



Sophomore corner Greg Henderson hopes to atone for a 2011 coverage miscue against Washington State.
Photo Courtesy: Joel Broida



Brooks: Henderson Eyes Another Chance vs. Cougars

Release: 09/19/2012 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER - If he's healthy enough physically, Greg Henderson hopes to take a mental health day Saturday afternoon in Pullman, Wash.

Try as he might, the Colorado cornerback has had a difficult time erasing the memory of CU's 31-27 last-minute loss last season to Washington State at Folsom Field. If he's sufficiently recovered from an ankle sprain that has sidelined him for the past two games, Henderson is viewing a rematch against the Cougars and receiver Marquess Wilson as therapeutic.

"I really want to get back out there - especially after last season and the mistake I made at the end of the game," Henderson said.

At the time, Henderson, who had earned the starting right corner job in August camp, was playing in only his fifth college game. He "bit" on a double move by Wilson, who caught a 63-yard touchdown pass to doom the Buffs. Just over a minute before, the Cougars had crept to within 27-24 on another TD pass, but Henderson is haunted only by the second one.

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"I think about it all the time," he said. "Every time they run 'triangle' (a three-receiver set) I make sure I get back there and do my job, do what I'm supposed to do. It's a horrible feeling giving up the game, especially when you have it in reach like that."

The loss hurt, but there were no fingers pointed by Henderson's position coach, Greg Brown, or any of Henderson's teammates. "They weren't blaming me or anybody (specifically)," he said. "It was a team thing. They were really compassionate about it."

Nonetheless, compassion carried him only so far. The angst remains.

Henderson had made 12 consecutive starts before missing CU's second game this season. During his freshman year, he was known for his durability - a trait that followed him to Boulder from Norco High School in Corona, Calif. He never missed a high school game, and sitting out the last two has been torture.

"I want to be out there so bad to help the team out," he said. "I've been going to the trainers morning, noon, night just to get better."

Henderson hasn't been the secondary's only missing starter. Senior safety Ray Polk suffered a high ankle sprain (Henderson's sprain was lower) and hasn't played since the first quarter of the season opener. He won't play again this week and no timeline has been established for his return.

After taking an early hit from injuries last season, Brown had hoped another epidemic could be avoided. It hasn't been. In addition to Polk, Henderson's replacement on the right side - freshman Yuri Wright - left last weekend's blowout at Fresno State in the second quarter with an ankle sprain. Wright's replacement, freshman Jeff Hall, also left the game with an injury. And safety/nickel back Marques Mosley, also a freshman, tweaked a knee and was sidelined for most of the second half after he attempted to play on it.

It might be wishful thinking, but that trio - Wright, Hall and Mosley - is expected to be able to play in CU's Pac-12 Conference opener. Still, Brown's defense will be minus a pair of starters (Polk, middle linebacker Doug Rippy).

"It's really similar to last year," Brown said. "We're running out of bodies. But it is what it is; nobody's going to feel sorry for you - especially Mike Leach."

Leach is the Cougars' first-year head coach, having succeeded Paul Wulff last winter. Leach's calling cards at his last coaching stop - Texas Tech - were record-setting quarterbacks and insanely productive spread formation offenses.

"He has a tremendously gifted offensive mind," Brown said. "His record speaks for itself. What he did at Texas Tech in the Big 12 South was unparalleled; for him to take Texas Tech and compete annually at a high, high level against Oklahoma, Texas and A&M is spectacular. His record and resume speaks for itself."

Leach's quarterbacks at WSU have been senior Jeff Tuel and redshirt sophomore Connor Halliday. Tuel missed last week's 35-27 win against UNLV with a leg injury, but Halliday stepped up with a 378-yard, four touchdown performance. Tuel apparently has recovered, but Leach is playing it Coy about this week's starter.

"I'm not a guy who tells people the end of a movie if they haven't seen it, so I'm not going to share it (the QB decision) with you," he said. "If you want to see how it turns out, you've got to come see the movie."

