson The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — You can list Colorado's highlights over the last few years on a Post-it note. However, at 1 p.m. Friday, the Buffaloes greet a guest that represents the pinnacle of coach Jon Embree's two years in Boulder.

It was nearly a year ago Friday that Colorado went into Salt Lake City and knocked upstart Utah out of its surprising Pac-12 championship game picture. The Buffaloes' 17-14 victory also ended CU's 24-game out-of-state losing streak and provided the perfect platform to launch into 2012.

That platform became a swan dive into a 1-10 crevasse, but the Buffs can salvage this season with another win over the Utes. This time, more intangibles are in Colorado's favor.

Utah (4-7, 2-6 Pac-12) comes in knocked from the bowl picture for the first time in 10 years. It has nothing to play for while the Buffs (1-7 Pac-12) have everything to play for. While pride is part of the beaten path of sports' vernacular, Friday's game represents Colorado's entire season.

A win for CU would:

- Prevent the first winless home season since 1920.
- Prevent the worst record since the school's inaugural 0-4 campaign in 1890.
- Send eight seniors out rare winners just as last year's did.
- Escape sole possession of the South Division cellar and share it with a Utah team with almost as disappointing a season as Colorado's.

"It's kind of flipfopped from last year," said senior tight end Nick Kasa. "They had something to play for and we didn't. We have something to play for in one sense in that this is a home game and we haven't won one yet. They can't make it to a bowl game, so they're just looking for revenge."

So what exactly happened last year? How did a Utah team that was 7-4, brought a four-game win streak into senior day and was a win from meeting Oregon for the first Pac-12 title get shocked by a 2-10 Colorado team?

It started with a speech from Embree in the hotel that Thanksgiving night.

"We just talked about every team has a limit as far as how long you're together and we had 3½ hours left and then this team was done," Embree said. "So we talked about what that looks like three or four years down the road, some of the things they'll think about and reflect on."

How well did they listen? Senior quarterback Tyler Hansen hit 22-of-36 passes for 264 yards and a touchdown and ran for another. Colorado's defense held Utah to 274 total yards, including star tailback John White's 28 yards rushing on 10 carries.

"Also, some things clicked with the guys," Embree said. "They were tired of talking about that streak."

Oh, and Utah's reliable Colem Petersen missed three field goals. That little factoid will likely get left out of conversations "three or four years down the road." What this group of seniors discuss in future reunions depends on their grasp of urgency they keep talking about.

The seniors were scheduled to speak Thursday night, again, and maybe they'll discuss how the last football game of their lives can put a nice cleansing to one smelly season. Maybe they should discuss one other factor: This Colorado team isn't as good as last year's — especially with leading rusher Christian Powell doubtful with a concussion — but neither is Utah. It has a true freshman quarterback in Travis Wilson who has thrown for 1,183 yards, six TDs and six interceptions.

Colorado has the only offense in the league worse than Utah's, and the Utes' defense got gashed for 320 rushing yards in a 34-24 home loss to Arizona.

Does Colorado, with the worst scoring offense and scoring defense in the country, have a chance? Embree had his say Thursday night.

"It's the finality of it," Embree said. "It's the fact that this group will not be together anymore after Friday at 4:30. That's it."

Deseret News

Utah Utes vs. Colorado Buffaloes: Friday, 1 p.m., FX

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Utah's John White IV celebrates another score Saturday, Nov. 3, 2012 as the Utes and Washington State play at Rice Eccles Stadium. (Scott G Winterton, Deseret News)

Utah (4-7, 2-6) at Colorado (1-10, 1-7)

FRIDAY, 1 p.m.

Folsom Field (53,613)

Natural grass, Boulder, Colo.

TV: FX

Radio: 700AM

Weather: 52 degrees, clear.

thestakes

For Utah ... The Utes haven't won a game away from Rice-Eccles Stadium in 2012. They've come up short in trips to Utah State, Arizona State, UCLA, Oregon State and Washington.

For Colorado ... The Buffaloes are seeking their first home win of the season. Losses in Boulder include setbacks to Sacramento State, UCLA, Arizona State, Stanford and Washington.

thetrends

For Utah ... The reeling Utes are closing out their first losing season since 2002. They enter the finale on a two-game skid and have prevailed in just two of their last eight outings.

For Colorado ... The Buffs kept the Utes out of last year's Pac-12 Championship Game with a 17-14 upset win in Salt Lake City. It was the first meeting between the teams since 1962.

playertowatch

John White, Utah: The senior running back is 127 yards away from becoming the first Ute to ever rush for 1,000 yards in back-to-back seasons.

keymatchup

Utah's offense vs. Colorado's defense: Since a 22-17 season-opening loss to Colorado State, the Buffaloes have given up at least 30 points in every game that followed. Oregon scored 70 on them and Fresno State racked up 69.

injuryreport

Utah: RB Kelvin York practiced this week after missing three games with an ankle injury.

Colorado: QB Jordan Webb (hand surgery) is out. QB Nick Hirschman (concussion) has been cleared to play.

nextup

This is the 2012 finale for both teams. Utah opens the 2013 season Aug. 29 at home against Utah State. Colorado faces Colorado State Aug. 31 in Denver.

schedule

Date. . .Opponent. . .Time/result

Aug. 30. . .N. Colorado. . .W, 41-0

Sept. 7. . .at Utah State. . .L, 27-20 (OT)

Sept. 15. . .BYU. . .W, 24-21

Sept. 22. . .at Arizona State. . .L, 37-7

Oct. 4. . .Southern Cal. . .L, 38-28

Oct. 13. . .at UCLA. . .L, 21-14 Oct. 20. . .at Oregon State. . .L, 21-7

Oct. 27. . .California. . .W, 49-27

Nov. 3. . .Washington St. . .W, 49-6

Nov. 10. . .at Washington. . .L, 34-15

Nov. 17. . .Arizona. . .L, 34-24

Nov. 23. . .at Colorado. . .1 p.m.

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