



Christian Powell led Colorado with 147 yards rushing
 Photo Courtesy: Associated Press



Brooks: Direction Of Buffs' Season Takes Ugly Turn

Release: 09/08/2012 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER - Where to from here for the Colorado Buffaloes? At this point, the only answer available that carries any degree of certainty is...west.

The schedule says it's on to Fresno State next Saturday night for the final non-conference game. From there it's back on the road for the Pac-12 Conference opener at Washington State.

We could go on, but the reality here is that if Games 1-2 of the 2012 season are your only barometer, you're expecting the Buffs to be in freefall by month's end - if they're not already there.

The cynics among you - and your numbers are mushrooming - will say losses to Colorado State (22-17) and Sacramento State (30-28) are signal enough that CU's bowl goal belongs in layaway for 2013. And it's hard to argue against that.

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After the humbling CSU loss, Sacramento State was to be Sacrificial State on Saturday at Folsom Field. That wasn't close to the message that CU coach Jon Embree spent the past five days delivering to his team before their home opener, even though some of his guys might not have believed it.

Embree warned them they were in for a fistfight, albeit against a program from a lower division (CU is FBS, Sac State is FCS; flag the NCAA for that blatant BS). Embree told the Buffs about the Hornets visiting Oregon State last season and winning 29-28 in overtime. He told the Buffs they weren't nearly good enough to merely "show up" and collect a 'W.'

If it hadn't sunken in Monday through Friday, the brutal truth had enveloped and inundated the Buffs by late Saturday afternoon.

After the opening loss to CSU, which featured as many head-scratching decisions as ugly plays, there were questions from the outside of whether the Buffs could clear out the Rams residue and not let that defeat become a season-killer.

CU junior inside linebacker Derrick Webb contended on Saturday there had been no CSU hangover. "Most definitely (not)," he said. "We had been prepared for Sac State, Sac State, Sac State. This loss wasn't because of CSU. Point blank, what happened out there is we left too many plays on the field and they made more plays than we did."

But Embree obviously wants more specific answers than that. At his post-game media conference, he said a staff meeting was scheduled "in about 19 minutes" and that all positions - players, not coaches - would be reevaluated. So when the Buffs show up next weekend in Fresno, there might be more new looks than they showed against Sac State.

Saturday's most noticeable were freshmen Christian Powell opening at tailback and Yuri Wright and Kenneth Crawley opening as cornerbacks and Marques Mosley at nickel. And there were many more.

Powell, a 235-pounder who had spent all of August at his recruited position of fullback, carried 28 times for 147 yards and three touchdowns. Maybe CU found an able big-bodied back for its off-and-on ground game.

"I like getting the rock . . . that doesn't really happen as much when you're just playing fullback," said Powell, who shed nearly 25 pounds (he was close to 260 on his recruiting visit) before camp opened. "But whatever they ask of me, whether it's playing tailback or fullback, that's what I'm going to try to do."

Wright and Crawley had their moments, making plays, giving up plays, drawing flags. They're first-year players, future playmakers. Embree said Wright, Crawley, Powell and the rest of the freshmen are "our guys, I don't care what year they are. They're going to make mistakes, but there's other guys playing, too. We knew coming in that we were going to play a lot of young guys . . . it is what it is with that."

On what ended as a second consecutive disturbing afternoon, CU's most disturbing sequence was Sac State's final 72-yard drive that culminated with junior Edgar Castaneda's 30-yard field goal on the game's final play.

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(Here's your feel good-story on CU's bad-feeling Saturday: A former walk-on, Castaneda was awarded a scholarship following the team's post-game meeting.)

After allowing the Hornets to score on their last four possessions of the first half and take a 24-21 lead at intermission, the Buffs bucked up defensively in the second half. On five of the visitor's previous second-half possessions, CU forced four punts and allowed a 31-yard field goal that allowed the Hornets to pull to 28-27.

"It was game time," Webb said of his defense's second-half upgrade. "Coming out (of halftime) we had to make up our minds to bear down and play harder on defense. It was more of a pride thing, more of a want-to in the second half. We stepped it up a little bit in the second half. We just played harder. That's all we did."

It just didn't last long enough. Sac State began its eventual game-winning drive at its own 15 with 2:26 to play. The Hornets reeled off four consecutive first downs, moving to the Buffs' 34 before "uh ohs" began reverberating through Folsom.

Said Webb: "It was a two-minute situation; we wanted to make them eat up a little clock, then the closer they got to field goal range, that's when we wanted to tighten down, buckle down and stop them from getting in field goal range."

CU defensive end Chidera Uzo-Diribe said his unit wasn't concerned "at all . . . earlier in the half we had held them to a field goal and a three-and-out, so we were very confident our defense was going to make a stop and we were going to win the game."

But that stop never came and neither did the win.

"This one hurts - a lot," Uzo-Diribe said. "All of the other guys, they feel the same way."

That includes his coaches. Embree and his staff remain puzzled about what they witnessed on the practice field in August remaining there in September.

"For whatever reason, the team that's practicing isn't necessarily coming consistently every . . . Saturday," Embree said. "And that's another one of those things we need to look at and figure out why."

Two weeks ago, Embree emphasized that submitting a strong September was mandatory for the Buffs to achieve their bowl goal. Two games into the season's first month, from what we've seen of his team, the postseason has never seemed so far away.

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SHOW MENU





Quarterback Jordan Webb escapes from Sacramento State defensive lineman Jaycee Totty
Photo Courtesy: Associated Press



Brooks: Last-Second FG Sends Stunned Buffs To 0-2

Release: 09/08/2012 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER - Sacramento State's Edgar Castaneda kicked a 30-yard field goal on the final play Saturday, sending the Hornets to a shocking 30-28 win over Colorado at Folsom Field.

