



*Jon Embree says his Buffs must be nearly error-free against No. Oregon.*

*Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com*



## Brooks: Buffs Face Formidable Mission Against Ducks

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**EUGENE, Ore.** - Coaches watch hours of tape and wade through swamps of statistics weekly, but this is all they really need to know about Oregon football under Chip Kelly: The Ducks start fast, stay fast and seldom look back. And no waddling allowed.

Kelly has run with the bulls - he did it in July in Pamplona - and can be a pretty good bull, ah, shooter. He coaches at a school that has everything that (Nike) money can buy. The Ducks are past cutting edge in facilities, equipment and attire; they could change uniforms at the end of every quarter and not sport the same look twice a season.

But here's Kelly on his own frugality: "I've worn the same practice visor since I got here in 2007 . . . I'm just trying to save the school money."

The guy is light, bright and occasionally airy, and given how his No. 2-ranked team is turning every Saturday (and the occasional Thursday night) into a runaway, there's little reason ahead for him to cloud up. The Ducks are 47-point favorites to speed past visiting Colorado on Saturday (1 p.m. MDT, Pac-12 Network) in Autzen Stadium.

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The Buffs might find some solace in this: Kelly is not a pointaholic. His team usually makes its point(s) early and sees no real reason to pile on. Oregon (7-0, 4-0 Pac-12) has outscored its opposition 134-26 in first quarters this season and hasn't really had a first-quarter scare. The closest first quarter score: a 7-0 lead against Arizona, and that one ended 49-0.

On the flip side, the Buffs (1-6, 1-3) haven't been swift starters, or - with the exception of their comeback at Washington State - efficient finishers either. CU has been outscored 84-24 in seven first quarters and 183-79 in first halves this season. The Buffs offense is still looking for a complete game (along with several other items).

Earlier this week, Kelly told reporters in Eugene that being favored by nearly 50 points shouldn't affect this week's preparation: "This team, since I have been here, has been really, really good at preparing for every opponent and I hope this week is no different. I worry every Sunday when I sit in the office about what our mindset will be when we come in on Monday, but these guys don't disappoint me."

In the second weekly BCS poll, Oregon slipped a spot to No. 4, now trailing Alabama, Florida and Kansas State. That's hardly a free-fall, but the Ducks can take flight again in November games against a pair of Top Ten opponents - No. 10 USC, No. 7 Oregon State - and No. 19 Stanford. Later in the month, there's probably a rematch looming with the Trojans in the Pac-12 championship game, with a win there pushing the Ducks into the first or second BCS spot and the national title game.

So Oregon's mission Saturday against CU really comes down to staying the course and avoiding doing anything too embarrassing. The Buffs, meanwhile, aren't planning on being embarrassed - but contending with the Ducks' overall speed can lead to that.

"Getting ready for Oregon, obviously we know the challenges they present, especially offensively," CU coach Jon Embree said. "They fast-break on grass, so to speak; they do a great job of spreading you out and then they hit the seam and they're gone. They have tremendous speed."

In a 45-2 win last season in Boulder (it was 29-0 after one quarter), the Ducks ran 69 plays and averaged 7.6 yards per play. Kelly has revved things up even more this season; his offense is averaging 83 plays a game (6.4 yards per play), 529.1 yards in total offense and 51 points a game.

Oregon, observed CU senior safety Ray Polk, runs a complicated offense stocked with talented players. "But it's just football, it's not rocket science," Polk added. "It's not like you're asking somebody to do something they've never done before . . . every scheme has its faults. You just have to look at where we have the best chance against them and then rep that game plan and execute it on the field. That's a week-to-week thing. I'm excited to play these guys; they're a great football team. (But) if we execute the game plan, I think we have a chance to beat these guys - and I think that every week."

Polk, whose return last week against USC marked his first game action since the first quarter of the Sept. 1 opener, said his biggest worry "is about us - that's it - about us lining up and executing. Every week the game plan is good. The coaches know what they're doing. We as players need to go out and execute that game plan as close to perfection as we can. But nobody's perfect."

As CU discovered last season against Oregon and last weekend against USC, time of possession can be football's most hollow statistic. FWIW, the Buffs are second in the conference in possession time - 31:57 - behind Oregon State's 33:24. But the Beavers are unbeaten.

Last season at Folsom Field, the Buffs ran 72 plays to the Ducks' 69 and led in time of possession 36:57 to 23:03. Last weekend at the L.A. Coliseum, CU ran 85 plays to USC's 48 and had a 37:10 to 22:50 edge in possession time.

But the Buffs allowed five scoring drives as short as 29 seconds and no longer than 2:18 in the first half. USC had a 7-0 lead just 50 seconds into the game, courtesy of a two-play drive. CU also committed six turnovers, and in five red zone ventures the Buffs totaled minus-14 yards on 14 plays, settling for a pair of field goals when they didn't give the ball away.

Kelly called the Buffs "snakebit a little bit" in almost doubling the Trojans' play total. "But USC made their 48 (plays) count. I think Jon (Embree) has got them playing hard. They've got a heck of a schedule, playing USC, us and then Stanford. We will prepare like we normally do."