The movie's marquee player doesn't matter much to Brown. "Both of them are guys who can throw the rock, they can sling it," he said. "It looks like they understand his system. It's hard to contend with as a defense."

Brown had success against Leach's Red Raiders offense when CU was in the Big 12, but that happened with an experienced and healthy Buffs secondary. Brown expects the Cougars to stay mostly in their spread offense, but added, "They'll get in some tighter formations from time to time. There's a lot of one-back spread, but there's a

lot of three-receiver, two-back looks, too."

The 6-4, 185-pound Wilson is the headliner among WSU's receivers. He's the Pac-12's active career leader, with 2,612 receiving yards. His 2011 total (1,388) was the 12th highest in conference history.

"We know up close and personal what No. 86 (Wilson) did to us last year," Brown said. "He's quite the talent. They've got guys, skilled guys. They're big and can run and they fit well into that system. I'm sure those receivers and quarterbacks, as soon as they saw (WSU) was hiring Mike Leach they were ecstatic."

WSU might have changed coaches, but Henderson hasn't noticed a marked difference in the Cougars' approach. "They like to pass - just like last season," he said. "But they have really good receivers all across the board now, that's probably the major improvement."

Watching his teammates struggle for the past two weeks has been difficult and surprising for Henderson, who was confident of improvement in August.

"We've had games won, games within our reach," he said. "But stuff happens; we have to stay together and keep getting better."

BUFF BITS: The season's first "Buff Bowl" - a short scrimmage matching the scout offense and defense - was conducted following Wednesday's practice. Coach Jon Embree said he liked the enthusiasm of both scout squads. "They do a lot of work for us," he said. "It's good for them to get to play football." . . . Embree also said the overall tenor of Wednesday's work was good . . . If Leach is refraining from naming his starting QB for Saturday's game, Embree is expecting to see sophomore Connor Halliday first. But he also expects he'll see some of senior Jeff Tuel. From watching WSU tape, Embree believes the difference between the two is minimal.

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SHOW MENU



Football: CU Buffs look to bring more intensity to field

By Ryan Thorburn *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

Posted:

Buffzone.com

There are bend-but-don't-break defenses.

Colorado's defense was just broken during the 69-14 loss at Fresno State.

The Buffs gave up nine plays of 20-plus yards, which accounted for a total of 419 yards (46.6 per) for the Bulldogs. That included one-play touchdown drives of 97, 94 and 60 yards.

By rule, Fresno State did have to kickoff after each score. And the CU offense was equally inept.

The Buffs had 10 drives end in punts, four drives end with interceptions, two garbage-time drives end in touchdowns, and the clock mercifully ran out to end the final drive.

After falling behind 35-0 in the first quarter and 55-7 by the intermission, head coach Jon Embree said that his team was not executing anything that had been worked on in practices leading up to the game.

Why not?

"This group of players, they are pleasers. That is one thing about this team, they are pleasers," Embree explained this week. "I think at times when you are that kind of person, you want to try and do it perfectly. You don't want to make a mistake, you don't want to do some stuff.

"And when you do that, you make mistakes and things arise. Part of it is relaxing and understanding, you don't play a perfect game and you still win. Understanding about focusing and getting in on the next play. That's probably our number one issue when it goes bad."

Embree said that during Thursday's practice he's going to remind his players that football is supposed to be fun.

"It's always been to me, if you won you had fun," said junior safety Parker Orms, who led Wheat Ridge High School to a state championship. "Football is a game and we have to have fun with it. We can't play so tight and tense like we have this season.

"There are guys out there who aren't having fun even if they make a play. They're kind of moping around or whatever. We can't do that at all."

The Buffs (0-3) didn't appear to be as excited for the Rocky Mountain Showdown as Colorado State, didn't appear to be fired up about running out behind Ralphie for the Folsom Field opener against Sacramento State, and acted like they had a plane to catch before the kickoff at Fresno State.