The loss dropped the Buffaloes to 0-2 for the second time under coach Jon Embree, while the Hornets, members of the Big Sky Conference, evened their record at 1-1. CU lost its opener 22-17 last week to in-state rival Colorado State, while Sac State dropped its first game 49-19 at New Mexico State.

Embree said he didn't believe the Buffs entered Saturday's game thinking they would dominate an opponent from a lower division (FCS): "I came in thinking this was going to be a football game we were going to have to fight and win. And that is how they were coached all week...how they were talked to. No one thought we were just going to come in and win."

Sac State coach Marshall Sperbeck said his players "battled

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Watch:
Sac State's Edgar Castaneda

back and really showed a lot of resilience...it was a great football game."

CU's bright spot in its 2012 home opener was freshman Christian Powell, who carried 28 times for 147 yards and three touchdowns, tying a school freshman record.

Sac State amassed 466 total yards (312 passing, 154 rushing) while CU gained 341 (188 passing, 153 rushing). The Hornets had 28 first downs to the Buffs' 20.

Sac State quarterback Garrett Safron completed 25-of-37 passes for 312 yards and two touchdowns, while CU's Jordan Webb went 12-for-24 for 160 and one TD. He was sacked three times, running that total to eight in two games.

After last week's distressing opening loss to CSU, CU fans hoped to see the Buffs respond with a more efficient performance that would include an improved running game.

They got their wish on CU's first two possessions, courtesy of a revamped backfield that featured the 235-pound Powell, who had practiced at fullback all August, lined up at tailback behind 245-pound fullback Alex Wood.

Powell ran 69 yards for a touchdown on his second carry, then capped a 72-yard drive with a one-yard plunge as the Buffs shot ahead 14-0 with 7:28 left in the first quarter.

CU finished the first quarter with 95 yards rushing, almost double its total (58) from the opener. But just as suddenly as the Buffs found their stride, they went lame again, finishing the first half with only 18 more yards on the ground.

Meanwhile, Sac State began picking apart CU's defense with a balanced read-option offense. The Hornets pulled to 14-7 on an 11-yard scoring pass from Safron to DeAndre Carter, then tied the game on a 2-yard run by A.J. Ellis. A 35-yard Safron toss to a disturbingly open Chris Broadnax gave Sac State its first lead - 21-14.

The Buffs answered with a 77-yard scoring drive, highlighted by a 40-yard Webb to Nick Kasa pass, and tied the game at 21-21 with 2:44 left before intermission. CU got the TD on a 9-yard pass from Webb to sophomore tight end Kyle Slavin, giving Slavin his first career catch.

But by now the Hornets were moving at will, having scored on three consecutive possessions. They made it four straight by positioning Castaneda for a 28-yard field goal that gave Sac State a 24-21 halftime lead and left the CU fan base more than a little disgruntled.

The Hornets finished the half with 123 yards rushing and 167 passing (290 total), while the Buffs managed 113 on the ground and 127 in the air (240).

With Sac State set to receive the second half kickoff, CU had to put a stop to the Hornets' first-half progress - and they did. After Chidera Uzo-Diribe forced Safron into intentional grounding and ultimately a Sac State punt, CU took possession and went back to its "Big Buff" backfield - Powell and Wood.

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Starting at its own 35, CU marched as far as the Sac State 7, where a reviewed pass interference call in the end zone on third down gave the Buffs a first down at the 2. It took three tries for the 235-pound Powell, but he finally got the TD on third-and-one. Will Oliver's PAT pushed the Buffs ahead 28-24.

The drive covered 65 yards and featured two critical plays besides the pass interference call in the end zone on Kasa. The first was a Webb-to-Alex Wood pass that went for 18 yards on third-and-16, the second was a Connor Wood-to-Gerald Thomas screen pass that went for 26 yards on third-and-18. It was Connor Wood's first play for the Buffs; the Texas transfer entered the game when Webb's helmet came off and he was, by rule, forced to sit for a down. He returned to the game on the following play.

CU's 28-24 lead held for the rest of the third quarter, but the start of the fourth found Sac State driving. The Hornets advanced to the Buffs' 14-yard line, where on third-and-three Safron threw incomplete. On fourth down, Castenada hit a 31-yard field to pull Sac State to within one (28-27) with 11:57 to play.

Just over halfway through the quarter, CU appeared to get a field position break on a shanked Sac State punt, but a personal foul penalty on Woodson Greer backed the Buffs up to their 19-yard line to open the drive.

With 8:15 remaining, CU's choices were get points or get rid of that time - or most of it. The Buffs did neither, punting back to the Hornets with 5:54 to play. Sac State took possession at its own 15 but advanced no further than its own 38 and punted.

At the 4:42 mark, CU took over at its 28 but kept possession for less than 2 minutes. Sac State got the ball at its 15 with 2:26 left and promptly got four consecutive first downs, moving to the CU 34 with 1:13 to play.

A pass interference call on freshman corner Kenneth Crawley moved the ball to the 28, and an 11-yard Safron-to-Morris Norrise carried the Hornets to the Buffs' 17 with 54 seconds left.

Three plays later, after Sac State had let the game clock run from :30 to :01 and called time out, Castenada kicked his game winner. It capped a nine-play, 72-yard drive and left the Buffs in shock and their season in disarray.

What was supposed to be the first month's easier portion is finished. The Buffs go on the road for their next two games, traveling to Fresno State next Saturday before opening Pac-12 Conference play on Saturday, Sept. 22 at Washington State.

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SHOW MENU



Bufs coach left looking for answers after falling to 0-2

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Most saw the potential for problems with so many young and new faces on the Colorado football team this season, but few envisioned coach Jon Embree apologizing for the state of his program before mid-September.

