



CU coach Jon Embree says the Buffs 'can't just show up' and expect to win.  
Photo Courtesy: Associated Press



## Brooks: Embree Says 'Showing Up' No Recipe For A 'W'

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**BOULDER** - Come Saturday afternoon, here's what Jon Embree wants his Colorado players believing to their cores: There's no such thing as a sure thing for the Buffs.

Sure, Sacramento State is not a Football Bowl Subdivision program, is 1-12 against FBS teams since 2002, and appears on CU's schedule at what fans and others might see as an opportune time - a get-well date following last weekend's distressing opening loss to rival Colorado State.

Not so. Embree scans every reason that the Buffs allegedly should win their 2012 home opener (on paper, at least) and offers this: "Look, there's nobody we play where we just say we're going to show up and win. I've said that to the team from last spring on. We're not in a position where we can just show up and beat anybody."

The Buffs might have believed that last Saturday when they arrived at Sports Authority Field at Mile High, but they boarded their buses later that afternoon mulling a 22-17 defeat. Showing up didn't suffice against the Rams. Neither did a 14-3 second-quarter CU lead; the Buffs were outscored 19-3 in the final minute of the first half and the final two quarters.

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At least one lesson should have been learned, and Embree believes it was. His second Buffs team left Denver, he said, with more distaste for losing than his first. Last season, "It was more of being resigned to the fact they were supposed to lose or that's how it goes," he said. "It wasn't like that this time. As a coach, that's what you're more used to being around . . .

"To me it's easier to get them back or have them bounce back when there's that mentality as opposed to 'we weren't going to win anyway, we're supposed to lose, or an oh well mentality.' I didn't get a sense of that like I did last year."

Added sophomore guard Alex Lewis: "It's important not to dwell on (the CSU loss), but it's fuel for the fire. It's been put behind, but don't get us wrong: It's definitely still in our heads because we're not going to have that feeling again this year. That loss is going to drive us. We're ready to show that last Saturday really humbled us."

Showing disappointment rather than discouragement is a nice mental start, but the Buffs also have plenty of technical polishing to do in Game 2. With no running game (58 yards) to speak of, their no-huddle, hurry-up offense turned into more of the hurry-up-and-wait variety.

"We were a lot slower than what I want us to be," Embree said, pointing to his offense frequently not being able to get a quick read on CSU's defense and therefore being hampered from going up-tempo. He believes as defenses are identified - particularly blocking assignments after the middle linebacker is pointed out - the comfort level with the no-huddle will increase and the pace will quicken.

"I expect us to be faster in that regard this week," he said.

But Sacramento State, which lost its opener at New Mexico State 49-19 on Aug. 30, plans to have a hand in how fast CU operates. The Hornets, members of the Big Sky Conference, won 29-28 in overtime at Oregon State last season and were down only 28-19 in the third quarter at New Mexico State before three turnovers (two fumbles, one interception) led to 21 unanswered points in the fourth quarter at Las Cruces.

Sophomore quarterback Garrett Safron set career highs in yards (308) and completions (23 of 35, two touchdowns, one interception). The Hornets' leading receiver was junior speedster Morris Norrise (seven catches, 84 yards), the leading rusher was former junior college All-American Ezekiel Graham (16 rushes, 47 yards). Defensively, Sac State allowed NMSU 468 yards in total offense - 367 of those in the air with three TD passes. Junior linebacker Todd Davis led Sac State with 11 tackles in the opener and was a preseason All-Big Sky selection.

The Hornets' offensive line features a pair of heavyweight guards (320- and 375-pounders) that Embree calls "not just big guys; they're big guys who can run. They use them on pulling, kicking out, stuff like that. And they've got a nice disposition about them. In other words they play with an edge and some nastiness. They get their hands on you, they got you."

CU has one of its smallest senior classes (eight) in recent years and Embree's message to that group is that Saturday is the first of their final six opportunities to follow Ralphie onto the field. Saturday also marks the second of five games in September - a month in which CU must get its bowl goal off the ground.

The Buffs haven't been a postseason participant since 2007, but Embree was still preaching the possibilities in the aftermath of last weekend's loss. He reiterated it at his weekly media luncheon on Tuesday: "There is a lot of football left to be played," he said. "I still (believe) and our players still do. So you have to get back up and you have to get going again."

"Even if we did get the 'W' last week we still would be motivated for a bowl game," Lewis added. "That's still our goal and has been from the beginning. It's going to stay that way."

By the end of Wednesday's practice, Embree and his players said any CSU residue had been flushed and that their focus was returning to their homefield and getting the first win of 2012. Junior linebacker Derrick Webb,

who made a career-best dozen tackles against the Rams, said getting back into Folsom "means everything . . . first and foremost it's our first opportunity and our home opener; we need and want this win."

