

Football: CU Buffs have tough task against Oregon's fast-paced offense

By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

The smartest coach in the NFL?

For many followers of the league, the first name that comes to mind is Bill Belichick.

The grumpy, hoodie-wearing football savant has hoisted the Lombardi Trophy three times in five Super Bowl appearances with New England.

And the team the Patriots are trying to mimic on offense in a copy-cat profession?

Oregon.

During the offseason when Chip Kelly asked if he could visit Patriots headquarters to talk X's and O's, the innovative Oregon coach was greeted with open arms.

Belichick wanted know how the Ducks fly so fast.

"I was interested to hear how he did it," Belichick told the Boston Globe when asked about meeting with Kelly to discuss his hypersonic spread offense. "I would say he expanded it to a different level and it was very interesting to understand what he was doing.

"Certainly I've learned a lot from talking to Chip about his experiences with it and how he does it and his procedure and all that."

New England, using one-word play calls at the line of scrimmage, ran 89 offensive plays and racked up 35 first downs during a 31-21 victory over the Denver Broncos earlier this season.

"I think a little of that is overblown," Kelly told the Oregonian of his influence on Belichick's 2012 team. "I don't think you're going to see Tom Brady running the zone read."

Jon Embree and several key members of his Colorado coaching staff have NFL experience. But so far they also have a 4-16 record while rebuilding the Buffs.

Now CU has to prepare for another mission impossible: Saturday's game against No. 2 Oregon at Autzen Stadium (1 p.m., Pac-12 Networks).

The Ducks (7-0, 4-0) lead the Pac-12 and are second nationally in scoring offense (51.0 ppg).

During a 43-21 road victory at Arizona State, Kelly's crew scored 43 unanswered points during an 18-minute stretch in the first half.

The Sun Devils, 51-17 winners at Folsom Field earlier this month, entered the game with the nation's No. 8 defense. But Oregon redshirt freshman quarterback Marcus Mariota shredded them with a rushing touchdown, a passing touchdown, and a touchdown reception during the offensive onslaught.

Kelly rested many of his starters after the intermission. Just what Oregon needs against CU -- fresh legs.

The Buffs (1-6, 1-3), who are last in the Pac-12 in scoring defense (42.6 ppg) and 112th nationally in total defense (489.0 ypg), played as hard as they could and still lost 50-6 at USC on Saturday.

"You have to compete. At some point you have to get to where it's not about who you're playing, it's about the opportunity to play," Embree said. "The one thing you can't say about this team, you can't say they don't compete. I felt like they fought the whole game; they fought last week and will continue to fight. It's something we have to do."

The Ducks' explosive offense vs. Greg Brown's anemic defense is one of the biggest mismatches of the college football season. Oregon's offensive coordinator, Mark Helfrich, left Dan Hawkins' staff at CU to run the offense of his dreams.

The Eugene Register-Guard summed the game up this way:

"A return to Autzen Stadium is on the schedule for Oregon next week, to face lowly Colorado, and it will be all the college football world can do to patiently endure that game, with the Ducks' long-awaited showdown at USC looming seven days later."

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CU Buffs' veterans in secondary want young players to work harder

By John Henderson *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*

Posted:

DenverPost.com

LOS ANGELES — The frustration is etched on their faces as deeply as when they see another receiver raising his arms in the end zone. Colorado's veteran and proud defensive backs — and yes, in this kiddie corps there are a couple — wonder if their young cohorts know what it takes to play at this level.

On paper, the level of Colorado's defense, particularly against the pass, can be measured only by deep-sea drilling. After 11th-ranked Southern California's 50-6 drubbing of CU on Saturday, the Buffaloes (1-6, 1-3 Pac-12) are 112th nationally in total defense (489.0 yards per game) and 119th in pass efficiency defense (176.0) and scoring defense (42.57 points per game). Add in the four provisional FBS schools, and Colorado in pass and scoring defense is 123rd out of 124 schools.

Yes, winless UMass, even you have given up fewer points than Colorado.

"Guys have to start taking it more seriously," junior safety Parker Orms said after the game, "if we're going to compete in this conference."

Part of the problem is the nature of second-year coach Jon Embree's rebuilding program. A dearth of defensive backs left behind by deposed Dan Hawkins has forced defensive coordinator Greg Brown to play youth in over their heads.