The Bufs found themselves in ESPN's "Bottom 10" of major college programs last week after a loss to Colorado State. They proved its where they belong Saturday by losing 30-28 to a Sacramento State team picked by Big Sky Conference coaches to finish ninth in that league this season.

"I'm sorry and I'm going to do everything I can to make it right and fix it, just like I tried to last week," Embree said when asked what he wanted to say to fans upset about the loss. "You guys that know me know I'm competitive. I'm going to fight until there is nothing left."

It is the second straight season Sacramento State has knocked off a Pac-12 Conference team on the road. The Hornets traveled to Corvallis, Ore., and beat Oregon State last season.

Somewhere former Colorado football coach Dan Hawkins had to be smiling. Turns out, he's not the only one to struggle to beat such lightly regarded competition and putting people who bleed black and gold back in charge here in Boulder wasn't the easy fix some expected it to be.

The game was reminiscent of Colorado's 2006 loss to Montana State to start the Hawkins era

Embree vowed to get his 0-2 team's substantial problems fixed. He said everything will be re-evaluated, including all starting jobs. Embree mentioned multiple times in his postgame remarks he planned to meet with his coaching staff to begin assessing everything.

"We're on the same page," Embree said. "We have to get a different book."

Embree had a handful of new true freshmen starters Saturday. Some were in the lineup because of injuries to teammates and others were in the lineup because coaches believe they are the best option.

Running back Christian Powell is at the top of that list. Powell is a fullback on the CU roster and played there in the season opener, but he started against the Hornets at tailback. Powell proved to be a rugged runner who was tough to bring down. He rumbled off tackle on the third play from scrimmage for 64 yards and the first of his three touchdowns.

The 6-foot, 235-pound product of Upland, Calif., carried the ball 28 times for 147 yards and those three scores. Powell would have been the story of the day if the CU defense didn't struggle so mightily, including surrendering the lead in the final minutes.

The Bufs allowed 30 points and 466 total yards of offense, including 312 passing yards, to a Sacramento State team that was drubbed at New Mexico State last week. The Hornets scored on four-straight possessions in the first half and took the lead in the final minute before halftime. The Bufs are now 0-10 under Embree when trailing at halftime.

"They were calling all the right plays at the right time," freshman cornerback Yuri Wright said.

Wright was one of three freshmen who started in the secondary for CU, along with fellow cornerback Kenneth Crawley and nickel back Marques Mosley. Two of the three were involved in key plays on the game-winning drive.

The Hornets took possession on their 15-yard line trailing 28-27 with 2 minutes, 26 seconds to play. Quarterback Garrett Safron quickly completed two passes and Mosley was called for pass interference on the third play. Three plays later, Crawley was flagged for another pass interference call and the Hornets were nearly in range for the winning field goal.

Safron, who completed 25 of 37 passes for 321 yards and two touchdowns in the game, guided his team to the Colorado 13-yard line where the Hornets lined up for Edgar Castaneda's 30-yard game-winning field goal with 1 second remaining.

After the kick sailed through the uprights on the north end of Folsom Field, the Hornets celebrated wildly, chasing down Castaneda near midfield. Meanwhile, the Buffs exited with bowed heads amid boos from their fans.

"For whatever reason, the team that is practicing isn't coming consistently to Saturday," Embree said. "That's one of the things I need to look at and figure out why."

One of the players at the top of that list might be starting quarterback Jordan Webb.

Coaches chose Webb as their started midway through August because they liked his decision making in practices. But Webb has been spotty in his first two games with the Buffs, after transferring from Kansas this summer.

Webb completed 12 of 24 passes for 160 yards and a touchdown against the Hornets, but some of his passes fell short of their targets or arrived too late.

"We missed some throws," Embree said. "We missed some critical throws. I'll have to see the tape overall, but there is two that really jumped out that were some big time plays for us and we weren't able to make the throw."

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Thorburn: Bowl game? How about winning one game?

By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

There wasn't a lot to say after this one.

Sacramento State's 30-28 victory over Colorado on Saturday at Folsom Field left both locker rooms stunned.

"I'm kind of speechless," said visiting head coach Marshall Sperbeck, whose Hornets were coming off a 30-point drubbing at New Mexico State.

"I have no (opening) statement," CU counterpart Jon Embree said. "Questions?"

What do you say to the fans who are tired of the Buffs losing to Big Sky programs in Boulder?

"Sorry," Embree said. "And we're going to do everything to make it right and fix it. Just like I tried to last week. You guys that know me know I'm competitive.

"I'm going to fight until there is nothing left."

There are still 10 games left in the 2012 season. That seems like cruel and unusual punishment for everyone who follows this program.

It's certainly an awful lot of bad reality television for the Pac-12 Network to fill time with. Dish Network customers, you've been warned.

Embree held a meeting with his staff following his postgame press conference. There was plenty to discuss.

Like burning this thing to the ground and starting over.

"We're on the same page," Embree said. "We have to get a different book."

Eric Bieniemy's offense found its missing running game with fullback turned tailback Christian Powell getting the start and producing 147 yards and three touchdowns. But quarterback Jordan Webb completed a Jayhawk-like 50 percent of his passes, finishing his second CU start with 160 yards and a touchdown.

Connor Wood should break the huddle at Fresno State next Saturday.

The Buffs would trade for Sacramento State signal caller Garrett Safron (312 yards, two touchdowns) if they could.

"Everything will be re-evaluated," Embree said of his quarterback situation. "All positions."

Senior free safety Ray Polk missed the game with an ankle injury. Senior linebacker Doug Rippy left the game in the second quarter with a knee injury.

And senior linebacker Jon Major had his soul crushed when Edgar Castaneda's game-winning field goal sailed through the uprights as time expired.