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SHOW MENU



## Wright gets his chance to repay Embree

By ARNIE STAPLETON AP Sports Writer News Fuze

Posted:

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BOULDER, Colo.—The Colorado Buffaloes could have three true freshmen playing in their banged-up secondary Saturday against Sacramento State, including highly touted cornerback Yuri Wright, who's eager to repay coach Jon Embree for giving him a second chance.

Senior safety Ray Polk and sophomore cornerback Greg Henderson were knocked out of Colorado's 22-17 loss to rival Colorado State last week with sprained ankles. Polk's injury is more severe and could cost him several weeks.

If Henderson can't play Saturday against the Big Sky's Hornets, Wright will step in alongside fellow freshmen Kenneth Crawley, who started at left cornerback last week, and safety Marques Mosley, who's also expected to get plenty of playing time.

Colorado (0-1) has never started two true freshmen cornerbacks in a game.

Wright was the gem of Embree's recruiting class this spring. He was a top-100 talent nationally and was being recruited heavily by Michigan until he ran into some controversy for derogatory racial references and graphic sexual comments he posted on his Twitter account.

Wright was subsequently expelled from his high school, national football power Don Bosco Prep in Ramsey, N.J., and the Wolverines backed off.

Wright expressed remorse and Embree offered him a shot at redemption.

"Coach Embree treated me real good throughout the whole situation that happened. He definitely trusts that it won't happen again. That's something I won't get involved in," Wright said this week.

"There was a lot of extra stuff before and now I can just focus on football and school, really."

Wright said he's eager to repay Embree for believing in him.

"That lets me know that he thinks I'm a lot different than what people say I am. He thinks different of me, he knows I'm not really that type of kid," Wright said. "I really want to show him more than anything that I have definitely learned my lesson from that whole thing that happened."

Wright and his two fellow freshmen DBs would join junior safeties Terrel Smith and Parker Orms as the Buffaloes face the Hornets (0-1), who were thrashed 49-19 by New Mexico State last week.

Mosley said there will be no hesitation among the trio of freshmen in the defensive backfield.

"I feel confident enough to go out there and be aggressive just like the actual starters, because they prepared us for this," he said.

Polk said he'll be tutoring the trio between series.

"I'll be on the sidelines and whenever they come off the field I'll be able to talk to them and talk them through it," Polk said. "I'm not going to be out there physically, but as far as anything else goes I'll be there mentally and be

able to help them figure out what to do."

Senior defensive tackle Will Pericak said the young DBs don't concern him.

"It doesn't necessarily put more pressure on us, but we definitely have to perform. If we're able to rush the QB and get pressure it takes more pressure off those guys, so they don't have to defend as long and they won't be isolated," Pericak said.

Sacramento State sophomore quarterback Garrett Safron recorded his first 300-yard passing day last week, completing 23 of 35 passes for 308 yards with two TDs and an interception against the Aggies, whose 21-0 fourth quarter blew open a close game.

Buffaloes quarterback Jordan Webb, a transfer from Kansas, had a so-so debut last week. After a slow start, he completed 12 of 16 passes in the second quarter for 111 yards and two TDs as Colorado jumped out to a 14-3 lead on its archrival.

"We were on a roll like we feel like we have the ability to be at all times and once we get to that I feel like we can be a dangerous team," Webb said.

The Rams, however, blitzed heavily after halftime, led by linebacker Cory James, whose three sacks were the most by a CSU player in his first game, and Webb was left with a bruised hip by the fourth quarter.

He said he's fine now and "fully mobile" heading into Saturday's game against the Hornets, who upset another Pac-12 team, Oregon State, in overtime last year.

"They're a fast team, they play really hard and they have a track record of beating good teams," Webb said. "So, when they come in here we have to take them seriously and play to the best of our ability."

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AP freelancer Monica Costello contributed.

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## Football: Despite loss to CSU, expectations big for CU Buffs against Sacramento State

By Kyle Ringo *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

Posted:

Buffzone.com

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It's been a long week since Colorado kicked off the college football season in rotten fashion with a loss to Colorado State.

Some chalked it up to a bad day, grit their teeth and moved on. Others needed to be talked back from the ledge but eventually got over it by midweek. A few flat out lost their minds and began discussing whether a coaching staff 14 games into its tenure should be sent packing.

One of those groups will grow considerably Saturday based on what the scoreboard looks like at Folsom Field following the home opener (1 p.m. Pac-12 Network) against Sacramento State.

