



*Jon Embree's Buffs travel to LA on Saturday to play No. 11 USC.*

*Photo Courtesy: Associated Press*



## Brooks: Trojans Present Another 'Opportunity' For Buffs

Release: 10/16/2012 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

**BOULDER** - It's mid-season quiz time. Identify the college football coach who said the following about this week's opponent:

*"They are deep, they are talented, they just change jersey numbers every year but the guys all look the same . . . They draft, we recruit. And they get the first 25 picks of the draft."*

That could be Colorado's Jon Embree as he (star) gazes at Southern California, but it's not. Embree might think it, but he didn't say it. USC features the probable No. 1 NFL draft choice in quarterback Matt Barkley, receivers Robert Woods and Marqise Lee, tailback Silas Redd . . . and that's merely the headliners on offense.

The quotable coach was Tennessee's Derek Dooley, who was truthfully hyping No. 1 Alabama - the Vols' opponent Saturday in Knoxville.

### BUFFALO EXTRAS



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Embree, meanwhile, is prepping his Buffaloes for Saturday's trip to the Los Angeles Coliseum to meet the No. 11 Trojans. USC is a 41-point favorite, a hideous but hardly surprising spread that Embree claimed he wasn't aware of until being briefed shortly before his weekly media luncheon on Tuesday.

Embree contends that he doesn't fret over that ugly figure seeping into the Buffs' locker room and doing early week psychological damage: "I don't really worry about that; it doesn't change how you prepare. You try and do everything that you would do normally. I don't read the papers or any of that stuff, so it doesn't affect me, and as coaches we just have to be positive on the field and do a good job of leading (players) and preparing them and then going out and playing. Go out and play the game."

That this game is being played in an area the Buffs recruit heavily and that the oddsmakers' inkling that the contest won't be close don't faze Embree either. In fact, he's viewing the Buffs' first visit to the Coliseum as Pac-12 Conference members as "a good opportunity . . . we (signed) ten kids last year out of California. I don't know how many we have committed now (from California), but there are a few more that are close. It's always good to go back out there and let kids play at home. That's one of the advantages of getting in this conference, going out and playing in Los Angeles or the Bay area every year so that kids can learn more about your program.

"Anytime one of our teams is out there, whether it's men's basketball or soccer, whatever, that's huge. We have a lot of alumni out there and we get a lot of kids in our general student population from California. It's a win-win."

Embree is basing that assessment as much on exposure as he is on results - and maybe more so this season. He believes CU prospects or potential prospects who attend or tune into Saturday's game can't help but see an opportunity to help the Buffs. He voiced the same thought last week before the nationally televised Thursday night game against Arizona State, which perhaps underscored his belief with a 51-14 win that actually was close for a half.

Although CU has been outscored 93-31 in its past two games, Embree doesn't see that lopsided total or the Buffs' other three losses as seriously damaging the reception he and his staffers are receiving from prospects.







"They need to understand there are different things going on within your program and how they fit," Embree said. "They need to understand that we're not instant oatmeal, we're not just adding water and get going. If that's what they're looking for, then this isn't the place for them.

"But if they want to be part of something special and help build something, if they want to get a great education, then they'll continue to want to be a Buff. Those are the things to talk about . . ."

Through games of Oct. 6, CU was tied for fifth nationally with Akron in the number of true freshmen played (13). Punch in the number of redshirt freshmen playing and the Buffs' first-year participant total goes to 21.

The same chart lists USC at 11 true freshmen and 25 first-year participants, which brings us back to Dooley's quote on the Crimson Tide. USC is in that "we recruit, they draft" mode, too. Eventually, Embree wants CU in that same conversation, but for now this has to be among his best opening lines in living rooms: "I ask kids, 'Is it your dream to play college football or watch someone else do it? Do you want to go stand in someone's line and wait a couple of years? If that's what you want, great. If you want a chance to play early and be a part of something special, then you'll come here.'"

When Embree elected to stay in-state - he was a nationally recruited Cherry Creek High School tight end prospect - and signed with former Buffs coach Bill McCartney in the mid-80s, he said he "dreamed of playing college football; I didn't dream of watching anyone else play."

