



By: CUBuffs.com

CU freshman Ryan Severson (30) is fourth in the Pac-12 in kickoff returns.

Brooks: Special Teams' Agony/Glory Is Day-To-Day

Release: October 24, 2013

By: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER – When the Colorado Buffaloes opened 2-0, Toby Neinas opened with more than one “Oh, no” – or perhaps something more descriptive following “oh.”

CU's special teams – especially on punt/kick coverage – were hardly that in wins against Colorado State and Central Arkansas, allowing 284 yards in return yards in the opener (including a 74-yard punt return for a touchdown) and 138 return yards in the second game.

Neinas is CU's special teams coach, thus the “ohs” and scarcity of “ahs.” In the succeeding four games, even though three of them have been losses, the Buffs appear to have adjusted their kick coverage and overall special teams play.

But don't think Neinas is resting easy. He acknowledges the improvement, but adds with a knowing smile, “All it takes is one and you're terrible again . . . we're like one block away on (kickoff returns) a couple of times – and so are they. It's one day, one game, at a time.”

When tape of CU's coverage issues in games one-two began filtering out to upcoming opponents, Neinas expected to see replays of what CSU and Central Arkansas had attempted in their return games. His expectations were met.

CU's last two opponents – Arizona State and Charleston Southern – borrowed the strategy. “They went to school on that . . . they both got away from what they normally do,” said Neinas. But his coverage teams held fast. Both ASU and CSU (the out-of-state version) picked up on the middle return concept that gashed CU early in September.

“I'm just pleased they didn't have the same result,” Neinas said. “Maybe we'll see it again Saturday (against Arizona) because they tweak their stuff a lot. We'll find out.”

The Buffs' early difficulties in coverage, said Neinas, fall on him. Will Oliver's kickoffs and Darragh O'Neill's punts were “hit well enough that we should have covered them. That's more on me . . . that's how you know that there's something wrong, that you're not getting your point across. You see that you have a number of people inside the 35 and even on the 20 when the guy's catching it and they're still ripping you, there's something wrong with that. If you have five or six guys within the 25 when (the returner) catches it you should pin him. Even if they don't tackle him, at least you get him moving laterally where he's not getting vertical.”

Of Oliver's 31 kickoffs, 17 have been returned and 13 have been touchbacks, including six into or out of the end zone. Neinas and the coaching staff have wanted most of Oliver's kickoffs to be directional, “but out of the end zone in the direction they want it is the best-case scenario,” he said. “Then again, if you pin them deep with hang time you have a better opportunity for a better result than a touchback. But I think they'd rather play it safe and get a touchback; they obviously haven't complained.”

With Justin Castor out for the season following an upper leg injury suffered before the opener, Oliver has handled all of CU's kicking. In addition to his kickoffs, he's made nine of 10 field goal attempts and all 15 of his PATs. He is second in the Pac-12 in field goal percentage (90.0) and tied for fifth in field goals per game (1.50).

Oliver's off-season changes in his kicking style were subtle, but even so, they helped his confidence. "Part of it is getting older and having already been through a couple of seasons and getting used to the rhythm," he said. "I wouldn't say I expect what's coming, but I feel prepared for the possibilities of each week. I'm settled when I get to game day; it's just another game day. I'm pretty comfortable and pretty used to it now."

His increased leg load isn't overbearing. "Not at all," he said. "It's actually pretty nice. You warm up with a field goal or a PAT before the kickoff. You get out there and kick again in pretty quick succession. It hasn't really changed much."

Nonetheless, Neinas wants Oliver's right leg to still be live come mid-November. "Will has a good strong leg, but we have to be real careful with him . . . a lot of times when you watch film on guys, they'll start off the year banging touchbacks. But by the time they get to the end of November, the ball is coming down at the ten (yard line). It's not they're a different guy, it's that they're tired. We have to be very careful, but I've been very happy with the way Will has hit the ball."

Another source of happiness has been kickoff return specialist Ryan Severson, a freshman who's fourth in the Pac-12 Conference with his 23.5-yard average on his 12 kickoff returns. He returned kicks at Valley Christian High School in San Jose, Calif., taking three back for TDs and prompting teams to kick elsewhere. He says he's "very comfortable" in that role although "obviously it's a bigger stage and the speed is faster. But we practice it a lot here and that helps."

A fleet 5-10, 200-pounder, Severson signed on with CU as an athlete who was to be given looks at running back and/or linebacker. He's settled at weakside linebacker (although he hasn't played there yet) and on special teams. He's been used on punt coverage as one of the wide "gunners" and on kick coverage, although a sore hamstring limited his use on kickoff coverage. He has eight special teams points.

Severson was a high school teammate of CU coach Mike MacIntyre's son, Jay. When Severson was a junior, he played in a Valley Christian backfield that included seniors Byron Marshall (Oregon) and Jarrod Lawson (San Jose State). "It was pretty elite – definitely a force to be reckoned with in high school," Severson said. "It was a lot of fun playing with them. And they were good guys; they're good friends and we still stay in touch."

