



*Linebacker Brady Daigh ready for Stanford's physical offense.*

*Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com*



## Brooks: Daigh, Buffs 'D' Say Physical Play Suits Them

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**BOULDER** - It might not be entirely accurate to call Brady Daigh a throwback football player, but poll any of Colorado's coaches and they'll tell you Daigh is a perfect fit for a throwback game.

That's what Daigh and the Buffaloes are expecting Saturday against No. 15 Stanford at Folsom Field (noon, FX). It might seem implausible for a one-win team locked in what seems to be a downward spiral to eagerly await a third consecutive ranked opponent, but the Buffs claim they are.

Here's why: The Cardinal offers a few-frills, look-you-in-the-eye, smack-you-in-the-mouth style. Two or more tight ends, a bullish offensive line in front of a fullback and running back . . . old-school power football.

"This is going to be a physical game from that standpoint, so it is good we are getting some guys back like Brady Daigh," CU coach Jon Embree said. "But it is going to be a very physical game up front. Our offensive and defensive lines need to play their best games of the season . . . their offensive line is kind of where they built their identity - big physical guys up front. Their favorite play is Power; they will run it out of two backs, out of two tights."

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For the past month against mostly spread-it-out, warp-speed offenses, CU's defense has been chewed up and spat out by four consecutive Pac-12 Conference opponents. In those four horrific losses, the Buffs (1-7, 1-4) have allowed an average of 53 points and 540 yards, plummeting them to the NCAA's statistical depths.

Make no mistake, even minus No. 1 2012 NFL draftee Andrew Luck, the Cardinal (6-2, 4-1) is capable of punching up impressive offensive numbers - particularly against CU's defense. But rightly or wrongly, the Buffs believe they're a better fit in a more physical matchup than in most others.

"I'm looking forward to that kind of game," said Daigh, a 6-2, 253-pound sophomore middle linebacker who is only two weeks removed from a neck strain and slight concussion suffered against Arizona State. "We see a lot of the spread stuff, so I'm looking forward to kind a two-back, between-the-tackles kind of game. I feel like I've been improving on a lot of other stuff, but I feel that (physical game) has always been my strongest suit."

He called Stanford an "incredibly disciplined team, very talented . . . and they'll run it down your throat if you let them. Mostly, they're disciplined; everyone does their job and assignment well. We have to match that."

Daigh, of Mullen High School, was held out of the losses to Southern California (50-6) and Oregon (70-14) for precautionary reasons. He was cleared to begin practicing again this week and said he was "doing real good."

He believes his defensive teammates share his eagerness to test themselves against a physical, pound-it-out offense. "I definitely think so," Daigh said, noting the preparation of the past four weeks has "been a lot of mental responsibilities football-wise. I think a lot of the guys around the locker room are really looking forward to just lining up and seeing who the more physical team is."

Given the Buffs defense's penchant for missed tackles and blown assignments, that could fall into the "be careful what you wish for" category. Still, the physical Cardinal offense does appear fallible. Without the gifted Luck at quarterback, Stanford has turned to a pair of replacements - senior starter Josh Nunes and his backup, redshirt freshman Kevin Hogan.

At his weekly press conference, coach David Shaw said Nunes, who won the job in August camp, remains this week's starter but Hogan's role could expand. "Kevin has played so well with what we've given him to do that we can't not give him more," Shaw said. "There are things Josh has done well that we're pleased with and things Josh has not done well that we're not pleased with. This is what's prudent."

Nunes guided the Cardinal to comeback wins against USC and Arizona, but he has completed only 52.6 percent of his passes and is No. 8 in the Pac-12 in passing efficiency. Moreover, he struggled last weekend in a close win (24-17) against Washington State, completing seven of 15 passes for 136 yards.

Hogan has been effective running the spread option - which has given the Buffs fits - but Shaw said that in itself was not enough to warrant a change in starters: "We need to be more efficient in the passing game. It's partially the quarterback, it's partially not the quarterback . . . (Hogan) is not ready to take it all right now, and I'm not ready to take it all away from Josh."

Compared to the Luck era, Stanford has slipped in Pac-12 offensive stats. The Cardinal is No. 6 in scoring (27 points a game), No. 9 in total offense (340.1 yards), No. 10 in passing (199.1 yards) but No. 7 in rushing (141 yards).