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Now, he might be dreaming of recruiting like an Alabama or a USC. But he's realistic enough to know that kind of cachet in the recruiting world is not going to materialize overnight. Instead, he and the Buffs must stay with the chase and keep hustling and grinding and talking up academic and athletic opportunities. (Several more wins along the way wouldn't hurt the sales pitch either.)

"There's a process; you have to be patient," Embree said. "You've got to get players in who can help you climb that ladder. You have to do a good job of developing players. You have to get some guys that maybe they (USC) don't take, and they may turn out to be better than the guys they do take.

"You have to have a little bit of that happen to give yourself that chance. There's no doubt there's some programs that have it rolling. But the great thing about college football is that it's cyclical. You just have to continue to develop your players, continue to recruit and get guys in who can do what you want to do . . . you just have to keep taking shots at those (upper tier) guys and eventually you start getting them."

Eventually, your program also must progress past the point of having "opportunity" as its top selling point - and that's certainly a point not lost on Embree.

**BUFF BITS:** Sophomore linebacker Brady Daigh, who was taken from the field Thursday night on a stretcher, returned to the team Sunday but did not practice then or Tuesday (Monday was a day off). Embree said Daigh "is fine, but he still has soreness in his neck." Daigh is listed as probable for USC . . . Ray Polk (high ankle sprain) is officially questionable, but the senior safety's prognosis isn't that dire. Polk believes he can play . . . Freshman tailback Christian Powell, the team's leading rusher, didn't play against ASU because of a deep thigh bruise but is probable for USC . . . Embree celebrated his 47th birthday on Monday. His best gift? Being with his family and being able to celebrate another birthday. Also, "I'm blessed to be doing what I'm doing," he said . . . Freshman receiver Gerald Thomas calls the chance to play USC in the Coliseum "cool; it's one of the things I was looking forward to (at CU). I grew up as a big Reggie Bush fan. I used to follow USC and now I get a chance to play against them. It's exciting . . . with the right mindset maybe we can pull the big upset."

**Contact:** [BG.Brooks@Colorado.EDU](mailto:BG.Brooks@Colorado.EDU)

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## Football: Hurricane Katrina helped shape CU Buffs' Gerald Thomas

By Brian Howell *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

Posted:

Buffzone.com

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When the New Orleans Saints visit the Denver Broncos on Oct. 28, Gerald Thomas will be watching.

He doesn't know if he'll be in attendance or watching on TV, but he won't miss the game.

For Thomas, and many others from the Bayou, the Saints are like family. He's known them since childhood, and they helped him and others from the area get through one of the worst natural disasters in United States history.

"To this day I'm a die-hard Saints fan," said Thomas, now a freshman wide receiver at Colorado.

In 2005, Thomas was an 11-year-old kid in New Orleans. An only child, he lived with his parents, but spent a lot of his time with an extended family that is glue-tight. In late August, that family got closer than ever.

Hurricane Katrina smacked the city on Aug. 29, 2005, leaving roughly 1,800 people dead and destroying 80 percent of the city that the Thomas family called home. He and his family narrowly got out of the storm's path.

"I left New Orleans the day before Katrina hit," Thomas said.

Members of the family -- 13 in all, including Thomas, his parents, his grandparents, a grandfather and two baby cousins -- fled the city and settled in a hotel in Plano, Texas. All 13 of them packed into a room with two beds, where they stayed for three months.

His father, a trained chef, and grandmother cooked food for the family, using what little they had -- and leaving doors open to keep the room ventilated. The Federal Emergency Management Agency and area residents helped to provide food and other goods.

"It was crazy, but we just had to make it work the best we could," said Thomas, now 18. "We were all very close, so it was kind of easy for us. We tried to make the best out of it, even knowing things were going bad back at home."

Although just 11 years old, Thomas knew right away that the situation was devastating for many of those who were in Katrina's path. On TV, Thomas saw houses that he recognized, washed away or destroyed. He saw many of the city's residents suddenly homeless and in dire need of food, water and clothing.