"It's hard to talk about right now," Major said.

CU's defense was spotted a 14-0 lead 6:32 into the game before allowing touchdown drives of 75, 57 and 80 yards and then a 59-yard drive that ended with a field goal before the half.

Sacramento State, a team Big Sky coaches picked to finish ninth in the conference's preseason poll, finished the game with 466 yards of total offense (6.5 yards per play).

Defensive coordinator Greg Brown had some explaining to do at Embree's come to Jon meeting. And starting four true freshmen wasn't the explanation the head coach is looking for.

"They're our guys. I don't care what year they are," Embree said. "They are going to make mistakes, but there are other guys playing."

CU might be cashing large Pac-12 checks and getting more national exposure these days, but the only thing this program has proven through two games is that it can't beat middle-of-the-pack Mountain West teams.

Or even FCS teams. We used to call them Division I-AA and automatic win.

It was easy for me to predict a CU triumph over Sacramento State in this space. The wise guys in Las Vegas had the Buffs as three-touchdown favorites.

Embree knew the cold, hard truth about the talent levels of these two teams when he turned on the Week 1 film.

This wasn't a surprise inside the Dal Ward Center.

"I did not come into this game thinking we were going to dominate. I came in thinking this was going to be a football game where we were going to have to fight and win," Embree said. "And that's how they were coached all week and how they were talked to.

"No one thought we were just going to come in and win."

Right now, it's hard to imagine the Buffs winning a game, let alone six games. Losing to Sacramento State has muted any talk by the Buffs of a bowl game.

This was the easy part of the schedule.

Fresno State, Washington State, UCLA ... all 10 remaining opponents can smell the blood seeping out of a once proud program.

"They're going to come after us. Everybody," Embree said. "So we have to figure out a way."

Follow Ryan on Twitter: @RyanThorburn

Football: CU Buffs' Powell delivers in shift to tailback

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Colorado threw everyone a curve when freshman fullback Christian Powell lined up as the starting tailback in Saturday's 30-28 loss to Sacramento State.

When he got the ball on the first play of the game and ran for 5 yards, the press box announcer said it was Tony Jones carrying the ball.

When Powell rumbled 64 yards for a touchdown on the third play of the game, Jones again got the credit from the press box announcer.

It didn't take long for everyone to realize it was No. 46 (Powell) carrying the ball and not No. 26 (Jones).

"It was something that we've been working on all week," Powell said.

At 6-feet, 235 pounds, Powell came to CU this fall as a fullback, but proved on Saturday he just might be the answer the Buffs are looking for at tailback.

Powell finished with 147 yards and three touchdowns on 28 carries, while adding one catch for 13 yards.

"We felt like he had enough tailback in him to be effective back there in the right situations, and so that's why we went with him," CU head coach Jon Embree said. "I thought he did a lot of good things."

Powell had one of the most impressive starting debuts on CU history. His 147 yards were the most yards by a CU running back in a starting debut since Marcus Houston had 150 in 2000 against Southern Cal. He also became just the second CU running back since 1956 to score three touchdowns in his starting debut -- joining Bobby Anderson, who did so against Indiana in 1969.

"It was pretty exciting," said Powell, who had a pair of 1-yard touchdown runs to go with his 64-yarder. "Anybody would like to get the ball. It was pretty good to get the ball and make some runs."

Perhaps just as surprising as Powell's new role was the fact that Jones appears to have been buried on the depth chart.

After Powell, Josh Ford, Donta Abron and D.D. Goodson all entered the game at tailback before Jones got into the action.

"It's good to let everybody else get a shot at going in and getting experience at the college level," Jones said. "I was cheering them on."

Although guarded with his post-game comments, Jones, who came into the season as the starter, couldn't have been completely thrilled with his reduced role.

Jones was CU's primary backup a year ago as a redshirt freshman and was one of the team's top receivers with 27 catches out of the backfield. He earned the starting job with a good camp, but managed just 43 yards on 16 carries (along with 29 yards on four catches) in a 22-17 loss to Colorado State on Sept. 1.

Jones said he was a little surprised with his role on Saturday. He had just four touches all day: two 1-yard runs, and three yards on two catches.

"Yeah, but I just go with what the coaches do," he said. "I believe in them and they believe in me. Our running game was great today with Christian Powell at running back. I'm not mad, but he definitely got it done. You can't be mad at that."

Powell's performance could mean that Jones will have to get used to this. Powell was clearly the player of choice when CU ran the ball, and Goodson was in on nearly every third down.

"I don't know," Jones said of his role going forward. "Whatever coaches think, that's going to be up to them."

On Saturday, they chose Powell and he delivered.

"I feel like it's not just me," Powell said. "We have a great group of backs. All of us together, I feel like we can turn it around. But, I can be a part of that."

Follow Brian on Twitter: @BrianHowell33.

Football notes: CU Buffs' defense takes another hit with Doug Rippy hurt

By Ryan Thorburn Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

The Buffs' leadership council might have to meet in the training room this week.

Two of the seniors Colorado's young players are looking at for guidance this season -- linebacker Doug Rippy and safety Ray Polk -- have already sustained fresh leg injuries.

Rippy hobbled off the field with a knee injury in the second quarter of CU's deflating 30-28 loss to Sacramento State on Saturday and did not return. Polk suffered a sprained ankle in the Rocky Mountain Showdown loss to Colorado State that kept him out of the home opener.

That leaves a defense that started four freshmen and gave up 466 yards to the Hornets of the FCS quite thin in the leadership department.

Junior defensive end Chidera Uzo-Diribe and senior linebacker Jon Major emerged from a dejected locker room to answer questions about another head-scratching loss that most fans had penciled in as an easy win.