Defensively, Stanford leads the conference in rushing defense, allowing only 64.9 yards a game and is No. 2 in total defense (334.9 yards). With sack totals taken into account, the Cardinal has yielded minus-13 rushing yards in its past two games. Pass defense hasn't been so stellar; the Cardinal is No. 10 in the league, allowing 270 yards a game.

That likely puts the onus on CU to find a way to throw, but the question is, "Who will do it?" The Buffs have their own QB issues. Embree said on Tuesday he will go with a "gut decision" in naming either junior Jordan Webb or sophomore Nick Hirschman as Saturday's starter, but he added a day later that both would play. Webb has

started all eight games and directed the Buffs to their comeback win at Washington State (35-34), but a Hirschman-led offense accounted for CU's only points in last weekend's blowout in Eugene.

Webb checks in at No. 11 in the Pac-12 in passing yards per game (172.8) and No. 12 in passing efficiency (109.8 efficiency rating). He has completed 56.1 percent of his throws (134-of-239 for 1,382 yards, with eight TDs and seven interceptions). The bulk of Hirschman's seasonal passing stats were recorded last weekend; he went 6-for-16 for 64 yards, with one interception.

Stanford's top rusher is senior Stepfan Taylor, who averages 96.9 yards and needs to hit that mark to become the first back in school history to record three consecutive 1,000-yard seasons.

Whoever starts at QB for CU likely will be handing off liberally to freshman tailback Christian Powell, who ran for 121 yards and two touchdowns against Oregon. Powell's average is 67.3 yards.

The Buffs play three of four November games at Folsom Field, but they are winless at home this season. Powell said he and his younger teammates want a home 'W' for the seniors: "We definitely don't want to go through a season not winning one at home . . . especially for the seniors. You don't want them to go out like that."

He also said loss after loss is "something new" to a freshman class mostly unaccustomed to losing. "We've had a long season; everything's extended, but we have to stick together and keep grinding it out," he said. "We knew it was going to be tough. We're just trying to stay tuned in and ride it out."

Added freshman safety Marques Mosley: "A play here and there is going to make a big difference - technique, better tackling and basically effort every play. If we can have that, we're in it."

CU's lopsided losses and defensive nightmares have been hard to ignore, but Daigh said he and his buds on 'D' have no choice but flush the memories and move on: "As a defensive-minded guy, you want to go out and not have anyone cross your goal line all game. You don't want anyone to even get a first down all game. When teams are putting up points like that, it's obviously it kind of stuns guys who aren't used to that. But at the same time, you've got to put it behind you or else it's just going to get worse next week."

That's where the Buffs find themselves; next week is here and the weeks in the regular season are trickling away.

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## Injuries have taken toll, but Buffs regrouping well

By Brian Howell *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

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Throughout Colorado's disappointing season on the football field, improvement has been tough to spot.

During the past few weeks, however, the Buffaloes' offensive line has made significant strides.

"We've made progress all along, since the start of the year," Buffs offensive line coach Steve Marshall said. "Not much different from last year. The more you keep playing, the more you work together, the better off you are.

"The one thing our guys up front have done, they're working hard. Every week is a new challenge. They've taken that challenge on to try to make themselves better every week."

Early in the season, it was the offensive line that took a lot of blame for CU's struggles. Yet, despite dealing with injuries and having never really played with continuity among the starting five, the group has become the leading unit of the team.

"The young guys are stepping up and guys are playing hard and guys are playing a full 60 minutes," junior left tackle David Bakhtiari said. "It's good to see our unit continuously progressing."

What changed? A variety of things, really. Bakhtiari said the Buffs simply got tired of being pushed around all the time, so a measure of anger has set in among the group.

For the most part, however, the Buffs credit their hard work -- and not just among the starting five.

"We've got to keep going the same direction, mostly because it's about competition," redshirt freshman tackle Stephane Nembot said. "Whenever somebody goes down, coach Marshall prepares the (No. 2) group to be ready to step up. You never know enough, so you've got to learn and get more experience."