Starting on USC's All-America receiver, Robert Woods, was true freshman Kenneth Crawley. He was the No. 2 prep prospect out of Washington, D.C., last year at Woodson High School, but he was not ready to take on the top receiver in USC history.

Marques Mosley, another true freshman, has started much of the year at safety, and true sophomore Greg Henderson is a veteran as a second-year starter. With five games left, Colorado has given up 27 touchdown passes and has three interceptions.

Orms and senior safety Ray Polk both said the young guys aren't watching enough film and studying enough to stay on the field with the best passing attacks splashed around the Pac-12.

"We go over the game plan all week long and we get the (play)book, and if guys aren't in the book enough, that's going to show," Orms said. "Some guys don't. We just have to be better as a team."

"It's not one guy. It's all of us messing up. We've got to fix that some way."

Added Polk, who said he played poorly in his first start since suffering a high ankle sprain in the opener against Colorado State: "That's true. We have to put the heat on, a little bit, of guys watching film more, of guys understanding what the game plan is and why we're playing it wrong. The bottom line is we have to execute, and we didn't do that. At all."

They say the slackers face repercussions. The coaching staff, whose honeymoon period is just beginning to fade, is trying to hold them accountable. So are the players.

"The captains try to get on those guys all the time," Orms said. "It shows on our iPads who watches film and who doesn't. They're going to look at that, and that's definitely a big thing."

If they're not careful, this group of defenders will go down as the worst in school history.

They're on pace to set school lows for total defense and scoring defense, "topping" the 464.4 yards per game and 41.0 points per game from 1980, coach Chuck Fairbanks' notorious 1-10 team, commonly considered, until now, the black hole of Colorado football's Dark Ages.

"I talk to them all the time about how it goes fast," Orms said. "All of a sudden, you're a senior and you don't want to be the guy that tells the freshmen to pick it up. It's not the freshmen's fault at all. There are older guys messing up assignments too, so we have to hold the whole team responsible."

And don't look now, folks, but it only gets worse. Up Saturday is a visit to second-ranked Oregon (7-0, 4-0), with two extra days off and sporting a No. 2 ranking in scoring (51.0) and No. 8 in total offense (529.14). USC is 34th and 47th, respectively.

At least some Buffs care.

"I don't even know how I'm going to sleep tonight," Polk said with a weak laugh. "I feel sick."

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CU eye on: Oregon Ducks

Posted:

DenverPost.com

Colorado at Oregon, 1 p.m., Saturday, Pac-12 Network

For the record: On Thursday night, Oregon raced out to a 43-7 halftime lead at Arizona State and cruised to a 43-21 win. ASU won 51-17 at Colorado seven days earlier.

Streaking: Oregon has won 21 of its last 22 home games. Its only loss was 38-35 to Southern California last Nov. 19.

Who's hot: Oregon's offense. Again. Last year's fourth-highest scoring team in the country (48.1 points per game) is No. 2 this year (51.0). It's also fourth in rushing (317.1 yards per game) and eighth in total offense (529.1).

Who's not: Kickoff returns. Oregon is second to last nationally at 15.4 yards per return. Then again, it hasn't had much practice. The unbeaten Ducks have returned only 18 kickoffs.

Key stat: 106.3. That's Oregon's vastly improved pass efficiency defense. It's 17th nationally and second in the Pac-12.

FYI: Oregon's 54,000-seat Autzen Stadium is legendary for its crowd noise. Who was the first opponent to play init? CU. Coach Eddie Crowder's Buffs christened the then-40,000 seat stadium on Sept. 23, 1967, with a 17-13 win over the Ducks.

Coachspeak: "I love it. Hopefully when you practice something, it pays off. Our guys have pretty good hands, and we're not dropping many." — Oregon defensive coordinator Nick Aliotti, after his Ducks intercepted four passes at Arizona State. The Ducks have 14 this season.

John Henderson, The Denver Post

CSU-Pueblo coach Wristen has high praise for Embree

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The current head coach of the CSU-Pueblo ThunderWolves, John Wristen, has led the ThunderWolves to an undefeated 8-0 record and 6-0 record in the RMAC.