"Things don't always go how you want it to go," CU coach Jon Embree said this week. "It's still just one game. If you let those kind of things affect how you prepare, if you let it affect how you see things or make you start changing your goals or your standards then you're not going to be successful in anything you do."

Sacramento State, a Football Championship Subdivision (Division I-AA) team, was assumed to be a sure victory when the schedule was released. Its ugly loss to perennial Western Athletic Conference doormat New Mexico State last week did nothing to change that perception among Buffs fans despite their team's loss to CSU.

Embree and his assistants could engender more patience in their rebuilding project by meeting expectations with a dominating victory. After all, one of the biggest knocks against former CU coach Dan Hawkins was a 2006 loss to Montana State and a 2008 close call against Eastern Washington, the only other lower division teams CU has played in the modern era. That's not company this staff wants to keep.

To put the opener behind them and earn their first victory this fall the Buffs must live up to their preseason billing in two areas perceived as strengths. The offensive line and a linebacker corps were thought to be the most reliable areas of the team, but last week members of both groups had tough days.

Senior linebackers Jon Major and Doug Rippy missed assignments on two different plays that resulted in CSU touchdowns and the offensive line allowed five sacks and produced an anemic running game. Taking a step forward in controlling the line of scrimmage is at the top of Embree's list Saturday.

"I'm very frustrated, I am," Embree said this week. "Because it doesn't matter what conference you're in or what level, if you can't run the ball it's going to be hard to win. I think we've run the ball effectively two times now in 14 games. That's not good enough. We've got to get it fixed."

Colorado quarterback Jordan Webb had a so-so debut in black and gold last week. He threw for two first-half touchdowns but suffered a hip injury in the second half and he and his teammates, like some of his throws, fell short down the stretch.

The Buffs also unveiled a no-huddle offense that caused CSU few problems because it didn't move very quickly. Sustaining a faster pace and wearing down the visitors is another objective Saturday afternoon in the old stadium on the hill.

"Obviously there is a different comfort level when you're at home," Embree said. "Getting a team from outside the

state at this altitude, doing what we do in our no-huddle offense and getting that pace going. It will be good for a lot of things for us playing here at Folsom."

The Colorado defense will play without senior safety Ray Polk and will likely be without starting cornerback Greg Henderson against a Sacramento State offense that threw for more than 300 yards in its opener.

For the first time in history, CU could have a pair of true freshmen -- Kenneth Crawley and Yuri Wright -- starting a game at the two cornerback spots and at times there could be three true freshmen playing in the secondary when Marques Mosley comes in to play nickel back.

CU coaches believe that trio is up to the task. In fact, unlike a portion of the fan base, CU coaches and players seemed to put their disappointment aside quickly and were very businesslike in their approach this week.

"The tempo has been much faster and nobody is holding their head down," Rippey said. "It's one loss and we got over it and we're moving on to Sacramento State."



## **THORBURN: Joy will return to Buff nation**

*By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer Boulder Daily Camera*

*Posted:*

Buffzone.com

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There is no joy in Buffville.

Colorado's loss in the Rocky Mountain Showdown has quelled most of the August optimism.

The two perceived strengths of the team -- offensive line and linebacker -- were out of sync and out of position against Colorado State.

Featured running back Tony Jones averaged 2.7 yards per carry. Eric Bieniemy didn't trust him to deliver on fourth-and-goal at the 1, so Jordan Webb passed (and failed) on the run.

CU's new starting quarterback did deliver in the second quarter, but Webb spent most of the decisive fourth quarter flat on his back.

Ray Polk and Greg Henderson are already down with injuries, which means three true freshmen are being asked to step up in the secondary.

The momentum from last season's road breakthrough at Utah didn't do much for an unseasoned team that suited up 50 freshmen and sophomores for the 2012 opener.

CU is ranked in one poll -- checking in at No. 10 in ESPN.com's debasing "Bottom 10" this week along with UMass, Idaho, Houston, Middle Tennessee, Pitt, Memphis, Akron, South Alabama and UAB.

Since they were last ranked in the real polls (November of 2005), the Buffs are 24-54 (.308).

Jon Embree is 3-11 (.214) as a head coach. Webb is 4-16 (.200) as a starting quarterback.

But all of those substandard statistics should be on the rise today.

CU hosts Sacramento State in the Folsom Field opener.

The Hornets -- a mediocre Big Sky program coming off a 49-19 loss at New Mexico State -- will receive \$460,000 for visiting Boulder.

The Buffs stand to gain some much-needed confidence and their first victory of the season.

"It was a different feeling than last year after a loss," Embree said of his team's reaction to the 22-17 defeat against CSU. "It was more disappointment then it was discouragement. ...