"The kind of things that we do in practice against our offense, no disrespect to the Sacramento State offense, but they are nowhere near our offense," Uzo-Diribe said. "For them to go out there and do what they did to us today is embarrassing."

Sacramento State quarterback Garrett Safron threw for more than 300 yards, but the Buffs' inability to stop the run was the difference in the game. CU gave up 154 net yards rushing on 35 attempts (4.4 yards per).

Major, a player who prefers actions to words, is still holding out hope for a dramatic turnaround.

"We've got to win our next three," Major said. "There will be no one in that locker room who won't come to work hard and fully expect to win from here."

Rippy's knee injury will be re-evaluated today. Polk is questionable for next Saturday's game at Fresno State.

In full Bloom

Jeremy Bloom knows what it feels like to make an early impact on this program.

The first time Bloom touched the football for the Buffs -- on Aug. 31, 2002 -- the speedy skiing star from Loveland returned a punt 75 yards for a touchdown against CSU.

The Buffs lost to the Rams that day but finished 7-1 in the Big 12 to win the North Division.

A decade later, Bloom -- who played for two seasons at CU and competed in two Olympics -- is preaching patience with Jon Embree's young Buffs.

"I believe in the long-term vision of Eric Bieniemy and Jon Embree and Brian Cabral and all these guys," said Bloom, who was at Folsom Field on Saturday working as the color man for the Pac-12 Network's first live broadcast of a CU event. "I don't remember a time when there has been more enthusiasm for the young players at Colorado, the true freshmen, the sophomores. ...

"I think the fans need to forget about the last four years and believe in the program. We're bringing talent to

Boulder. Now that talent needs to grow."

Right now the Buffs are going through some extreme growing pains.

The perfect backup

The Buffs were still trailing by three points in the third quarter when Jordan Webb was sacked to set up a key third-and-18. CU's starting quarterback had to sit out for one play because his helmet came off.

Backup Connor Wood came in and completed a 28-yard screen pass to Gerald Thomas. The Buffs finished the drive with Christian Powell's third touchdown of the game to take a 28-24 lead with 6:27 remaining in the third quarter.

"I looked at the sticks and it was third-and-long," Wood said. "That's how it is and it was fun being out there and throwing a pass and almost getting a touchdown there."

It was Wood's only snap of the day. He finished with a quarterback rating of 335.2.

Embree will be taking a hard look at the quarterback position after Webb missed on some potential big plays and finished 12-for-24 with 160 yards and a touchdown.

O-line shuffle

Starting left guard Alex Lewis was shaken up and left the game in the second quarter, which tested CU's depth on the offensive line for the first time this season.

Starting right guard Daniel Munyer slid over to play Lewis' spot, starting right tackle Jack Harris moved to right guard and Ryan Dannewitz came in and played right tackle.

That group helped Powell punch in a 1-yard touchdown run that reclaimed the lead for the Buffs. Dannewitz was called for a personal foul on the play, but the Hornets didn't take advantage of the extra 15 yards in the ensuing kickoff.

Lewis returned to the game in the third quarter to help the Buffs finish with 153 yards rushing.

In the fourth quarter, starting center Gus Handler went down with an ankle injury. Munyer moved to center and Dannewitz returned at right tackle with Harris at right guard.

The Buffs had a chance to put the game away on their final drive, but Webb was sacked for a 10-yard loss and threw an incompletion on third-and-15. The offensive line gave up a total of three sacks after allowing CSU five sacks.

New captains

Handler, Uzo-Diribe, Paul Vigo (linebacker) and Derrick Webb (linebacker) served as CU's captains.

There were no repeats from the CSU game when David Bakhtiari (left tackle), Will Pericak (defensive tackle), Polk and Jordan Webb were the captains.

Back at Folsom

CU opened its 89th season at Folsom Field. The first opener at the venue, known as Colorado Stadium until 1944,

was played in 1925.

The Buffs opened the 1924 season with one final game at Gamble Field before moving over to the new stadium.

CU is now 60-27-1 in home openers at Folsom Field. The Buffs also lost to Montana State from the Big Sky in the 2006 opener.

Quotable

"We need to come back next week and do the same thing in Northern Colorado because they're going to come out just as tough," Sacramento State defensive back Ryan McMahon said.

Notable

CU has 52 punt return yards through two games after having 56 yards in 13 games last season. ... This is the 20th time in 123 seasons of football that the Buffs are 0-2. ... The 30 points were the most scored by Sacramento State against an FBS team since scoring 43 against Pacific in 1993. ... Scouts from the Cincinnati Bengals, New Orleans Saints and St. Louis Rams watched the game from the Fred Casotti press box.

Football: CU Buffs quarterback position up for grabs again

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

One month ago Colorado football coaches had a hard time coming up with something critical to say about quarterback Jordan Webb, the transfer from Kansas they eventually named their starter.

Following Saturday's loss to Sacramento State at Folsom Field, it became clear the intensity of two game days and the spotlight of missed opportunities has them seeing their quarterback situation a little differently.

Coach Jon Embree didn't blame any one player for the loss, but when asked about Webb's performance, he noted that the junior missed some open targets in the game, and, in Embree's immediate assessment before film review, two of those throws should have been big plays for the Buffs.

Embree said the starting job under center along with every other job on the team will be up for grabs this week as the team prepares for its first road trip of the season next Saturday at Fresno State.

One week after being sacked five times, Webb didn't have a lot of time to throw once again, but even at times when he did, he wasn't always on target.

"A couple times I was just trying to get the ball out of my hands to avoid a sack," Webb said. "A few times the receivers were not even breaking into their route and I had to get rid of it. It is hard to be accurate and I guess I missed a couple."

Webb completed 12 of 24 passes for 160 yards and one touchdown. He completed four of nine attempts in the second half.