"It was tough at first, seeing all of that," he said. "My mom would cry and was stressed out; my dad didn't know what to do. We tried to keep our minds off of it, but it was tough at the time."

After a couple of months in the hotel, Thomas' extended family went back to New Orleans, but he and his parents stayed in Texas to start a new life.

They returned to New Orleans to gather their belongings a few months after the hurricane. As it turned out, the Thomas home in New Orleans escaped major damage. Their home on the west bank of the Mississippi River had a little water damage, he said, but, "It wasn't hit as bad as the east bank."

Still, the Thomas' felt it was best to go. In the aftermath of the hurricane, the crime rate rose dramatically in New Orleans and that proved to be a major factor in the Thomas family relocating.

"It wasn't a good environment to raise a kid in," he said of New Orleans. "It was a better opportunity for me for football and my education (in Texas)."

Over the next few years, Thomas blossomed as a football player, and in four seasons with The Colony High School, he became the school's all-time leading receiver, catching 127 passes for 2,345 yards and 22 touchdowns.

His success in high school led to scholarship offers from around the country. He and his parents fell in love with CU and he signed on to become a Buffalo. (His parents love the area so much, in fact, that they are moving here in a couple of weeks.)

Thomas is still learning the nuances of the CU offense, but he is beginning to emerge as a weapon for the Buffs. Through six games, he has caught 12 passes for 143 yards and he's gained another 44 on seven rushing attempts.

Through the trials and recovery associated with Hurricane Katrina, the Thomas family and thousands of others were healed by the Saints, who became a symbol of the city. On the field, the Saints went through difficult times in 2005, but slowly got better and reached the top in 2009 when they won the Super Bowl.

Thomas said he still remembers the Super Bowl victory "like it was yesterday." He's only seen the Saints in person once, when he was a child, so the thought of the Saints coming to Denver excites him.

"I want to go. I'm trying to find a way to go to that game," he said.

Whether he gets to the game or not, Thomas will always have a place in his heart for the Saints and the city of New Orleans. Like the football team and his hometown, Thomas has been through tough times, but he knows what he's been through has shaped him.

"It made me grow up faster and mature quicker than most kids," he said. "At first it was tough, but it ended up being a good thing in the long run."

Follow Brian on Twitter: @BrianHowell33.



## Colorado to visit No. 11 Southern Cal on Saturday

By Brian Howell, Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

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Buffzone.com

Already, the Colorado football team has had losses by 55 points, 34 points and 28 points.

And, that was during the easy half of the schedule.

On Saturday, the Buffaloes (1-5, 1-2 Pac-12) begin a brutal stretch of games by visiting No. 11 Southern California (5-1, 3-1) at the Los Angeles Coliseum.

As of Tuesday, Colorado was a 41-point underdog. It's only the seventh time since the start of the 2007 season that a BCS conference school has been a 40-plus point underdog; it's the fifth time in those seven games that USC has been the favorite.

"I don't really worry about that (point spread), I really don't," CU head coach Jon Embree said Tuesday at his weekly press conference. "It doesn't change how you prepare. You have to go out and prepare and do everything that you would normally. I don't read the papers or any of that stuff, so it doesn't affect me.

"As coaches, we just have to be positive on the field and do a good job of leading them and preparing them and then going out and playing the game."

Saturday's game would appear to be the toughest challenge yet for CU. Southern Cal features a Heisman Trophy candidate at quarterback (Matt Barkley), two all-American candidates at wide receiver (Marqise Lee and Robert Woods), two of the nation's best running backs (Silas Redd and Curtis McNeal) and a postseason award candidate at center (Khaled Holmes). And, that's just the offense.

On defense, the Trojans have safety T.J. McDonald, who is one of the top defensive players in the country. Defensive end Morgan Breslin and linebacker Dion Bailey are also playing at an all-American level.

Add in the fact that USC is 56-7 at the Coliseum since 2002 and it's clear the Buffs have a daunting task ahead.

"I want to play the best and they have some of the best guys in the nation," Colorado defensive back Parker Orms said. "Their whole team is NFL guys and I just want to see how I can match up against them.

