



*Safety Terrel Smith says CU's players know they must improve.
Photo Courtesy: Chip Bromfield, ProMotion Ltd.*



Brooks: Smith Says Outside Noise Won't Faze Buffs

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BOULDER - The numbers are ugly, the mood outside the locker room even uglier. After a game that saw the Colorado defense allow most of Fresno State's 69 points and all of its 665 yards, Buffs strong safety Terrel Smith understands the outside frustration that has reached the boiling point.

But it's nothing compared to what's bubbling within.

"I am aware of it, but I don't let it affect my play and none of these players on defense or offense are affected by that either," Smith said Monday. "The outside people aren't on the field, so they can say whatever they want but we still believe and still have faith. We're still going to go out and try to improve after last week."

As did several of his teammates following CU's 69-14 loss on Saturday night, Smith shouldered blame that's being heaped on the defensive staff - particularly on coordinator Greg Brown.

"Every player in the locker room knows it's not the coaches, it's us," said Smith, whose five solo tackles (six total) topped the Buffs Saturday night. "Coach Brown has been doing everything he can, every game this year. It's not the coaches, it's us. We know that. We've put it on our shoulders to get some of that heat off of his shoulders. It makes us players mad . . . we have to change it."

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Change needs to happen soon. Saturday night's humbling loss dropped the Buffs to 0-3, with Pac-12 Conference play opening Saturday afternoon at Washington State (2 p.m. MDT, FX).

Coach Jon Embree said Monday there is a chance that starting cornerback Greg Henderson (ankle) can return this week. But he made no mention of free safety Ray Polk (ankle) coming back. In the absence of Henderson, a sophomore, and Polk, a senior, CU's secondary has featured true freshmen Yuri Wright and Kenneth Crawley at cornerbacks, with freshman Marques Mosley playing safety/nickel.

It's OJT for the young Buffs, and it has been far from painless - which Smith, a junior, understands. "When I was a freshman I made mistakes back there trying to get in the groove of things," he said. "They're improving, learning. It's going to take bad plays for them to learn what to do and what not to do . . . it is unfortunate, but you learn by mistakes. Hopefully they'll improve every game for the rest of the year."

CU is the Pac-12's only winless team and is last in the league in a handful of team categories and next-to-last in several others. In major categories, the Buffs are No. 12 in total defense (476.3 yards allowed a game), scoring defense (40.3 points allowed a game) and total offense (289.7 yards a game).

Washington State (2-1) hasn't yet produced as prolific an offense as first-year coach Mike Leach desires, but with Leach it seems inevitable that he finds a quarterback and transforms him into a record-setter. His offense at Wazzu is averaging 21.7 points a game and 346.7 total yards (284.7 passing). During his 10-year stay at Texas Tech, Leach's spread offenses led the nation in passing six times.

In the Cougars' 35-27 win last Friday night at UNLV, backup Connor Halliday completed 26 of 45 passes for 378 yards and four touchdowns (two interceptions). Leach hasn't said whether Halliday or injury-prone starter Jeff Tuel will open on Saturday.

CU faced Tuel's backup last season in WSU's visit to Boulder. Marshall Loebestael threw two of his three TD passes in the final 2:35 - the last with 1:10 to play - to lead the Cougars to a 31-27 win and spoil the Buffs' Pac-12 debut.

Whoever starts on homecoming weekend for Wazzu, he'll have one of the conference's top receivers among his targets. Marquess Wilson, a 6-4, 185-pound junior, had a pair of TD receptions against UNLV and caught the 63-yarder that beat the Buffs last season. He's made 13 receptions for 218 yards and two TDs this season, but he's had help from Isiah Myers (16-153, 3 TDs) and Gabe Marks (12-219, TD).

Smith promised improvement from the secondary against the Cougars: "Looking at film of last game, we know what mistakes were made and we'll correct them for this game and the rest of the season."

QB COMPETITION: Embree said weekly quarterback competition will continue and he will "know more Thursday," but he added, "I still imagine Jordan (Webb) will be the first one out there (Saturday)."

Webb has started all three games, but backups Connor Wood and Nick Hirschman were used at Fresno State. None were effective, with the trio combining for these passing stats: 11-of-30 for 173 yards, one touchdown and four interceptions.

Hirschman threw the fewest number of passes (three, completing one) and didn't throw an interception. Webb and Wood threw two apiece, with each throwing a pick that was returned for a score.

It was Hirschman's first game duty of the season. "I felt very comfortable," he said. "I've been in the offense for a while now and had some live snaps last year. They didn't throw anything at us that we didn't practice for. So in that respect I felt good. Of course, you don't feel good about the loss . . . but other than that I felt pretty good."

He said he hopes for another opportunity this weekend: "There's nothing better than going out on a Saturday no matter where you're playing. It's a real privilege to go out and play college football. We're working on improving

some things and getting better."

Hirschman underscored the obvious about the winless Buffs: "Everybody's down, of course," he said. "It's not the way we were taught to play football from the time we were little kids up to now. This team hasn't lost faith in each other, we haven't lost faith in our staff and we haven't lost faith in our game plans. So we're going to continue to grind and make next week a better situation."

NO SURPRISES ON TAPE: Upon further review, Embree saw nothing different in watching the Fresno State tape than he witnessed on Saturday night.

"Same thing I saw on the field," he said. "We got jumped on early. It was 28-0 . . . there were too many explosive (plays), short play drives for them. Now you're in a game offensively where you've got to throw and do all kinds of stuff. We're not a team that just drops back and throws it from a protection standpoint. For us to move it down the field we need to play-action and all that."