Webb's backup, sophomore Connor Wood, was called on for one play Saturday thanks to the new rule that requires any player who loses his helmet to come off the field for one play. Webb lost his in the middle of a third-quarter CU drive and Wood came on to take his first college snap.

He completed a screen pass to freshman wide receiver Gerald Thomas who scampered 28 yards to help set up a touchdown run that gave the Buffs a 28-24 lead. Thomas seemed to miss an opportunity to score on the play by running into a defender who was being blocked.

Wood said the fact that Embree views the quarterback competition as open once again doesn't change anything for him.

"I've always been competing for the starting job since I've been here," Wood said. "It didn't stop when Jordan was named the starter. It's been since yesterday at practice. So I'm going to keep on doing what I'm good at and trying to get better each day and we'll what happens."

Wood said it's difficult to get a feel for why the CU offense has been so inconsistent in the early going this season from his spot on the sideline. He said he does not believe there is one person or position to blame.

Colorado gained 341 yards of total offense on 63 plays Saturday. Only 101 yards came after halftime.

Follow Kyle on Twitter: @KyleRingo.

Four true freshmen start on defense vs. Sacramento State

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Colorado claims it has a lot of young talent on defense.

As good as those players may be, however, they are inexperienced, and it showed on Saturday in a 30-28 loss to Sacramento State.

"I think (inexperience) has a little bit to do with it, but I trust our coaches," sophomore linebacker Kyle Washington said. "If they feel like someone is ready to play, I feel like they're ready to play."

They're either ready, or they have no choice.

After losing 28 seniors to graduation from the 2011 season, the Buffs are loaded with youth. Four true freshmen started on defense on Saturday, including three in the secondary. The Buffs played without senior safety Ray Polk (injured ankle) and lost senior linebacker Doug Rippey (knee injury) early in the game.

"You definitely need some experience, but that's when other guys have to step up," junior safety Parker Orms said. "Like myself, I didn't step up today."

Sacramento State quarterback Garrett Safron picked on CU's youth all day, completing 25 of 37 passes for 312 yards and two touchdowns. He also had two throws on the Hornets' game-winning field goal drive that drew pass interference penalties. CU freshmen corners Kenneth Crawley and Marques Mosley were tagged for those penalties.

"Those two freshmen, they had big penalties toward the end of the game, but honestly, it shouldn't have even come down to that," junior linebacker Derrick Webb said. "They played well enough for us to win in my eyes. It's a team thing. We just gave up too many plays out there. It shouldn't have come down to the last drive. Those penalties hurt, but I can't fault them. They were playing hard."

Truth is, the Buffs said, it shouldn't have mattered how young CU's players were on Saturday. Youth was no excuse for giving up 466 yards and 28 first downs.

In the first half, Sacramento State burned the Buffs for 290 yards, including 123 on the ground, and scored on four consecutive possessions. CU bottled up the Hornets for much of the second half, but Safron led his team swiftly down the field in the final minutes for the winning field goal, thanks in large part to the penalties.

"You know what, they're our guys," head coach Jon Embree said of the freshmen. "I don't care what year they are. They are going to make mistakes, but there's other guys playing (too). We knew coming in that we were going to play a lot of young guys ... it is what it is with that. They also made some plays."

With 10 games to play, the Buffs are going to need their young players to make a few more plays. They can't do anything about their youth; they just need to hope they get better soon.

"We have a lot of really good, young players," freshman cornerback Yuri Wright said. "It's just a couple of things we still need to learn and improve on."

Asked specifically what the Buffs can improve upon, Wright said, "Everything."

That work will begin in a hurry. The Buffs have another game on Saturday at Fresno State.

"We just have to come in and look at this (Sunday) or Monday and just learn from it and move on," Washington said.

Follow Brian on Twitter: @BrianHowell33.

Colorado loses 30-28 to Sacramento State on late field goal

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

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — Can it get any lower for the Colorado football program? Judging from those down-turned expressions on the faces of stunned players and coaches after a 30-28 loss to lower-level Sacramento State in the home opener, it would be hard to imagine anything more discouraging than Saturday afternoon.

Colorado dropped to 0-2 when Sacramento State drove 72 yards to set up Edgar Castaneda's game-winning 30-yard field goal with no time remaining. Folsom Field became as quiet as a funeral, and everyone who cared about the team must have thought about its publicly stated 2012 goal of qualifying for a bowl game.

Nobody in the locker room wanted to say it — or believe it — but the chances of the Buffaloes finding six victories somewhere on their remaining schedule might be a bigger surprise than losing on this weekend to a Hornets (1-1) team that was picked to finish ninth out of 13 Big Sky Conference teams in that FCS league's preseason polls.

"It's embarrassing," CU junior defensive end Chidera Uzo-Diribe said.

A Colorado fan among the announced paid attendance of 46,843 was overheard exiting Folsom Field: "This isn't as bad as when we lost to Drake twice (1979 and 1980 under coach Chuck Fairbanks). But it's close."

The challenge for a Colorado program that hasn't posted a winning record since 7-6 in 2005 under Gary Barnett to regain respectability gets even tougher. The Buffs play next at Fresno State, which prides itself on knocking off teams from bigger conferences. Then comes the Pac-12 schedule.

Colorado coach Jon Embree wasn't going to sleep on what to do next. He said he was calling a coaches meeting for immediately after his postgame comments to reporters.

"We're on the same page (as a staff); we just have to get a different book," Embree said. "The book's got to change. (Remaining opponents) are going to come after us. We have to find a way."

All positions on the team will be evaluated, Embree said. "All positions," he added.

Asked what he would say to disgruntled fans, the coach said: "I'm sorry. I'm going to do everything I can to fix it. I'm a competitor. I'm going to fight until there isn't anything left."