Even Bakhtiari, the most experienced, and arguably the best lineman in the group, said he has improved since the opener on Sept. 1 against Colorado State.

"I'm starting to understand calls more and understand defenses," he said.

At the beginning of the year, Bakhtiari was the starter at left tackle, with Alex Lewis at left guard, Gus Handler at center, Daniel Munyer at right guard and Jack Harris at right tackle.

Injuries -- mainly to Handler -- have forced the Buffs to move around a bit. Handler missed three games earlier in the year and then sprained his knee on Saturday against Oregon, so he's likely to miss another two or three games. In his place, Munyer has moved to center, Harris to right guard and Nembot to right tackle. Ryan Dannewitz filled in for an injured Bakhtiari last week (Bakhtiari expects to return Saturday against Stanford).

Freshmen Brad Cotner, Jeromy Irwin and Marc Mustoe and senior Eric Richter have worked their way onto the field a bit, too.

All-in-all, it's a group that, while maybe it hasn't wowed anybody, continues to improve and lay a foundation for the future.

"I think it starts with the three juniors, Bak, Jack and Gus," Marshall said. "They're the ones that have kind of taken hold of this thing in bringing the young guys along."

"It's been a tough year from a standpoint of wins and losses, but it's been extremely gratifying for me as a coach to see these guys grow and continue to get better and better as the weeks have gone on."

It's been pleasing to Bakhtiari, too. He felt all along that this group would be a strength of the team. It just took a little longer than expected.

"We had so much potential coming in, and now it's really starting to unfold," he said.

Better late than never. And, the goods new for the Buffs is that each of the top six linemen, in terms of number of snaps played, will return in 2013. Nine of the 11 who have seen the field are slated to return next year. That gives Marshall and the Buffs hope that next year will be a great year for this line.

"That's been their goal," Marshall said. "I hope we have other groups that are strengths of this team. But, if you're a good football team, it starts with the guys up front on both sides of the ball. We have to continue to grow and work from the inside-out."

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## Football: CU Buffs' defensive issues remain glaring

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

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Head coach Jon Embree said that during Colorado's 70-14 loss at Oregon last week, he saw two players on the Buffs' defense that stood out.

"They were playing hard, they were where they were supposed to be and they ran to the ball and made plays when they had the opportunity, and that was Will Pericak and Parker Orms," he said.

The bad news -- other than the fact that only two players did what they were supposed to do -- is that one of them won't be playing again for a while. Orms suffered a concussion and will miss Saturday's game against Stanford. His status for the rest of the season is up in the air.

Just another blow for the CU Buffs (1-7, 1-4 Pac-12), who have arguably the worst defense in the country and are on pace to set school records for defensive futility.

For all the issues facing the CU offense -- and there are many -- it's the defense that has been the glaring weakness of the Buffaloes this season. No team in the Football Bowl Subdivision is allowing more points (46.0 per game) this year. In fact, just one FBS team in the past decade has allowed more points (North Texas, 47.6 in 2008).

Only three teams are allowing more yards (505.0) this year.

Every week, the Buffaloes cite missed assignments and missed tackles as the biggest reasons they struggle to stop the opposition. That was again the case against Oregon, as the Ducks had 617 yards in total offense. Oregon had three offensive plays of at least 40 yards. That doesn't even include De'Anthony Thomas' 73-yard punt return for touchdown.

"They're both big concerns," Embree said of the missed tackles and missed assignments. "We just can't have that stuff.

"It's hard enough when you're very talented to overcome those things and we're not very talented. We have some talent, but we're not very talented. When you're not very talented, you can't help beat yourself and that's what we've done."

Colorado opponents have lived off of big plays all year. CU has allowed 57 plays of at least 20 yards, an average of 7.13 per game.

"It's a matter of tackling and assignments, really," Embree said. "I think that's probably 75 percent of the big plays."

Senior linebacker Doug Rippy believes the defense has improved since the start of the season. Yet, the combination of playing freshmen in key spots and facing some of the top teams in the country in recent weeks has left the Buffs more exposed, he said.

"We have a lot of young guys playing on the defensive side, so missed assignments are going to happen, especially in the secondary and up front, too," he said.

Oregon and Southern Cal have both had field days against the Buffs in the past two weeks, but they aren't alone.