"I know our guys aren't afraid or anything like that. We're anxious to get out there and see how we can match up with them."

Embree said the point spread could be a motivating factor for the Buffs, but in reality, the only thing that matters is how the team works during the week.

"You have to prepare in a certain way if you're going to go out and win any game," Embree said. "It's important that we have a great practice today. That's all we can control."

To this point, the Buffs have had a disappointing season, but Orms said he and his teammates haven't stopped fighting.

"We have a lot of guys that are discouraged, but we have coaches that have been pushing us every week," he said. "The first half of the season didn't go well, but we have six more games left and you can either try to turn that

around or you can just give up."

#### Notable

Embree said as of Tuesday afternoon the Buffs aren't sure of the playing status of safety Ray Polk and running back Christian Powell, who are both battling ankle injuries. Chidera Uzo-Diribe and Doug Ripsey should play. ... Linebacker Brady Daigh is doing well after being carted off the field Thursday against Arizona State. Daigh is back practicing with the team. ... USC is 3-1 as a 40-plus point favorite since 2007; the Trojans lost 24-23 to Stanford as a 41-point favorite in 2007. ... USC has won 17 consecutive games in which it was favored by at least 20 points.

Follow Brian on Twitter: @BrianHowell33.

## **Thorburn: CU Buffs need dynamic QB to compete**

*By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

*Posted:*

Buffzone.com

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There are several reasons why the NFL is our new national pastime.

Football and television go together better than peanut butter and jelly.

Football and fantasy leagues also work well in tandem.

And for many Americans it's hard to beat football and gambling.

Although the NCAA would like everyone to believe that college football coaches and players don't think about point spreads, Jon Embree and the Buffs know odds-makers have made them 41-point underdogs against No. 11 USC on Saturday.

An attendee at Tuesday's weekly luncheon at the Harvest House in Boulder asked Colorado's head coach this question about the spread in Las Vegas:

"Being a Buff fan, that makes me angry just reading the sports page. I can't image what you guys feel. Can you use that as motivation?"

Embree said he doesn't "pay attention to that" and competing with the mighty Trojans is all about preparation and making sure the team has a good week of practice.

OK, forget the 41 points. Sadly, most wise guys are probably laying them and betting heavy on the Trojans.

The real question is: How can the Buffs close the expansive gap that exists between them and elite programs like USC?

CU's road wins over Utah and Washington State were nice little feel-good moments that brought rays of light to one of the darker periods in the program's history.

But since Embree took the job and the Buffs moved to the Pac-12, the team has been boat raced by Stanford (48-7), Washington (52-24), Oregon (45-2), Arizona State (48-14 and 51-17), UCLA (45-6 and 42-14) and USC (42-17).

The CU coaching staff is doing its best to recruit potential while USC continues to select from the nation's best talent.

"You have to be patient, you've got to get players in that can help you climb that ladder," Embree said. "You have to do a good job of developing players. You have to get some guys that maybe they don't take that may turn out to be better than the guys that they do take. You have to have a little bit of all that kind of happening to give yourself that chance."

Embree seems to be more patient this season than he was as a first-year head coach who inherited a large senior class. There isn't much of a choice with so many underclassmen learning as they go.

At this point, it's difficult to tell how good this coaching staff is at developing players.



They've taught some old dogs (Will Pericak and Nick Kasa) new tricks. But halfway through Year 2, the running game remains in hibernation, there isn't a lot to get excited about in the passing game, and the injury-riddled defense is the dregs of the conference.

A number of true freshmen -- Kenneth Crawley, Marques Mosley, Christian Powell, Josh Tupou -- have already had an impact on the program and look like they would fit in on any Pac-12 roster.

Embree believes the players who have verbally committed to CU for 2013 will remain loyal no matter how lopsided the scores in Los Angeles and Eugene, Ore., are. He says the prospects want to build something as active participants instead of sustaining something as second-string players early in their careers.

"They need to understand we're not instant oatmeal," Embree said. "We're not just adding water."

The coaching staff's original plan has been to run a traditional pro-style offense and use their NFL backgrounds to sell CU on the recruiting trail.

