

Football: Greg Brown just as frustrated as anyone with CU Buffs' woes

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

In 31 years prowling the sidelines of college and professional football fields, Greg Brown has seldom felt as frustrated as he does this fall as defensive coordinator for the Colorado Buffaloes.

Brown's defense is allowing 43 points and nearly 500 total yards of offense per game and it hasn't even played the best opponent on its schedule yet. That comes this week when the 1-6 Buffs travel to No. 2 Oregon, which is scoring 51 points a game and is undefeated at 7-0.

"It's a frustrating thing when any coach, any defensive staff, pour their heart and soul into something and yet we haven't seen results," Brown said. "The only thing we can do is dig our way out and get better in all phases, as coaches, as players, practice habits, in our preparation. It's just leaving no stone unturned."

Colorado fans are obviously frustrated and they're directing their anger at Brown, head coach Jon Embree and other defensive coaches. Brown said he believes in what the defensive staff is teaching and he sees development in individual players, but some of the success the Buffs experience on the practice fields isn't also occurring on game days.

That is where the frustration comes in. Helping players be more successful in games is Brown's biggest challenge.

"Each week, somebody is coming up with some new twist and you better have an answer for it because if you don't, they're going to exploit it," Brown said. "In years past, that wasn't necessarily the case, but nowadays coordinators and offensive head coaches have seen what other people have done and they're building on it and adding their own twist."

Brown isn't the only one searching for answers to the Buffs' defensive woes. Embree said this week on the Pac-12 coaches call that he hasn't been able to pinpoint why the Buffs continue to struggle so badly on the side of the ball.

"That's probably the most frustrating, not being able to put a finger on one or two things, like, this is what we need to do to fix that," he said. "We just have to stay the course right now and look at different ways we can help." Colorado has played eight true freshmen on defense this year, but it seldom has more than three or four on the field together. Six of the Buffs' top-10 tacklers are juniors or seniors, players who ought to understand schemes and what it takes to be successful on Saturdays. Another one of the top-10 tacklers is sophomore Brady Daigh, who already has played plenty of football in his young career.

To his credit, Brown said using young players such as starting cornerback Kenneth Crawley, starting defensive tackles Josh Tupou and Samson Kafovalu and safety Marques Mosley is only part of the problem. He said veterans on defense have made key mistakes this season as well.

Brown said every player on the field needs to make sure they are aligned properly to start each play, know their assignment, use the proper technique and execute. He said he emphasizes that with players every week. Brown said he would also like his defense to improve on swarming to the ball and gang tackling, which is hard to do against offenses that spread defenses out these days.

Brown said the number of big plays his defense has allowed also bothers him. He said the Buffs have to focus on doing their jobs as individuals and they will improve as a unit. CU has allowed 49 plays of 20 yards or more through seven games, including 37 passes.

"When you simply give somebody a big play, it's like baseball. It's an unearned home run, an unearned base," Brown said.

Several Buffs emerged from the losing locker room last week at USC and questioned whether some of their teammates were watching enough film on opponents before games and fully studying and understanding game plans. Brown said he believes all of his players are putting in the work ahead of time. He said Ray Polk and Parker Orms might have been speaking out of frustration in the heat of the moment and he has talked with both players this week.

Ultimately, Brown takes responsibility for how the Buffs are playing and getting it fixed. "Any time you don't have success, you're always going to look and blame yourself first and say, 'What could we do better? How could we put our players in better positions,'" Brown said. "It really goes hand in hand. It's up to coaches to find a way to put players in positions and it's up to players to understand the game plan, get it practiced correctly and then execute it in a game."

Quotable

Embree when asked if coaches had used anyone specific on scout team offense to simulate the speed of some of Oregon's players:

"You can't. We don't have, we only have a couple fast guys anyway. It's not like we have a plethora of them to put out there to simulate that. But the tempo of the offense, I think we've done a good job simulating that."

Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn plans to boost recruiting staff

By John Henderson The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — Colorado will add a number of people to its football recruiting staff in a support and evaluation capacity, possibly as early as next spring, athletic director Mike Bohn and coach Jon Embree said Wednesday.

The new personnel, who will not replace current staffers or count against the NCAA's limit on coaches on the road, would be hired to help identify and evaluate prospects and help in the transition to college.

"It'd be huge," Embree said. "Right now, all the legwork and all that we're doing now takes away from all the other stuff we should be doing from an X and O standpoint, or anything else. Things like transcripts, all that stuff."

CU is 1-6 in Embree's second year of a major rebuilding project. He said he hopes to add six people to his staff.