Colorado's defense yielded 466 yards of total offense to a Sacramento State team that couldn't hang with New Mexico State nine days earlier. The Buffs, playing three true freshmen in the secondary and then losing senior linebacker Doug Rippey to a first-half knee injury, struggled all afternoon in trying to keep up with the Hornets' zone-read option.

No, Sacramento State's version isn't Oregon explosive. But Hornets quarterback Garrett Safron kept the ball in the belly of his running backs long enough to keep Colorado defenders guessing. And the Buffs often guessed wrong.

When CU thought Safron would hand off the ball, he tucked it in and found a running lane. When CU thought he would run, he handed off to running backs. And when Safron pulled back to pass, he continually spotted open receivers who worked the middle against the youngsters in the CU secondary who were worried about getting beat deep on the outside.

Safron threw for 312 yards and two touchdowns without an interception.

"I'm kind of speechless," Sacramento State coach Marshall Sperbeck said.

That's not to say Sperbeck didn't think his team could play well here. The Hornets had upset another Pac-12 team last year — Oregon State, on the road.

Embree said he had tried to convince his team Sacramento State would arrive with confidence and the game would be a dogfight. The Buffs got off to an exciting start with fullback-turned-tailback Christian Powell, a 6-foot, 235-pound true freshman, breaking loose on the game's third play for a 64-yard touchdown run.

Later in the first quarter, Powell scored from a yard out to put Colorado up 14-0. The Southern Californian finished with three scores and, with 147 yards, he became the first CU freshman to reach the century mark since Rodney Stewart in 2008.

But Buffs quarterback Jordan Webb completed only half of his 24 passes, was sacked three times and missed some open receivers in the second half when CU needed to keep its defense off the field.

Webb said afterward he isn't surprised that all CU jobs will be evaluated.

"That's going to happen when you're 0-2," Webb said.

Especially after losing to a team in a lower NCAA classification and with the big boys looming ahead on the schedule.

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Key stat:

4.4 Average yards per carry for a Sacramento State team that sustained drives all day.

Key play:

Stuffed. On third-and-3 at CU's 35-yard line, leading 28-27 with less than three minutes left, freshman running back Christian Powell was stopped for a 3-yard loss. It forced Colorado to punt and set up Sacramento State's drive for the winning field goal.

CU Buffs' defense is left defenseless by savvy Sacramento State

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

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — When a defense hits rock bottom, the sound it makes isn't "Splat!" as if it ended its misery. It's the scraping sound of guys digging the hole they made for themselves even deeper, just so they have a place to hide.

For whatever heights eventually reached by Jon Embree's program — and early in Year 2 it's a rocket launch away from ground level — this defensive unit must live with what goes down as one of the most humiliating performances in school history. Colorado gave up 466 yards and a game-winning field goal drive to a Sacramento State team picked ninth in the Big Sky in losing 30-28 at the buzzer.

"For them to go out there and do what they did is embarrassing," junior defensive end Chidera Uzo-Diribe said.

Putting this loss in perspective makes it even worse. This is the same Sacramento State that New Mexico State blew out 49-19 in Week 1. It's the same one that's considered less talented than last year's disappointing, albeit injured, 4-7 squad.

Yet a 6-foot-1 sophomore named Garrett Safron shredded Colorado's secondary on 25-of-37 passing for 312 yards and two touchdowns. A.J. Ellis, a running back not listed on the two-deep, rushed for 73 yards in the first half.

It was the most points the FCS school had scored on an FBS or Division I-A team since scoring 43 against Pacific in 1993.

"For whatever reason, the team that's practicing isn't necessarily coming consistently to Saturday," a downcast Embree said before rushing into a hastily called staff meeting. "That's one of the things I need to look at and figure out why."

If Colorado's defense is inexperienced — it played three true freshman defensive backs much of the game — it should at least hold its own where FCS schools struggle: in the trenches. Sacramento State's large offensive line opened gaping holes for a running game that averaged 4.4 yards per carry.

"We couldn't stop them running the football," Embree said. "You can't win if you can't stop them from running, and we did not do a good job defensively. It shouldn't have been that severe."

Nowhere did the defensive collapse look worse than the last 2:26. The Hornets took the ball at their own 14, down 28-27. One defensive stop, one turnover — Sac State had none all day — and Colorado (0-2) survives.

Safron threw for three first downs on three quick slant plays, and a pass-interference call on freshman nickel back Marques Mosley took it down to the Buffaloes' 34. Another Safron first-down pass took it to the 17. This was not a case of the Hornets being too fast.

It was a matter of the Buffs being too out of position in man-to-man coverage.

"It's tough on the defender because he can't take away everything," defensive captain Jon Major said. "He has to take one side. You pick your spots as a quarterback when you're in man coverage. That's what any quarterback can do."

The sad part? Sacramento State knew it all along. They just looked at the film of Colorado's upset 22-17 loss to

Colorado State.

"We saw that they left the middle of the field open," Safron said. "We wanted to attack that area."

Safron, a part-time starter last year from Santa Monica, Calif., was 4-for-4 for 54 yards on that last drive.

Colorado true freshmen Kenneth Crawley, Yuri Wright and Mosley played much of the game. Not that it's any excuse against Sacramento State.

"I don't care what year they are," Embree said. "They're going to make mistakes, but there are other guys playing. We knew coming in we were going to play a lot of young guys. It is what it is. They also made some plays."

They'd better make more. A defense is at a crossroads, and heading straight for it in two weeks is the oncoming train that is the Pac-12.

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Edgar Castaneda, Sacramento State kicker, unlikely hero vs. CU Buffs

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — Junior Edgar Castaneda got no scholarship offers after last season at City College of San Francisco. All he ever wanted was a chance.