That's a much easier sell for Lane Kiffin at USC or Nick Saban at Alabama.

"There's no doubt there's some programs that have it rolling," Embree said. "But the great thing about college football is it's cyclical."

Right now the Buffs are missing out on the very exciting spread offense cycle.

Oregon wouldn't be a serious threat for the national title without Chip Kelly's beautiful offensive mind. Kansas State wouldn't be in the top five if old-school Bill Snyder wasn't running a modern offense.

Nothing closes the gap between the haves and the have-nots like a dynamic quarterback capable of beating defenses with his arm or legs.

The Buffs will be heavy underdogs against USC again in 2013 unless they find that player and adapt.

Follow Ryan on Twitter: @RyanThorburn

## Colorado's Embree: Matt Barkley compares favorably to Andrew Luck

By Tom Kensler The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

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BOULDER — Andrew Luck or Matt Barkley?

Take your pick, Jon Embree said Tuesday, because the Colorado coach can't decipher much difference between the two drop-back quarterbacks who can pick apart a defense.

"Barkley and Luck are very similar," Embree said. "Matt has some swagger about him that Luck had, a quiet confidence."

Luck, the former Stanford standout, was the overall No. 1 pick in the 2012 NFL draft and became an immediate starter in Indianapolis.

Barkley, USC's strong-armed senior, is being mentioned as a top candidate to be the first player taken in the 2013 draft.

Colorado (1-5, 1-2 Pac-12) hopes to fare better against Barkley on Saturday when the Buffaloes face No. 11 USC (5-1, 3-1) in Los Angeles. Last year in Boulder, Barkley threw for 318 yards and a school-record six touchdowns in USC's 42-17 win.

"Matt is good with his decisions and he's accurate with the ball," said Embree, an assistant coach for four years in the NFL. "He does a good job with coverages. So when you're trying to mix or fool him, he's still good at getting rid of it."

"(Barkley) can make all the throws. He can go across the field. He has very good touch on the deep ball. And he's the kind of leader you want at that position."

According to draft analysts, Barkley (6-foot-2, 230 pounds) would have been a sure first-round pick a year ago. But Barkley elected to return to USC for his senior year because, he said, he wanted to help the Trojans get a shot at the national championship. Until this season, USC had been ineligible for postseason play due to NCAA sanctions.

"I'm glad this is it for him," Embree said. "I'm glad he's leaving (after this season)."

Barkley directs a Trojans offense that never forgets about the running game (Penn State transfer Silas Redd ranks fifth among Pac-12 rushers with 95 yards per game), and his statistics don't match those of more air-oriented statistics. Barkley's 245.8 passing yards per game rates just fifth in the conference.

But Barkley is third among Pac-12 quarterbacks in pass efficiency (behind leader Kelly Taylor of Arizona State and Oregon's Marcus Mariota). And Barkley's 16 touchdown passes top the conference.

Barkley enters Saturday's game needing three TD passes to match the conference record of 99 set by USC's Matt Leinart (2003-05).

Barkley's supporting cast makes the USC offense especially lethal. In addition to Redd's punishing runs, Trojan wideouts Robert Woods and Marquise Lee may be the nation's best — and fastest — receiver tandem. Both caught two touchdown passes at CU's Folsom Field a year ago.

"Playing USC is what I signed up for," Colorado junior safety Parker Orms said. "I signed up to play Oklahoma and Nebraska (as a freshman), and now I get to play SC, Oregon and Stanford. I'm going into the Coliseum on Saturday, and I can't wait."

Injury updates. All tests on the neck of sophomore linebacker Brady Daigh were negative, Embree said. The Mullen alumnus was taken off the field on a backboard during the fourth quarter of Thursday's game against Arizona State. He is listed by CU as "probable" for Saturday's game against USC,

Other CU injury updates among active players: probable — tailback Christian Powell (thigh); questionable — safety Ray Polk (ankle), linebacker Paul Vigo (foot), cornerback Yuri Wright (concussion); doubtful — Kyle Washington (concussion).

Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280, [tkensler@denverpost.com](mailto:tkensler@denverpost.com) or [twitter.com/tomkensler](https://twitter.com/tomkensler)

## CU coach Jon Embree discouraged by lack of consistent running game

By Tom Kensler *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*

Posted:

DenverPost.com

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BOULDER — Speaking Tuesday during his weekly media luncheon, Colorado coach Jon Embree said he has been dismayed, perhaps as much as anything, by his team's inability to generate a consistently effective running attack.

Colorado (1-5, 1-2 Pac-12) is ranked 10th among Pac-12 teams in rushing offense (110.8 yards per game) entering Saturday's game at No. 11 Southern California.

The Buffs' top rusher, freshman Christian Powell, ranks 12th individually in the league with just 58.8 yards per game.

"From an offensive standpoint, that's the biggest issue for me with what we've done," Embree said of the running game, and lack thereof.

"Obviously in the offseason that's a top priority to get that fixed. We have to run the football. It will be examined thoroughly. I've already started doing that, but we will do it as a staff. That will be addressed and discussed as to the direction we want to go."

Embree said the struggles with the ground game have prevented Colorado to establish an identity on that side of the ball.

"We haven't run the football like we've want," he said.

Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280, [tkensler@denverpost.com](mailto:tkensler@denverpost.com) or [twitter.com/tomkensler](https://twitter.com/tomkensler)

The Field House — Blogs — The Denver Post

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OCTOBER 17, 2012, 6:49 AM

## Colorado's Parker Orms: "Lot of guys discouraged"

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

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BOULDER — Participating in Colorado's weekly media luncheon, Buffs junior safety Parker Orms was asked about the psyche of the team considering the 1-5 start.

"We have a lot of guys that are discouraged," Orms replied. "But we have the coaches that are pushing us every week. ... 'Why did you come to Colorado? What does the fight song mean to you? What do those words, fight, fight (pause) fight, fight fight mean to you?'"

"Some guys are going to get that. Some guys it's going to go in one ear and out the other. They're thinking about their future. I try to tell the freshmen that it goes fast. You never know if you're going to play next season or when your career is going to end.

"The first half of the season didn't go well," Orms added. "But we have six more games left. You can either try to turn that around or you can just give up."

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**<http://blogs.denverpost.com/colleges/2012/10/17/colorados-parker-orms-lot-guys-discouraged/25348/>**

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**chicagotribune.com**

## 11th-ranked Trojans welcome Buffaloes to Coliseum

Sports Network

10:18 AM CDT, October 17, 2012

Los Angeles, CA

The No. 11 USC Trojans will continue their quest to re-enter the national championship race when they welcome in the Colorado Buffaloes for a Pac-12 conference game at the Los Angeles Coliseum.

A three-game winning streak has USC back within striking distance of the top-10, as the 5-1 Trojans now sit at No. 11. The Trojans are even higher (10) in the first BCS rankings of the season. The Trojans' overall record, which includes a 3-1 tally against Pac-12 foes, has come despite the squad playing four of the first six games on the road.

"We're excited that we went on the road for four of the first six games and outside of one (loss) we're 5-1," head coach Lane Kiffin said while looking forward to a stretch of three games in the next four at LA Coliseum. "We've got some stuff to work on and get ready to come home."

The first visitor to the Coliseum in almost a month will be the 1-5 Colorado Buffaloes who have lost back-to-back games entering play. In those two losses the Buffaloes have been outscored by a margin of 93-31. Most recently the Buffaloes dropped a 51-17 decision at home to Arizona State. Colorado is just 1-2 in Pac-12 play.

Last season was the first in which Colorado and USC squared off as conference opponents. USC won that matchup in convincing fashion 43-17 behind a school-record six touchdown passes from Matt Barkley. The win also increased USC's perfect record all-time against Colorado to 6-0.

The Buffaloes are the worst scoring team in the Pac-12 (20.8 ppg) this season, while ranking better than only two other teams in total offense (326.5 ypg).

Jordan Webb has been the man under center this season for Colorado. Webb has completed 56.5 percent of his passes for 1,141 yards, with eight touchdowns and four interceptions. Webb has not had an opportunity to really build consistency, with Colorado second to last in sacks allowed (27) in the Pac-12. Webb has taken 26 of those quarterback takedowns.