Wristen's ThunderWolves are currently the number one ranked Division II football program in the Nation. But while the landscape is vastly different for the ThunderWolves, Wristen thinks it's not time to panic yet for the Colorado Buffaloes.



"Jon (Embree)'s doing a great job up there, so are the Buffs, they'll get it turned around," Wristen said on Mile High Sport Radio's Afternoon Drive with Mac and Goodman 3-6 p.m. on Monday afternoon.

Wristen pointed out that the success in Pueblo is due largely to successful in-state recruiting and finding dedicated players.

"We've had a bunch of guys stay with us for four years, I knew they were going to be on a mission," Wristen said. "We played [West Texas A&M] and we beat them. That really set us on a journey where we've been able to establish an identity."

The identity the ThunderWolves have established is that of a high-powered offense. In each of

their eight games, CSU-Pueblo has scored at least 30 points, and over 40 points in five games, including a 50-21 win over in-state rival Fort Lewis.

Another advantage Wristen cited was the fact that the program is able to recruit players that aren't heavily recruited by CU or CSU.

"I think we just afford these kids a different opportunity, people know we'll treat them right and give them an opportunity. We've developed them and given them a plan, not everybody's a Division I guy," Wristen added.

Under the leadership of Wristen, CSU-Pueblo is on track for another playoff berth.

Maybe college football isn't dead in Colorado after all.

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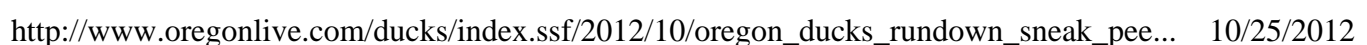
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Star power: Running back Christian Powell leads the team with 350 yards rushing and has scored three touchdowns on the ground. Wide receiver Nelson Spruce has 28 receptions for 307 yards and two touchdowns. Linebacker Derrick Webb leads the team with 34 tackles.

Did you know: Colorado won six bowl games from 1993 to 1999 before losing to Oregon in the Fiesta Bowl following the 2001 season. Since, the Buffaloes have reached four bowl games and won one.

Threat level (1-5 scale): 0. A real Duck would have a better chance against a real Buffalo in a game of chicken than Colorado has of defeating Oregon.

Early prediction: The perfect day for a UO fan could include brunch, tailgating, in stadium by noon and then out by 1:30 to catch a matinee after Oregon goes up 40 in the first half before slamming on the brakes. UO 67, Colorado 16.

Links:

Ducks insider: Oregon's dominance **not doing it any favors**

(http://www.oregonlive.com/ducks/index.ssf/2012/10/ducks_insider_oregons_dominanc.html#incart_river).

UO remains at **No. 2 in the AP Poll**

(http://www.oregonlive.com/collegefootball/index.ssf/2012/10/uo_ducks_remain_at_no_2_osu_be.html#incart_river).

Issues and answers: **Watch out for Kansas State**

(http://www.oregonlive.com/collegefootball/index.ssf/2012/10/issues_and_answers_watch_out_f.html#incart_river).

Adam Jude's **Harris Poll ballot**

(http://www.oregonlive.com/ducks/index.ssf/2012/10/adam_judes_harris_poll_ballot_2.html#incart_river).

Rebuffing Colorado **is Oregon's top priority**

(<http://www.registerguard.com/web/sports/28929255-41/oregon-game-colorado-kelly-usc.html.csp>).

Kelly brushes off Oregon's **fall in BCS standings**

(<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/article/20121022/SPORTS/310220032/Coach-Kelly-brushes-off-Oregon-s-drop-BCS-standings?odyssey=tab|topnews|text|Sports>).

Is Chip taking **kindness too far** (<http://fishduck.com/2012/10/is-chip-taking-kindness-to-far/>)?

Top teams again **defined by elite defense**

(http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2012/writers/stewart_mandel/10/21/alabama-florida-oregon-defense-overtime/index.html?eref=writers).

Does Kansas State **control own destiny**

(<http://collegesportsblog.dallasnews.com/2012/10/writer-after-passing-oregon-in-bcs-standings-kansas-state-controls-own-destiny-in-national-title-game-race.html/>)?

--Aaron Fentress (<mailto:afentress@oregonian.com>)