Bohn wouldn't be specific about the number of hires, or their roles, but said the new personnel would help the current staff with everything from research to developing sources. And, he added, they would be experienced people who have expertise in recruiting.

"We're trying to emphasize what we believe is integral to our success, and it's recruiting," Bohn said. "We believe we have outstanding coaches who are recruiting and we want to further bolster their data, their research and their information for them to be better so they can attract (players) to what we believe is the premier college community in the country."

Bohn said he will add recruiting support to all athletic programs and wants to use football as the pilot program. He is going through the process of getting the positions approved and adjusting the budget.

"The recruiting process is not emphasized or invested in at the level it needs to be," Bohn said. "We recognize across the board, with all of our coaches when we meet, that it's about recruiting and about competing in this league of champions."

Colorado's football team has only eight seniors, tied with Indiana for second-fewest in the country behind Rice's seven. A loss at No. 2-ranked Oregon on Saturday would clinch a school-record seventh consecutive losing season for CU.

John Henderson: 303-954-1299, jhenderson@denverpost.com or twitter.com/johnhendersondp

Oregon brings ball-hawking defense with powerful offense vs. Buffs

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

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — A college football fan, or opponent, can get caught up in the blinding kaleidoscope that is Oregon's offense. Combine speed that ranges from Olympic to warp with uniforms taken off the "Starship Troopers" set, and the Ducks attract attention like neon lights in Nikes.

However, beneath all the big names and big numbers and bigger blowouts on offense is a defense that would look very appropriate wearing Dickies with blue collars. Everyone wonders if these second-ranked Ducks (7-0, 4-0 Pac-12), who host Colorado (1-6, 1-3) on Saturday, are better than their last three conference championship teams.

They are. CU coach Jon Embree knows why.

"Defense," Embree said, "is why they have a great opportunity at the end of the year to lift up that (BCS championship) crystal ball."

Keep in mind the finesse label following around the nattily attired Ducks only applies to their offense. Remember, Oregon's defense held Auburn to 20 offensive points before losing the 2010 BCS championship on a last-second field goal 22-19. Louisiana State pounded Oregon in last season's opener 40-27, but the Tigers' offense gained only 273 yards.

Oregon's defense has proven it can muscle up against the bullies of the SEC — and this year its defense appears even better. It's more experienced. It's faster. It's bigger.

"People gravitate toward offense, and our offense, how good they are, forced us to be a little better on defense," Ducks defensive coordinator Nick Aliotti said.

Aliotti is in his 21st year as Oregon's coordinator. He has been around Eugene longer than some Douglas firs and gets the same amount of attention. But his blitzing and ball hawking have made Oregon as explosive on defense as it is on offense.

Forget the stats. The Ducks rank only sixth in the Pac-12 in total defense (allowing 366.7 yards per game) and fifth in scoring defense (20.1 points). With Oregon's offense often scoring in drives lasting less than two minutes, overall defensive stats are as meaningless as Aliotti's 40 time. What's meaningful are Oregon's 2.0 interceptions per game, second nationally, including 11 in four league games, with four returned for touchdowns. In the first half, when the game is in doubt, the Ducks have outscored their opponents 234-56 this year and held their opponents to 3.91 yards per play. Their secret?

"Their length," said Arizona State coach Todd Graham, whose Sun Devils fell behind in the first half a week ago 43-7. "They're much bigger in person and they're very, very well coached. They're tough to throw the ball over. Obviously, they're tough to get leverage on."

The Ducks' defensive ends are 6-foot-7 first-team all-Pac-12 Dion Jordan and 6-6 Taylor Hart. In the rotation are 6-7, 265-pound DeForest Buckner and 6-8, 280-pound Arik Armstead, both true freshmen.

If you think Oregon's no-huddle offense runs fast, Aliotti subs like a hockey coach. He plays up to nine linemen, eight linebackers and seven defensive backs, the better to keep everyone fresh. The rotation has added depth that pays off weekly. When preseason All-America safety John Boyett had two knee surgeries in September, Aliotti

inserted junior Avery Patterson, who has returned two interceptions for touchdowns.

"It's done a couple things for us," Aliotti said. "You can play faster for longer. Secondly, your prominent seconds and those other guys when you're playing 22, 23 people, they stay mentally in the practices knowing they're getting reps. They must know the whole package."

So, if you're feeling sorry for Colorado's beleaguered defense Saturday, you may save a few tears for the offense too.

John Henderson: 303-954-1299, jhenderson@denverpost.com or twitter.com/johnhendersondp