Arizona State, UCLA and Fresno State all put up big numbers against the Buffs, too. So did Washington State (although CU won that game) and Sacramento State, a decent FCS team.

About the only team CU has stopped this year is Colorado State, but that was in Week 1 (and the Buffs still lost).

As head coach, Embree has the responsibility of fixing the defense, but with his hand in so many pots, his involvement in the weekly game planning on defense has been limited. He mostly leaves that task to defensive coordinator Greg Brown and the rest of the staff.

"I give them my opinion on some things here and there," he said. "But, it varies by week. You rely on those guys in that room."

Coming from an offensive background, Embree has spent a good deal of his time working with the Buffs' offense, especially in recent weeks.

"The last couple of weeks, we've started doing spread stuff, so I've been in there trying to help get that going," he said. "I really do believe some of the things we are doing offensively, we're getting closer."

Defensively, however, the Buffs seem to be regressing and with four games to go, there doesn't appear to be any relief in sight.

Stanford hasn't put up gaudy statistics, but the Cardinal have hit the 50-point mark twice. After that, the Buffs visit Arizona, which has the No. 2 scoring offense in the Pac-12 (39.1 points per game) and leads the conference in yards (553.6 per game). CU's last two opponents -- Washington and Utah -- rank near the bottom of the conference in offense, but will surely be licking their chops at the prospect of facing CU.

Embree is trying to remain positive, however. A positive outlook may be the Buffs' best asset on defense going forward.

"One of the first things that kinda happens, and it's happened to some of our guys, confidence isn't what it was in August," Embree said. "They start wondering. That's one thing I always tell our coaches about is you've got to be positive. You've got to keep helping them understand what they did right and build on that and not focus on what they didn't do right, and help them fix it as they continue to go through this process."

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## Bakhtiari puts it all on the line with Buffs

By Vytas Mazeika Daily News Staff Writer San Jose Mercury News

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MercuryNews.com

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At the end of the phone interview Wednesday morning, David Bakhtiari gave a shoutout to Patrick Walsh, his high school coach at Serra in San Mateo.

"He definitely built me into part of the man that I am today," Bakhtiari said.

The 21-year-old is a 6-foot-4, 295-pound left tackle at the University of Colorado, which hosts Stanford this weekend. But back in 2008, his senior season with the Padres, Bakhtiari was more than 50 pounds lighter and a starter on the offensive line for the first time.

His oldest brother, Eric, was a standout at Burlingame High and played four years as a defensive end at the University of San Diego. The 27-year-old is a converted 6-3, 250-pound linebacker who has enjoyed his cup of tea in the NFL, the latest coming with the San Francisco 49ers this season before he was released in the first week of October.

"We try to coordinate our offseason so we're lifting together," the younger Bakhtiari said. "I have a huge amount of respect for him. He definitely helped me develop as a player and I was very happy to see him out there playing because I know he's doing what he loves. ...

"And playing for the 49ers, it's definitely an honor. You grow up with that team around you, so playing with that team was something that I know he cherished a lot."

Bakhtiari has a chance to follow in his oldest brother's footsteps and join the NFL ranks, but when it came to high school he wanted to walk a separate path. That's why he chose Serra instead of Burlingame. It sort of worked out.

"One of the big things was not to be in my brother's shadow," Bakhtiari said. "I didn't want to be known as Bakh's little brother. And I actually still ended up getting that going to Serra because I had a middle brother, Andrew."

Andrew Bakhtiari is now a 6-foot, 200-pound defensive end at USD. When it came to college, once again David went in a different direction than his older brothers.

"It came to a decision, if I were to wake up tomorrow and I could never play football again, would I be happy at the university I was at?" said Bakhtiari, who also received offers from Washington, Utah, UTEP and Sacramento State. "And that made me decide to come to Colorado."

The moment Bakhtiari stepped on campus, he expected "zero" favors.

"I came to the university to earn everything I got," Bakhtiari said.

He understood the importance of gaining size and strength, which meant freshman year was spent in the weight room. After redshirting in 2009, it was baptism by fire as Bakhtiari started 11 games at right tackle.