If CU doesn't play with emotion and intensity at Washington State on Saturday, the Pac-12 opener isn't going to be any more enjoyable than the painful non-conference portion of the schedule was.

"I think sometimes when we get down early in the game we can tighten up," said quarterback Connor Wood, who inherited a 21-0 deficit when he replaced starter Jordan Webb at Fresno State. "I think we've sometimes failed as a team to understand it's a long game and we can't get down if they score a touchdown or two touchdowns early. We've just got to fight back."

Through three games, CU's defense has allowed 17 plays of 20 yards or longer for a total of 640 yards (37.6 per

snap). The other 187 plays have netted 789 yards (4.2 per).

Webb has engineered 30 drives for the CU offense, guiding the team to seven touchdowns and one field goal. The Buffs have gained 651 yards on the 152 snaps the Kansas transfer has taken (4.28 yards per play).

Wood has been on the field for eight drives and led CU to just 107 yards on 27 plays (3.96 yards per play).

Nick Hirschman was the quarterback of record for one of the Buffs' touchdowns at Fresno State. The third-string signal caller took 24 snaps and was 1-for-3 passing for 41 yards; CU gained a total of 112 yards on those plays (4.67 per).

"Clearly what we're doing on the field isn't enough," left tackle David Bakhtiari said. "We're not executing the way we should be on all phases of the game. In order to do that, we all need to step up. It shouldn't be pinpointing one leader. It's all of us together collectively need to step up.

"Guys need to take pride out there."

Through three games, CU ranks 107th nationally in both passing defense (287.3 yards per game) and total defense (476.3 yards per game).

There is a chance defensive coordinator Greg Brown could be getting some more help soon. Embree said there is a chance sophomore cornerback Greg Henderson (ankle) will come back this week, and senior linebacker Doug Rippey (knee) is planning to play on Sept. 29 against UCLA. Starting free safety Ray Polk (ankle) is expected to get out of a walking boot this week to begin rehab.

The Buffs have been using true freshmen Kenneth Crawley, Marques Mosley and Yuri Wright in the defensive backfield.

"What are we going to be like with Yuri Wright, Kenneth Crawley and Marques Mosley as juniors?" Embree wondered aloud this week. "It will be something. Those guys have been great."

That might bode well for 2014, but the growing pains made it difficult to watch CU at Bulldog Stadium.

Offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy is moving from the press box to the sideline this week. Quarterbacks coach Rip Scherer will be helping with the play-calling.

The Buffs plan to use both Webb and Wood again. They combined to complete 10-of-27 passes for 132 yards with one touchdown and four interceptions against Fresno State.

"Jordan Webb has been in this offense seven, eight weeks. He's a young player in our offense," Scherer said. "Plus the other two guys are truly young players. Yeah, he has game experience, but he doesn't know this offense. So he's growing with it, and our other quarterbacks are, too."

The coaching staff plans to keep simplifying the game plans until this team can start executing.

"Really right now, it is about playing better from the mistake and assignment standpoint," Embree said. "So adding new schemes and wrinkles will just make it worse. So we will continue to streamline and to get it to where we can play fast and better from a mistake standpoint."

Follow Ryan on Twitter @RyanThorburn

Football: Jon Embree trying to follow Bill McCartney's path

By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Jon Embree's biggest supporter also happens to be Colorado's all-time biggest winner.

Bill McCartney's passionate plea at Tuesday's press luncheon was for Buffs fans upset with a 69-14 loss to Fresno State and an 0-3 record to have some more patience.

"Commitment is when you get knocked down, you lay there and bleed a while, and then you get up and fight," McCartney said. "That's what you're going to see. You can see it in his eyes."

Embree loves McCartney's fiery speeches as much as anyone but said he leans more on private conversations from his mentor.

And it has been that way even during better times in Boulder and the NFL.