"Last year there was a lot of discouragement, there was more of being resigned to the fact that they were supposed to lose or that's how it goes. It wasn't like that this time."

Sacramento State beat Oregon State last September in Corvallis. This is not breaking news inside the Dal Ward Center.

"It's not in the pregame speech, it was in the postgame speech. So they know," Embree said. "They're aware of it, they've seen the game. There are no surprises there."



It would be a pleasant surprise to most of us if the Buffs were to win at least six of their final 11 games and avoid a seventh consecutive losing season.

The young men running out behind Ralphie Saturday still have a bowl-or-bust attitude.

"We've kind of already forgotten about the CSU game and we're now moving on to Sacramento State," said defensive lineman Chidera Uzo-Diribe. "We didn't work for just one game, we worked for a 13-game season."

Right now elite teams don't fear Folsom Field. Oregon and USC outscored the Buffs 87-19 under the Flatirons in 2011.

However, CU let Cal (a 36-33 overtime loss) and Washington State (a last-minute 31-27 loss) off the hook and bludgeoned Arizona (a 48-29 win) in the other home games last season.

Road trips to Fresno State, Washington State and Arizona this year aren't mission impossible.

Still, a bid to the Kraft Fight Hunger Bowl or the New Mexico Bowl will be won or lost in Boulder, where the Buffs host five formidable but flawed Pac-12 foes -- UCLA, Arizona State, Stanford, Washington and Utah.

"We have to find a way. There are a minimum of six winnable games," senior linebacker Jon Major said. "Home field has always been where we do our best, and what a great opportunity this Saturday is to get back on track."

There will be joy in Buffville Saturday.

Follow Ryan on Twitter: @RyanThorburn

## Malcolm Creer may give jolt to Colorado running attack

By Tom Kensler *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — Malcolm Creer logged so many miles on a bicycle to strengthen a surgically repaired knee during the offseason, Colorado coaches nicknamed the sophomore tailback "Tour de France."

"Malcolm stopped at my house a few times," CU offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy said. "That's not too far away, but he was on his way back in from a ride."

The "Tour de Creer" would stretch as far as Longmont and back. Like many in Boulder, the 5-foot-11, 205-pounder really took to cycling. A native Southern Californian, Creer calls cycling his "second love" next to football, and he intends someday to enter races.

For now, the goal is to get that left knee feeling 100 percent again. In a cruel case of rotten luck, Creer discarded a redshirt year two-thirds into the 2011 season and played for the first time in the eighth game of the season, against Oregon. The following week, he blew out his knee at Arizona State.

Creer's freshman season lasted just 15 carries. But there are no regrets, he said this week during preparations for Saturday's home game against Sacramento State (0-1).

"I just wanted to play," he said of his abbreviated first year. "Everybody wants to play and help the team."

In addition to pedaling around Boulder County, Creer spent long hours with the CU training staff. His goal was to make it back by the beginning of August drills. He did, although the knee swelled early in camp and he was held out of some two-a-day practices.

But coaches had enough confidence in Creer in the season opener against Colorado State to run him three times during a key red-zone series late in the third quarter. Creer almost scored on his third carry, gaining 2 yards on third-and-goal from the 3, but he slipped before he could break the plane.

"I learned that I'm not back to where I was last year (before the injury)," Creer said. "But I'm progressing. The knee felt great. As the season goes on, it's going to get better."

Creer finished the game with four carries for 17 yards, his 4.3 yards per attempt the team's best among running backs in what was a tough day on the ground for the Buffaloes. His 10-yard gain in the fourth quarter was bettered only by a 17-yard run with a backward-pass lateral by receiver Gerald Thomas.

"Is Malcolm back to where we want him to be? No," Bieniemy said. "But the attitude, the heart and the desire is there. He made tremendous strides to get to this point. That's all you can ask of a kid. He wants it."

Creer is one of CU's bigger backs. And with his strong base and thick shoulders, he packs the kind of punch that one might expect from an even bigger tailback.

"Malcolm is a cerebral kid who cares," Bieniemy added. "He puts it out on the table each and every day that he gets an opportunity."

More touches figure to be forthcoming.

With his north-south running style between the tackles, Creer can complement starter Tony Jones (5-7, 190), who needs space to become effective. Jones averaged just 2.7 yards per carry against Colorado State.

"Malcolm is strong," CU center Gus Handler said. "I think with him and Tony, it's a little bit 'Thunder and Lightning.' "

Colorado (0-1) hopes Creer can return to full strength and become, well, a "tour de force" to the offense. Perhaps that begins Saturday.

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