Neinas says Severson, who has been timed in 10.7 seconds in the 100 meters, has the rare knack as a returner to "run to darkness." That would be opposed to running to daylight for a tailback – and that might be easier than the run into the unknown.

"The thing about Ryan that makes it nice – No. 1 he's a good football player, No. 2 he is willing to run to darkness, which is a hard thing to do as a kick returner," Neinas explained. "At times you're going to run and there's going to be no daylight there. To me, it's one of the toughest parts of a kickoff return play . . . it's a timing play in an enormous amount of space. There are going to be times when the timing of it is a little off; it won't be clear at the beginning or it will be clear or it will be dark – then it will open. You have to be willing to run to that area we ask you to run to."

"Not everybody is willing to do that. A lot of times your 'home run hitters' will get in there and look for the home run and start chopping their feet and they get hunted down like an animal. You need a guy who's just willing to bang it up in there with a kind of an old I-back mentality. Sometimes that thing springs just perfect and other times it gums up."

Neinas said Severson's return team teammates "are getting better, moving people better with better leverage and that's helped a lot."

Arizona does not have a player in the top eight of the Pac-12's kick return statistics and its top punt returner, sophomore Johnny Jackson, is averaging 8.5 yards on 13 returns. In punting, Wildcats sophomore Drew Riggleman is ninth in the conference with a 38.0 average, while O'Neill is sixth at 41.6 (36.2 net).

All of Oliver's 10 field goal attempts were in the first four games, but he doesn't expect that inactivity to continue. "The last couple of games I haven't been asked to do too much, but I'm ready," he said. "I imagine this (Saturday) will be a close one and kicking is going to be necessary. It's going to be fun."

Contact: BG.Brooks@Colorado.EDU

Colorado Buffaloes Football

Show Menu



FresnoBee.com

[Next Story >](#)

Scheelhaase's father banned from Illinois campus

Richardson cousins square off Saturday

Published: October 25, 2013

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Google Plus](#) [Reddit](#) [E-mail](#) [Print](#)



FILE - In this Nov. 19, 2011 file photo, Arizona's Shaquille Richardson (5) runs during the second quarter of an NCAA college football game against Arizona State, in Tempe, Ariz. Cousins Shaq and Paul Richardson have been squaring off against each other since they were 8 years old tackling each other in Southern California. On Saturday, Oct. 26, 2013, they'll face each other again when Paul's Colorado Buffaloes host Shaq's Arizona Wildcats. ROSS D. FRANKLIN, FILE — AP Photo



memorable performances Saturday when the Arizona Wildcats visit the Colorado Buffaloes.

The only other time they met up in a college football game was two years ago when both were banged up — Buffs star receiver Paul Richardson with a knee injury and Wildcats star cornerback Shaquille Richardson with a high ankle sprain.

Paul had one catch for a couple of yards and a 15-yard run in which Shaq made the tackle.

Paul missed all of last season with an ACL injury, so Saturday's showdown between the Wildcats (4-2, 1-2 Pac-12) and the Buffaloes (3-3, 0-3) marks the last time they'll face each other in college.

Follow Arnie Melendrez Stapleton on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/arniestapleton>

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Google Plus](#) [Reddit](#) [E-mail](#) [Print](#)
[< Previous Story](#)

Boise State still has league crown goal in reach

[Next Story >](#)

Scheelhaase's father banned from Illinois campus

Join The Conversation

The Fresno Bee is pleased to provide this opportunity to share information, experiences and observations about what's in the news. Some of the comments may be reprinted elsewhere in the site or in the newspaper. We encourage lively, open debate on the issues of the day, and ask that you refrain from profanity, hate speech, personal comments and remarks that are off point. Thank you for taking the time to offer your thoughts.

[Commenting FAQs](#) | [Terms of Service](#)

Today's Circulares



BIG 5 SPORTING GOODS
THIS WEEK ONLY



BIG LOTS
VALID UNTIL NOV 03



GUITAR CENTER
3 DAYS LEFT



DELL US
VALID UNTIL NOV 30

[View All Circulares](#)

[Email Newsletters >](#)
[Manage newsletter subscriptions](#)
[Tablets >](#)
[Apps and services for tablet devices](#)
[Mobile >](#)
[Apps and services for your mobile phone](#)
[Social Media >](#)
[Get updates via Facebook and Twitter](#)
[e-Edition >](#)
[Your daily paper delivered to your computer](#)
[Home Delivery >](#)

Colorado football: Q&A with Buffs offensive coordinator Brian Lindgren

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera
Posted:

Buffzone.com

The Colorado Buffaloes are 3-3 at the official midway point of their football season. Does any other regular season in sports fly by so fast?

We've seen plenty for CU fans to be excited about in the first six games this fall and still plenty of the same old problems. Yet, entering Saturday's homecoming game against Arizona, the Buffs have an opportunity to get to the postseason for the first time since 2007 if they can win three more games in the second half.

Some believe the idea is farfetched based on how the Buffs have remained uncompetitive in the Pac-12 Conference and others, including the coaches and players, believe it's an attainable goal. We'll begin to find out Saturday night.