"Mac has always been an integral part of my life period," Embree said after Wednesday's practice. "Whether I was here or UCLA, Kansas City or Washington. He's a man I talked to probably once every six weeks, maybe a little bit more here and there."

Now Embree is trying to rebuild CU football from the ground up as McCartney once did.

The problem is society and athletic departments aren't nearly as patient as they were 30 years ago.

"It's good to be closer to him and to be able to get some of his wisdom," Embree said.

Built by Ford?

CU's anemic run game might finally look to sophomore tailback Josh Ford to boost production.

The former Mullen High School star had 10 carries for 61 yards and a touchdown against Fresno State in the fourth quarter after the game's outcome had long been decided.

"The only thing we ever see from Josh Ford is him making plays," offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy said. "Josh deserves an opportunity. I love the way Josh comes to work every day. He's the most humble, the most hungry kid, and does not take anything for granted. Those are the type of kids you want to build your program around."

Tony Jones, the opening day starter, is day-to-day with an ankle injury.

Two QB systems

Washington State isn't the only defense preparing for two quarterbacks (at least) this week.

The Buffs won't find out if Jeff Tuel or Connor Halliday will start against them until the Cougars' first possession on Saturday.

Tuel, who led Washington State's comeback win in Boulder last season, started the first two games for Mike Leach. A knee injury allowed Halliday to get the start at UNLV last week.



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College Football RapidReports

Preview: Colorado Buffaloes at Washington State Cougars

By John Breech | CBSSports.com

September 19, 2012 3:18 pm ET

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With 145 yards receiving on Saturday, Marquess Wilson could become Washington State's all-time leading receiver. (US Presswire)

Colorado (0-3, 0-0 Pac-12) at Washington State (2-1, 0-0 Pac-12)

Kickoff: Saturday, 4 p.m. ET (FX)

Spread: Washington State by 18.5

Watchability: There's a lot of college football games on TV Saturday, this one should be on the bottom-half of the bottom-half of your college football watching priority list.

Shining Stars: **Washington State:** QB Marquess Wilson. Wilson had been itching to get the ball this season and he finally got it against UNLV last Friday to the tune of 110 yards and two touchdowns. The junior WR should shine against a Colorado pass defense that ranks 11th in the Pac-12. **Colorado:** RB Christian Powell. Powell is the closest thing to a star the Buffaloes have, rushing for 147 yards and three touchdowns against Sacramento State in Week 2. However, the freshmen has yet to prove himself against FBS competition, as he's averaging only 26 yards in two games.

Who could steal the show: **Washington State:** WR Gabe Marks. Marks stole the show last week with six catches for 126 yards and a touchdown against UNLV and he's primed to do it again this week. Opposing team's seem to focus their attention on WSU All-Pac-12 player Marquess Wilson, which makes it easier for Marks to get open. **Colorado:** QB Jordan Webb. The Buffalo QB has struggled in his first three starts, only averaging 144 yards passing per game. However, the Washington State defense could be just what Webb needs to break out of his funk. The Cougars pass defense ranks 121st nationally, surrendering 344.3 yards per game.

You going? Ranking the road trip: National Pirate Day was Sept. 19, which makes this the perfect week to go see the Pirate on the Palouse. However, if you can't make it to Pullman, Wash., this week, WSU's next game in Pullman might be a better option anyway: it's Mike Leach Bobblehead Day.

Magic number for Washington State: 145. WR Marquess Wilson is on the brink of Washington State history. With 145 yards receiving against Colorado on Saturday, Wilson would become the school's all-time leading receiver. Wilson has crossed the 145-yard mark in a game three times in his career.



Top College Football



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Despite 0-3 start, Colorado coaches looking to make things fun again

By Tom Kensler The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — Colorado lacks the depth to make wholesale changes to its starting lineup in the wake of an 0-3 start, so the Buffs' coaches have tried a new tact, telling players to loosen up and lighten up. CU opens its Pac-12 schedule Saturday (2 p.m., FX) at Washington State (2-1).