Not so for CU. The Buffs' preparation this week hasn't been business as usual. In trying to simulate the speed of Oregon's no-huddle offense, Embree had two scout team offenses huddled and ready to run back-to-back plays against his first defense. Being ultra-conscious of assignments, open-field tackling and avoiding cut blocks by receivers also were stressed.

Statistically, the Ducks 'D' is at or near the middle of the pack in the Pac-12, but Embree calls that unit "the most impressive (thing) about Oregon . . . they have tremendous personnel, their linebackers have great size and range, they all can run, they are violent when they tackle you. I told our guys, they tackle through you, their secondary ball hawks, so if you are not accurate, it's going to be an interception."

CU quarterback Jordan Webb suffered three of those at USC, bringing his season total to seven. The Buffs are last in the conference in turnover margin - minus-seven on eight lost fumbles and 10 picks - while the Ducks are at plus-five - seven recovered fumbles and a co-league-best 14 interceptions.

Embree conceded the recipe for defeating Kelly and the Ducks is widely shared, but largely unsuccessful. "Everybody has the same plan; you want to go in there, you want to control the ball and eat the clock," he said. "You say all of that, but it doesn't work out that way. Some of it, I think, has to be them shooting themselves in the foot, getting some turnovers where you give yourself some chance to score. You're probably going to win time of possession, but that doesn't matter . . .

"What you have to do is play error-free on your side and then you have to force them into some mistakes and hopefully that is enough to be able to win. They go for it on fourth down, they go for two (points) after touchdowns; their mindset that their team plays with is just different than, I don't want to say conventional football, but it's just different than the teams that you are playing against. You have to be able to focus on what you need to do and not get caught up in what they are doing - or you're done."

At day's end, Chip Kelly usually is the guy holding the fork.

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SHOW MENU



## CU Buffs face highest-ranked opponent of season in No. 4 Oregon

By John Henderson The Denver Post The Denver Post

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BOULDER — Call it the eternal optimism of a downtrodden team refusing an early burial or the naïve boasts of players trying to convince themselves that miracles exist, but Colorado approaches another cruel mismatch Saturday with words of optimism.

The Buffaloes (1-6, 1-3 Pac-12), beaten by an average score of 53-13 in their past four losses, face perhaps their toughest opponent this season Saturday. They are 45½-point underdogs at second-ranked Oregon (7-0, 4-0), the nation's No. 2-scoring team, one that has bludgeoned foes in the first half by an average score of 33-8.

"Let's turn the college football world upside down," junior quarterback Jordan Webb said. "It's just going to be our role. We've got to be spoilers."

Losing to Colorado wouldn't just spoil Oregon's season. It would make its year look like cottage cheese left out in a hot kitchen for three months.

For what it's worth, the Buffaloes aren't going in with blindfolds and a last cigarette.

"If we can execute the game plan, I think we have a chance at beating these guys," senior safety Ray Polk said. "I think that every week."

If you look at the teams' seasons, these are more words of folly than optimism. Yet give the Buffs credit for putting up brave fronts in a game of overwhelming odds that Las Vegas' line can't truly reflect.

This is the best defense in Oregon coach Chip Kelly's four years. The Ducks are averaging 3.1 sacks a game; Colorado's giving up 4.9 a game, worst in the country. Oregon has intercepted 14 passes, third best in the country.

While Oregon has outscored its opponents in the first half 234-56, Colorado has been outscored in the first half 183-79. The Ducks are averaging 51 points a game to Colorado's 18.7 and are outrushing the Buffs 317.1-109.7.

"It's a great offense," Polk said. "It's great players. But it's just football. It's not rocket science. You're not asking somebody to do something they've never done before. If we can come together as a team and do the things the coaches tell us, we can do some great things this year."

But time is running out. A loss clinches a seventh consecutive losing season, a school record, topping the 1979-84 run of the Chuck Fairbanks era and painful early years of Bill McCartney.

Last year, Southern California became the only team in the last four years to win in Eugene. The Ducks' pace, which results in sub-two-minute scoring drives, leaves opponents buried before their second cup of Gatorade.

Colorado's coaching staff, as inexperienced as some of its players, must find a workable plan that no one else has. One piece of good news is starting offensive tackle Jack Harris is back from his concussion.

"Everybody has the same plan," second-year CU coach Jon Embree said. "You go in and you want to control the ball and eat the clock and you say all that, but it doesn't work out that way. Some of it has to be them shooting themselves in the foot. Getting some turnovers where you get a chance to score."

Don't count on it. Redshirt freshman quarterback Marcus Mariota has thrown only five interceptions. The Ducks have lost only eight fumbles.

In Saturday's 50-6 loss at USC, Colorado moved the ball at times, but six turnovers killed any chance of respectability.

"What you have to do is play error-free on your side and force them into mistakes, and hopefully that's enough to win," said Embree whose team fell behind Oregon 29-0 last year at home before losing, 45-2.

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Reinhardt back on Ducks' field

Former CU tight end Ed Reinhardt Jr. will be honored before the Buffs' game Saturday at Oregon, returning to the field where he was injured 28 years ago. In 1984, Reinhardt was tackled late in the game and went to the sideline. After losing consciousness on the sideline, he was taken to a hospital where doctors discovered he had a blot clot in his brain. He underwent emergency surgery and spent some three months in a coma.

The Associated Press