And that's exactly what the walk-on asked for on the Sacramento State sideline Saturday afternoon as his Hornets' offense drove down for what would be his last-second, game-winning 30-yard field goal to beat Colorado 30-28.

"I told my team, 'Get me there and I'll do my job,' " Castaneda said.

How did he feel lining up for one of the school's biggest upsets in history before the biggest crowd he has played before?

"It's just another kick, a PAT," he said. "It doesn't matter if it's a game-winning field."

His third field goal of the game made him 4-of-5 this season. Sacramento State kicked only three field goals all of last year. After Castaneda arrived on campus, the Hornets didn't even bring incumbent Jason Diniz back to the team.

After a modest career at Alameda (Calif.) High, Casaneda kicked 12-of-17 field goals to help CCSF win last year's national junior college title. Yet the only other four-year offer he got was to walk-on at Hawaii.

After the game, coach Marshall Sperbeck offered him a scholarship.

Injury report. CU reported injuries to two starters: senior linebacker Doug Rippey (knee) and junior Gus Handler (ankle). Rippey had reconstructive surgery during the offseason, but this was to "his other knee," coach Jon Embree said. According to CU, they will be re-evaluated Sunday.

Powell packs wallop. Christian Powell, a 6-foot, 235-pounder, became the first CU freshman (true or redshirt) to rush for three touchdowns in a game since Herchell Troutman in 1994 at Texas.

John Henderson and Tom Kensler, The Post

CU's five to forget

Some notable embarrassing losses by Colorado:

1979: Drake 13, CU 9 First sign of trouble under coach Chuck Fairbanks, who was 3-8 that season and 7-26 in three seasons.

1980: Oklahoma 82, CU 42 Track meet at Folsom when OU finished with 758 yards rushing.

2005: Texas 70, CU 3 Big 12 title game and the end of Gary Barnett era.

2006: Montana State 19, CU 10 Start of Dan Hawkins era and first game against an FCS team.

2012: Sacramento State 30, CU 28 Buffs fall to 1-2 all time vs. FCS.

THE SACRAMENTO BEE sacbee.com

Hornets stun Pac-12 foe for second straight year

Special to The Bee

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BOULDER, Colo. — Austin Dotson did cartwheels at midfield. Garrett Safron did his version of the Lambeau Leap.

All over Folsom Field, the Sacramento State Hornets ran around as if they owned the place. Saturday, they did.

For the second straight season, the Hornets pulled off a stunner against a Pacific-12 Conference team. Edgar Castaneda kicked a 30-yard field goal as time expired as Sac State rallied to upset Colorado 30-28 in front of a hushed, shocked crowd in Boulder.

"It hasn't hit me yet," Safron said. "I'm trying to take it all in, but it's a great feeling."

The Hornets had the same feeling last year after shocking host Oregon State 29-28 in overtime in a season opener.

Castaneda, who helped City College of San Francisco win the community college national championship last season,, capped a 72-yard drive with his first game-winning kick at any level.

After the game, Hornets coach Marshall Sperbeck rewarded his walk-on kicker with a scholarship.

Castaneda, who was 3 for 3 in field-goal attempts, said he didn't have butterflies before the biggest kick of his life.

"I was relaxed. I was calm," he said. "I wasn't paying attention to, 'Oh, it's a game-winning field goal.' It's just another kick."

When it sailed through the uprights, the Hornets (1-1) swarmed the field in celebration. Then they went to the Sac State fans in the stands, sang the school fight song and received plenty of congratulatory hugs and shoulder slaps.

"Coming into the game, we were underdogs, and when you're underdogs and come out on top, that's exciting," wide receiver Morris Norrise said.

It took a little work to get there. Trailing 28-27, Sac State got the ball at its own 15-yard line with 2:26 left. Safron, who threw for a career-high 312 yards on 25 of 37 passing, started carving up the Buffaloes' defense. He hit Norrise for 10 yards and DeAndre Carter for 20 and got help from two pass-interference penalties.

"Whenever we can gain yards, it's a big plus," Safron said.

After the second penalty put the Hornets at the Buffaloes' 28, Safron hit Norrise over the middle for 11 yards. Colorado (0-2) burned its timeouts trying to preserve precious seconds, but Safron set the ball in the middle of the field with one second left.

Castaneda did the rest.

"Obviously, we wanted to score, but we knew a field goal would do it," Sperbeck said. "We felt if we could get inside the 25, we had a good shot at it. Garrett put us in a drive that last series and did a good job."

The outcome was unlikely after the way the Buffaloes started the game. Freshman Christian Powell scored on a 64-yard run on the third play from scrimmage and again from one yard to cap a 72-yard drive that gave Colorado a 14-0 lead midway through the first quarter.

"A lot of times you get into the first part of the game, it takes time to get used to the speed and size of these types of teams," Sperbeck said. "Once we settled down and got comfortable with the speed of the game, we were OK."

Safron guided the Hornets to the next 21 points, hitting DeAndre Carter for an 11-yard touchdown and Chris Broadnax for a 35-yard score sandwiched around A.J. Ellis' two-yard touchdown run.

After Colorado tied the score on Jordan Webb's nine-yard touchdown pass to Kyle Slavin with 2:44 left in the half, Castaneda connected on a 28-yard field goal that gave Sac State a 24-21 halftime lead.

Powell's one-yard touchdown run in the third quarter put the Buffaloes ahead 28-24. Castaneda's 31-yard field goal with 11:57 to play brought the Hornets within one, and when they regained possession with 2:26 to go, Safron gave the offense a pep talk.

"I gathered around the offense and told them, 'It's go time,'" he said. "We've got to win it right here, right now.' That's what we did."

Even Sperbeck was a bit stunned.

"I'm kind of speechless after a day like today," he said. "It's a great day for Sac State."

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