"We're talking to the team about having fun," said CU head coach Jon Embree. "When they get into games, they get so robotic. With all the hard work you put in, the game is when you're supposed to have fun. We're not doing that."

"Winning is a lot of the fun. But we were up 14-3 (against Colorado State) and 14-0 (vs. Sacramento State), and didn't feel the fun."

Colorado has only eight seniors on its roster and is tied for fifth nationally in the number of true freshmen (13) who have played. Young players can get caught in the trap of being so overwhelmed by the X's and O's that they sometimes forget to simply make plays.

That tunnel vision can be especially troublesome on defense. During last weekend's 69-14 loss at Fresno State, Colorado yielded first-quarter touchdowns of 97 yards (pass) and 94 yards (run) within a span of less than two minutes. A missed tackle or mental error can be the cause of allowing a big play, but having young players become so wrapped up in their assignments and not see what's going on around them can also hurt.

"When you're out there having fun, you play more relaxed, you play faster, you play better," senior defensive lineman Will Pericak said Wednesday. "I think that's our issue."

Defensive coordinator Greg Brown continues to preach his mantra of "alignment, assignment, technique and execution" as the steps to success.

"If you do those things, you've got a chance," Brown said. "If you don't, it's very difficult to play well."

To reduce the confusion and stress felt by his young secondary, Brown simplified the defense before the loss to Sacramento State. That obviously hasn't helped. But Brown believes it will help as the season moves on.

"A lot of bad things happened (against Fresno State) and it all added up to a very, very bad night," Brown said.

The rotation in the secondary will get a boost when sophomore cornerback Greg Henderson returns. Henderson, a full-time starter as a freshman, has been out since spraining an ankle in the season opener against Colorado State. Embree said Henderson may be available against Washington State. "That would be huge for us," Brown said.

Another personnel move involves shifting Pericak from defensive tackle to defensive end. Pericak played both inside and outside against Fresno State, but has been told he will be at end against Washington State.

Now coached by passing-game wizard Mike Leach, the Cougars usually split out their tight end. That could reduce the congestion in front of Pericak and allow him the freedom to become more disruptive.

"We just have to keep from pressing to make plays," Pericak said. "We've got guys almost trying too hard. You have to relax out there."

Smiles, even some laughs, are welcomed.

SEPTEMBER 20, 2012, 7:24 AM

"Jordan Webb is our starter," Colorado QB coach says

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

BOULDER — In talking with Colorado quarterbacks coach Rip Scherer following Wednesday's practice, he put to rest any notion that a QB controversy may be developing.

Jordan Webb, a junior transfer from Kansas, has started all three games. But in last weekend's loss at Fresno State, sophomore Connor Wood got in for eight series, and sophomore Nick Hirschman saw some late action.

"Jordan is our starter, will be our starter (Saturday at Washington State) and will continue to be," Scherer said.

"People misinterpreted this last week," Scherer added. "I tried to explain it. When you've got a lot of guys that haven't played very much, to make it a point early in the game, we're going to put him in for a series. So whoever your No. 2 (quarterback) is, he gets experience under fire. So if he has to play later in the year or at some point in the game, all his duty hasn't been mop-up duty."

Scherer said Wood played more than expected and Hirschman also drew snaps because the 69-14 Fresno State victory "got out of hand" and it was an opportunity for the Buffs to take a look at their back-up quarterbacks.

Webb (5-of-13 for 85 yards, one touchdown, two interceptions) and Wood (5-of-14, 47 yards, two interceptions) finished with similar statistics. Hirschman completed one of three pass attempts.

ARTICLE PRINTED FROM THE FIELD HOUSE

<http://blogs.denverpost.com/colleges/2012/09/20/jordan-webb-starter-colorado-qb-coach/24880/>

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