He said he was scheduled to meet with his staff and several players on Monday night, and those meetings could produce personnel changes for this weekend's game: "I'll know more after some more dialogue with certain people . . . we've had some scheme discussions already (on) different things we can do better or differently that will help us do better on game day. We get it done on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday; we've got to get it done on Saturdays."

The Buffs' effort at Fresno State was satisfactory "for the most part," Embree said. "It's just details. If you're supposed to be inside a guy, be inside the guy. A 12-yard route isn't an 8-yard route - it's those kinds of things. Sometimes you get out there and get going and you don't execute. You get excited and don't do your thing. That's not all the problem. It's everybody, it's all of us. We've all got to be better."

Contact: BG.Brooks@Colorado.EDU

SHOW MENU



Football: CU Buffs' Greg Brown feels frustration

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Greg Brown has been around long enough to know that when things don't go well on the football field, the critics get loud.

Following Colorado's stunning 69-14 loss at Fresno State on Saturday, the critics have spit a lot of venom in the direction of Brown, CU's second-year defensive coordinator.

Goes with the territory, he said, and he doesn't blame them.

"Oh yeah. Any time you play poorly and we get our hat handed to us like we did, absolutely everybody has a right to criticize," Brown said.

Colorado (0-3) is off to a disastrous start to the season, and the defense has been especially porous.

Fresno State racked up 665 yards (9.9 per play). The Bulldogs had 288 rushing yards and 377 through the air and scored eight offensive touchdowns on 67 plays.

"You always remember all the tough losses but this one has to rank up there," Brown said. "Giving up 69 points to Fresno, and hats off to them -- they have talent, they do a great job. They're well coached and they're a good team. But, they got us in every way, shape and form possible."

Why was Fresno State able to dominate the Buff defense?

"A lot of it comes down to, when you don't get off blocks, when you miss tackles, bad things are going to happen to you," Brown said. "That was a lot of it Saturday night."

Asked whether the struggles can be pinpointed to the players, the scheme or the lack of experience, Brown didn't point fingers. He said everyone -- players and coaches -- need to get better.

"You win and lose together, in all facets, as players and coaches," he said. "We, as coaches, have to come up with plans that give us our best shot and put our players in position and them, as players, have to execute those."

As a group, CU didn't come close to achieving its goal against Fresno State. That led to a lot of frustration on the sideline and the locker room, some of which was evident during the television broadcast.

"There's always going to be a high level of frustration when we as a defense don't perform like we are capable and like we should perform," Brown said. "That was the epitome of a poor performance Saturday night. Fresno State went out there and took it to us and we didn't do anything to deter them."

Perhaps more concerning is that the CU defense hasn't done much to deter any of the offenses it has faced to this point.

In the opener, Colorado State finished with just 298 yards, but the Rams made key plays when they needed them most in a 22-17 win over the Buffs.

On Sept. 8, Sacramento State, a middle-of-the-pack Football Championship Subdivision team, came into Boulder

and racked up 466 yards and 28 first downs in a 30-28 win at Folsom Field.

Then came the disaster of Saturday in Fresno.

"Right now, we've put together three weeks in a row of being humbled," Brown said. "It's hard and there's only one way to work your way out of it and that is just that, work."

The question is whether the Buffs have the ability to work through their issues this season. Brown said he still believes in his defensive coaching staff and the players they are putting on the field -- even the plethora of true freshmen that are being forced into action.

"We have guys, we just have to get aligned better, get off blocks, make tackles and grow up," he said. "It's still a long season to go. We've got to start by taking positive strides and getting in position and making plays."

"It all starts with fundamentals. We have to do a better job getting alignment, assignment, technique and execution. It starts with that. If you do those things right, it gives you a chance. If you don't, it's hard to have a chance to play well."

So far, the Buffs have not played well on defense. Fans are unhappy, but so is Brown. He said his frustration level is "off the charts."

Unfortunately for Brown, his defense doesn't get a break this week. CU visits Washington State, which is guided by Mike Leach. This is Leach's first season with the Cougars, but he built quite a reputation as an offensive mastermind at Texas Tech.

"Sure, there's a lot of stuff that you recognize (from Leach's Texas Tech days), but there's also stuff that you don't," Brown said. "This guy, he's a trendsetter. He's going to explore and move into new areas and do different things than what he's done."

Brown has had success against Leach in the past. In 2006, he was CU's secondary coach when the Buffs shut down Texas Tech, 30-6. The next year, Brown and the Buffs went to Lubbock, Texas, and knocked off Leach the Red Raiders, 31-26.

Those results give Brown no comfort this week, however.

"We are so humbled right now as a defense," he said. "We're in a hole looking up. We have no choice but to work our way out of it."

"The only thing you can do to try to get over the sting of a humiliating loss is, let's get up and go work the next weekend. Let's see if we can improve."

Notable

Head coach Jon Embree said Jordan Webb will likely start at quarterback on Saturday, but that the competition is ongoing. ... Asked if there would be personnel changes this week, Embree said, "I'll know more after dialogue with certain people." He added that he is discussing certain things about the scheme with coaches. ... Asked if he was pleased with CU's effort against Fresno State, Embree said, "Yes, I am." ... Cornerback Greg Henderson (ankle) could be back this week after missing two games. Center Gus Handler and defensive back Marques Mosley are day-to-day as they nurse injuries. ... Senior safety Ray Polk, who has missed two games, was out of his walking boot for the first time Monday, but is still not close to returning to the field.