"There is some men that you will go up against, and it humbled me," Bakhtiari said. "It made me realize even after I finally got my starting spot that it doesn't mean I'm already there."

It helped to have someone to mentor him. That role went to 6-8, 320-pound Nate Solder, who was drafted in the



first round by the New England Patriots in the 2011 NFL draft.

"When I came in here, I knew I needed to learn a lot and I needed to grow as a player," Bakhtiari said. "So I used to go over to his house once a week every Thursday for film session when we were both playing together."

Last year, Bakhtiari filled the void at left tackle created by Solder's ascension to the NFL. But things didn't go as planned. On the seventh play from scrimmage, Bakhtiari suffered a severe knee sprain and missed the next two games. After a return against Ohio State, he participated in the rest of the 623 snaps over the season.

His combination of burst at the line of scrimmage, quick feet, balance and upper body strength have established Bakhtiari as a top-tier NFL talent. It helps that he allowed only three sacks in his first two seasons with the Buffaloes.

In the near future, Bakhtiari will sit down and study his options for the next chapter in his life. Will he return for his senior season, or opt for the draft?

"Now that decision is kind of in my face," said Bakhtiari, who is majoring in communication and minoring in business. "I've finally met my fork in the road."

- Before it comes to that, Colorado has four games left in its Pac-12 campaign. After leaving the Big 12 for richer pasture, the Buffaloes (1-7, 1-4) have struggled. It doesn't get easier against Stanford, which set a school record with 10 sacks last week.

"They throw a lot of blitzes at you, and within the blitzes they are very multi-dimensional," Bakhtiari said. "But if we're all communicating and we're all on the same level, we know exactly what each person is going to be doing and we can be very effective and basically neutralize their pass rushers."

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## CU Buffs seniors won't have bowl game, or pity party

By Adrian Dater *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — The sun was shining, the air was crisp, the ground on which they walked crackled with the occasional golden fall leaf. For the seniors on the Colorado football team that will never experience a bowl game, there was always this at least.

For seniors such as Jon Major and Ray Polk, a career devoid of many big victories has forced them into a "keeping things in perspective" mind-set. There has been a little too much perspective for their liking, including a 1-7 record this year. But at the same time, there have been valuable lessons learned from a college career mostly spent on the wrong side of the scoreboard.

"We all came here to build a dynasty, but crazy stuff happens," Major said. "You look at our (recruiting) class of (2008) and it's a top-20 class, and we all thought we'd be going to bowl games every year. It didn't happen. Nothing's guaranteed. It's been tough, real tough. But especially for us seniors, it's important that we work harder than ever and go out with leaving nothing on the football field."

Major said the losing "has shown me who my true friends are," a life lesson he didn't have as a brash freshman.

"The people that really do care about you, you find that out. That's definitely been a positive," said Major, a middle linebacker. "Everyone in their life has gone through something like this, whether it's in a sport or out of a sport. There is advice to be heard everywhere. But what we wanted most was to win games here, so it's still hard."

Polk, a defensive back, said: "We came here four years ago wanting to do some big things. Losing (stinks). But I think there's still some good we can do around here as seniors, where we can be a good example to younger guys about not quitting and fighting hard to the end. You want to think that this can help them when things are great, that it'll help in the process of getting there.

"You learn a lot about how people are when it all crumbles down. But it's still been great. There's nothing like college football. I came in with these guys five years ago, and they're great people. I'm going to be friends with these people for the rest of my life."

Last year's seniors didn't have much to play for, either, but in the final stretch they helped the Buffs beat Arizona and close the season with an upset at Utah.

"Last year's seniors went through the same thing we went through. That's our mind-set right now, to finish out strong. It'd be great to win the next four," senior linebacker Doug Rippy said.

Second-year Buffs coach Jon Embree isn't too fond of trying to find perspective amid the onslaught of lopsided losses. But he does admit that the character shown by his seniors is a positive that will benefit them when they leave CU. That's what life's supposed to be all about, right?

"They've worked hard at it and put all they've had into it and that's all you can ask for, is to control the stuff you can control," Embree said. "They've been good about that. Unfortunately for them, we weren't able to (get to a bowl game) this year, but I think they all feel good from an individual standpoint about what they were able to contribute to this program."

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