



By: Joel Broida

Chdiera Uzo-Diribe (96) and the Colorado defense will have it's plate full against a talented Charleston Southern team.



Charleston Southern Presents Challenges For Colorado

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By: Josh Casey, Graduate Assistant SID

BOULDER—Charleston Southern's unique offensive scheme has been keeping FCS coaches up at night all season long and now it's doing the same to Colorado head coach Mike MacIntyre.

While at first glance it may not seem like an FCS opponent would present a major hurdle for a Pac-12 Conference team, Charleston Southern, at 7-0 and one of six remaining unbeaten FCS teams, and its distinct offensive style offer many challenges.

"(Their offense) is very unique. It really is," said MacIntyre. "They do a good job with it. It's in between a pistol offense and a Navy (type) offense. It's kind of a hybrid. So we've been working at it hard and studying it. You've got to be good on your option responsibilities or they'll lull you to sleep and throw it deep. Our guys have been working hard at it and we were a lot smoother at it today I thought."

This game will mark the fifth time in its history that CU has faced an FCS foe, and in the four previous games the Buffs have been anything but dominant. Colorado has a 2-2 record in those matchups and even the two wins required dramatic comebacks in the fourth quarter.

Earlier this season, the Buffaloes came back from seven points down in the fourth to beat FCS power Central Arkansas. MacIntyre is quick to point out that if the Buffs are to win this week they will have to play significantly better against what he feels is superior opponent than the team they played on that day.

"Well, offensively they're able to hold onto the ball and move the ball and do some things there," said MacIntyre. "They have more of an arsenal on their defense. They're bringing people from different places some and they're good in that area of it. They're kicking game is good but I thought Central Arkansas had some very good returners. But, I think offensively and defensively they're better than Central Arkansas. They're going to be tough to beat."

The Buccaneers have overcome a season-ending injury to their senior quarterback, a daunting schedule and a number of fourth quarter deficits in battling their way to 7-0. Most significant of those setbacks may have been the loss of multi-talented quarterback Malcolm Dixon to a torn ACL three weeks ago. But, in the true mark of a resilient team, have kept on winning. Freshman quarterback Danny Croghan has come off the bench to lead two fourth quarter comebacks and has helped the passing game reach even higher levels of success. MacIntyre and his staff feel like their opponent hasn't skipped a beat as a result of their unfortunate loss at quarterback.

"They're throwing the ball better with the new quarterback," said MacIntyre. "He's a better passer. That adds another element to it but they're still running the option well and he's running it pretty good."

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NOTABLE—MacIntyre told the media that he thought defensive tackle Josh Tupou played well on Saturday one week after suffering an injury that appeared earlier in the week like it might have sidelined him. He credited the trainers for working to get Tupou back on the field so quickly MacIntyre thinks the rules committee should look into changing the NCAA's new targeting rule after Parker Orms' second quarter hit on a receiver resulted in his being ejected from the game. "There's nothing you can do about it right now but after the season I think there will be a little bit of reevaluating as far as exactly how we want to implement (the rule)." MacIntyre has been impressed with the play of kicker Will Oliver so far this season. Oliver had to assume the kickoff duties on short notice after the injury to Justin Castor towards the end of fall camp and he has adjusted nicely to the added responsibility with comes in addition to his usual placekicking duties. CU will continue preparation for this weekend's tilt with Charleston Southern with another morning practice on Thursday. The game will begin at 12:07 p.m. on Saturday and be televised on the Pac-12 Network.

Colorado Buffaloes Football

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Life's never been tougher for defensive backs playing college football

By John Henderson The Denver Post The Denver Post
Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — In recent years, the high-octane spread offense has spread across the college football landscape like typhoid. The men absorbing the worst symptoms — the hang-dog tongue, the bloodshot eyes, the frazzled nerves — are defensive backs.

A year ago, 10 teams averaged at least 500 yards per game. Eight averaged at least 40 points. This year, offense has gone viral. Seventeen teams are averaging over 500 yards, topped by Baylor at 714.4 per game, and 18 teams are averaging at least 40 points. The Bears are averaging 63.4 points.

In 2000, only Florida State averaged 500 yards. That year, only five teams averaged 40 points.

"It is difficult," said Colorado senior safety Parker Orms. "Sometimes you wish you were on the other side of the ball."

The spread has forced college football teams to change the way they play defense and how they recruit. Vaunted spread teams such as Baylor, Oregon and Texas A&M use up to five players lined up wide, feature quarterbacks who run faster than safeties and run plays at a pace that requires the fitness of a Navy SEAL to cope in the secondary.

A common theory in football is that offenses innovate and defenses catch up. Don't look now, but the spread offense has about lapped the modern defense.

"I had a great head coach that called me the other day," said Colorado coach Mike MacIntyre. "I mean, he's phenomenal and he goes, 'No way in the world, if anybody asked me to be a defensive coordinator, would I be a defensive coordinator today. No way.'"

Who could blame him? The spread is not like the old run-and-shoot offense when coaches called a running play to give receivers a rest. Baylor is averaging 302.2 yards per game on the ground, fourth-best nationally. Oregon, with Heisman Trophy contender Marcus Mariota at quarterback, is second with 324.0 yards rushing a game.

"You've got to make sure you don't come up too much if you think it's a run and they throw behind you, so you've got to make sure you play flat-footed," Orms said. "Don't cross your feet. Make sure you get a good read."