Nelson Spruce (27 receptions, 291 yards, 2 TDs) and Tyler McCulloch (20 receptions, 243 yards, 2

advertisement

The advertisement features a blue background with the text "CHECK OUT THIS WEEK'S HOTTEST DEALS" at the top. Below this, there are three red circular callouts: "SAVE \$150" next to a Westinghouse TV, "SAVE \$700" next to a Samsung TV, and "SAVE \$20" next to a black electronic device. At the bottom, a yellow banner reads "THIS WEEK'S DEALS END IN:" followed by a digital clock showing "12:29:54". To the left of the clock is the "BEST BUY LATEST DEALS" logo, and to the right is a yellow button that says "SHOP THE DEALS >". A small copyright notice "©2012 BBY Solutions, Inc." is visible in the bottom right corner.



TDs) have been Webb's most consistent targets. However tight end Nick Kasa has seen a jump in production in the last three games, with 10 receptions and 199 yards during that stretch. He has also caught a touchdown pass in each of those games.

The numbers in the run game are not any better than those passing, with Colorado having just 665 yards rushing on the season, the third worst total in the Pac-12. Christian Powell (294 yards) and Tony Jones (222 yards) are the two most productive backs, although Powell was sidelined by injury against Arizona State.

There's not much the offense can do with how poor Colorado's defense has been though. The Buffaloes are ranked last in the Pac-12 in both scoring (41.3 ppg) and total defense (494.2 ypg).

Terrel Smith (52) and Derrick Webb (48) are the two leading tacklers on the roster, while Chidera Uzo-Diribe has been a solid pass rusher with six sacks.

USC is scoring at a healthy 32.3 points per game clip this season but the Trojans have not been the prolific offense that was advertised entering 2012. The Trojans are just seventh in the Pac-12 in total offense (415.2 ypg) and the vaunted passing attack is ranked just sixth (249.5 ypg).

The passing game's inconsistency was evident in the squad's most recent matchup against Washington with starting quarterback Matt Barkley throwing for a season-low 167 yards with one touchdown on 10-of-20 passing. Barkley has really regressed this season, putting up three games with less than 200 yards passing and two with a completion percentage of less than 50 percent. Last season Barkley threw for less than 200 yards only twice and never completed less than 54.3 percent of his passes.

With Barkley limited, the production of talented receivers Marqise Lee and Robert Woods also dropped off. Woods had five receptions for 88 yards, while Lee had season-lows in receptions (two) and yards (32). That game aside, Lee has been one of the most dangerous offensive weapons in college football this season, with a Pac-12 leading totals in receptions (54), yards (681) and touchdowns (seven).

While the passing game struggled to get on the same page it was the Trojans' rushing attack that carried the squad to the victory over Washington. Penn State-transfer Silas Redd rushed for 155 yards and a touchdown on 26 carries for his second game of more than 150 yards this season. Redd now has 570 yards and six rushing touchdowns this season.

"(Silas has) been very important and a big part of the reason we went to get him was these last two games," Kiffin said. "Going on the road in a place that coming into the year has been tough to play he played big."

The real question many had about USC entering this season was on defense and the Trojans have largely silenced those critics. USC has the second-best defense in the Pac-12 in terms of total yards (331.5 ypg) and is third in scoring (18.5 ppg). The unit's ability to force opposing teams to make mistakes has been key, with the Trojans collecting the third most turnovers in the Pac-12 (16). That includes a league best 11 interceptions.

"It's the first time in three years we've felt where we go on the road in a hostile environment we can play to our defense at times," Kiffin said while crediting his defense with keeping the Trojans in game this season.

T.J. McDonald and Dion Bailey have been impressive with McDonald having a team-leading 47 tackles. Bailey has 42 tackles and has collected a team-high four interceptions. Lamar Dawson (12.5 TFL, 7.0

sacks) and Leonard Williams (8.5 TFL, 5.5 sacks) have been disruptive in opposing backfields.

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