Because of the proliferation of the spread, the nickel back has become a prized recruit. Ask a CU defensive back how much the Buffs played without a fifth defensive back against Arizona State, or Oregon, and he will scratch his head.

"When I first started coaching (in 1991), we never played a snap of nickel," MacIntyre said. "Then people started spreading you out and then you started using more nickel or you

played a linebacker that could maybe do both because you weren't worried about playing as much man (coverage).

"Now, you've got to play man quite often or you don't have a chance."

Because coaches use five or six defensive backs on almost every down against spread teams, they stockpile them like cordwood. Jon Embree, MacIntyre's predecessor at CU, signed 10 defensive backs in 2011 and 2012, primarily to make up for a dearth of secondary players signed by his predecessor, Dan Hawkins.

MacIntyre said roster numbers in college have gone from 12 to 14 defensive backs and 12 linebackers in the old days to 10 or 11 linebackers and 15 or 16 defensive backs.

What can secondaries do? Hope they get help, such as a ball-control offense, a great pass rush, anything to keep them from chasing five receivers, plus a quarterback, all over the field.

"Don't get me wrong, those (spread) offenses are made to kill DBs," said Colorado State safety Trent Matthews. "But the good thing about it is, it's a good opportunity. We like challenges like that."

But a pass rush is nearly impossible because the spread requires quick passes from a pistol or shotgun formation. Mariota and Texas A&M's Johnny Manziel have both been sacked only five times.

"It's tough," Orms said, "but that's what we signed up for, playing defensive back in the Pac-12 Conference."

*John Henderson: jhenderson@denverpost.com or twitter.com/johnhendersondp Staff writer
Tom Kensler contributed to this report.*

Colorado football: Consistency key for Buffs' O-line

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Gary Bernardi is an old-school offensive line coach. He wholeheartedly believes any offense is only going to go as far as the offensive line takes it.

It makes sense. Bernardi has been coaching college football for 33 years now, 32 of them with the big guys up front.

So it's safe to say there is no one involved in the Colorado football program -- not even coach Mike MacIntyre -- who is putting more pressure on Bernardi and his players and feeling more pressure to produce great results than Bernardi.

"I feel like each game we've done a good job improving, taking little steps getting better," Bernardi said. "They're not astronomical or giant. They're small steps forward every week."

The Buffs will officially reach the halfway point of their first season being coached by MacIntyre and Bernardi and the rest of the staff after this week's home game against Charleston Southern (12:07 p.m., Pac-12 Network) at Folsom Field.

So far, it has been a mixed bag when it comes to the results the offensive line has produced leading to inconsistency for the offense as a whole.

The Buffs started strong passing the ball against Colorado State and Central Arkansas but struggled to run well. In the past three games against Pac-12 competition, neither part of the offense has been stellar but there have been positive moments on which to build.

The CU offense has scored a total of 46 points in the past three games combined. Two of those three opponents scored more than that in beating the Buffs. The running game is ranked 110th in the nation averaging just 108 yards a game.

The Buffs are 86th in total offense and 87th in scoring offense and their once-strong passing numbers have been dropping like a stone in calm water, which is a big reason true freshman quarterback Sefo Liufau is now at the controls.

Before the season started a concern for the offensive line was staying healthy because there isn't a lot of experienced depth behind the starters. The Buffs couldn't ask for better luck on the injury front to this point. The same five offensive linemen have started each game.

"You can't really simulate those game reps and I feel like the more game reps we get, the more we come together as a group," center Gus Handler said. "We're better at communicating and better at knowing where each other is going to be."

Yet, there have been too many moments where the Buffs suffer breakdowns, which have led to incompletions, negative-yardage plays and even turnovers. The bottom line is the line still needs to reach another level of play and consistency for the team to be more competitive.

Bernardi gave a one-word answer -- "communication" -- when asked how he would like to see his group improve and take a step forward this week.

Bernardi gives his players a test every Friday night and he said he has seen marked improvement in the results of those tests each week since the Friday night before the season opener.

"I'd like to think we're well prepared," Bernardi said. "I think the kids do a good job. They do some extra meeting time. They watch extra film. I have them fill out extra blocking sheets and they're very, very good about that. I really like working with them because they do extra things. I think some times in this position, you have to do extra things. They do whatever I ask them to do."

Contact staff writer Kyle Ringo at ringok@dailycamera.com or twitter.com/kyleringo.

Colorado football: Buffs' Will Oliver quietly off to strong start

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Going unnoticed is generally a good thing when it comes to place-kickers.

So far this fall, Colorado kicker Will Oliver has flown under the radar with a steady and reliable performance through five games.

He has already made one more kick than he attempted all of last season when he went 6-for-8 on field goal tries. This season he is 9-for-10, though coach Mike MacIntyre would prefer to have a few of those back and replaced by touchdowns.

Oliver has also been handling kickoff duties, a job he didn't expect, but one he inherited in August when Justin Castor was injured and had to undergo season-ending surgery.

"He's done a good job," MacIntyre said. "There has been a couple of games of course where you'd like to kick it deep in the end zone every time, but the last few games he's been kicking it real good and he's been placing it good. And he's given us an opportunity on our kickoff team -- he can do a lot of different things -- to have a little bit of an arsenal in that area."

Oliver earned praise from coaches and teammates at the end of Wednesday's practice when he made a 56-yard field goal with plenty of room to spare.

Contact staff writer Kyle Ringo at ringok@dailycamera.com or twitter.com/kyleringo.