This week seemed like an appropriate time to catch up with CU offensive coordinator Brian Lindgren, who is in his first season in the Pac-12 Conference, and defensive coordinator Kent Baer, who is in his 19th season in the Pac-12, including 18 during a 21-season period from 1987-2007. During that time, he served as defensive coordinator at Cal, Arizona State, Stanford and Washington.

We'll start on the offensive side of the ball where CU now has true freshman Sefo Liufau playing quarterback and learning from Lindgren, who also played the position at Idaho (2001-2003).

Buffzone: Last year at San Jose State, your offense put up almost 6,000 yards of total offense. As a coach has been difficult at all coming back to earth this season?

Lindgren: Anywhere you're at I think any coach wants to experience success move the ball a lot and score a lot of points. I think this year I think we've been trying to build on the successes that we've had every week. We're working towards it I guess would be the best thing to say.

Buffzone: What are the keys to success for Sefo Liufau going forward the rest of the year and into the future?

Lindgren: I think the number one thing for him is taking care of the football. That's what we're telling him. The last game he did a great job. He had no turnovers and at the quarterback position the first five games, we turned the ball over too many times. We had interceptions, we fumbled in the pocket and that's something we really emphasize in our room. The next thing is just making the plays when they're available. If we've got an open guy, we need to be able to make the throw. Earlier in the season, we missed some opportunities like that particularly on third down. We've been really working on it as a whole offense just converting third downs and doing a better job with that. The last two weeks

we've been 50 percent of better, which has helped us stay on the field and helped us sustain drives.

Buffzone: Obviously you're not happy settling for field goals in the red zone instead of scoring touchdowns. Have you been able to put your finger on what is causing you to have to settle for field goals so often?

Lindgren: I think the No. 1 thing when you get down in the red zone is you've got to be able to run the ball. We've got to be able to run the ball better when we get down there and when people get in the box. We've got to do a better job up front, we've got to run harder and the quarterback has to get us sometimes into the right run. There is a lot of things that go into it, but I think that is the No. 1 thing when you talk about scoring in the red zone is running the ball. Then it's a matter of guys making plays and winning one-on-one battles on the perimeter. We've got to get down there more, too.

Buffzone: At the midway point of the season, how do you feel about what your offense has done and what do you hope it is able to do in the second half?

Lindgren: The No. 1 thing is we've got to stay on the field longer I think. Our third-down percentage for the first six has been kind of low and we've been putting ourselves in too many third-and-long situations. That goes back to first down. So I think staying on the field, keeping our defense on the sideline cause they're seeing a lot of really powerful offenses, that's a key for us. And I think it's taking care of the football, not turning it over and putting our guys in bad situations. I want to see just more consistency at all positions as far as execution of the things that we're doing. In the first six games it's been sometimes we've got 10 guys doing it right and one guy that is getting beat or one guy making a mistake or something is just a little bit off.

Buffzone: When defenses are successful in taking Paul Richardson away, what needs to happen in your offense to replace that element?

Lindgren: Well, other guys have to step up and I thought Nelson Spruce has done a pretty good job and we've got to get him more balls and other guys need to step up. I think we've got to be able to run the football. Last week against Charleston Southern I thought we did a nice job. We really wanted to emphasize the run and I thought we were better up front. I thought we ran the ball pretty good and that was good to see, but I think the other guys have to step up and make plays.

Buffzone: You only two players in your entire offense who have made 20 starts or more and those two guys -- Daniel Munyer and Gus Handler -- are right at 20 starts. How does that overall lack of experience affect your offense?

Lindgren: I mean, any time you've got guys with experience, it's huge especially at this level. The guys that are used to executing under fire and executing under that kind of pressure and in that environment I think is key. Then just being in different situations in a football game, you can simulate it as much as you want on the practice field, but when you get out there and guys got to realize and know down and distance and where we're at and what the score is in the game and how that plays into what we're trying to do. I think when

you get experienced players, they've been through it and they've learned from it and that's huge. Hopefully we're building that with some of the young guys that we've got playing.

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

Colorado football: Q&A with Buffs' defensive coordinator Kent Baer

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera
Posted:

Buffzone.com

The Colorado Buffaloes are 3-3 at the official midway point of their football season. Does any other regular season in sports fly by so fast?

We've seen plenty for CU fans to be excited about in the first six games this fall and still plenty of the same old problems. Yet, entering Saturday's homecoming game against Arizona, the Buffs have an opportunity to get to the postseason for the first time since 2007 if they can win three more games in the second half.

Some believe the idea is farfetched based on how the Buffs have remained uncompetitive in the Pac-12 Conference and others, including the coaches and players, believe it's an attainable goal. We'll begin to find out Saturday night.

This week seemed like an appropriate time to catch up with CU offensive coordinator Brian Lindgren, who is in his first season in the Pac-12 Conference, and defensive coordinator Kent Baer, who is in his 19th season in the Pac-12, including 18 during a 21-season period from 1987-2007. During that time, he served as defensive coordinator at Cal, Arizona State, Stanford and Washington.

Buffzone: You were in the Pac-12 for a long time, but it's been a number of years. How have offenses in the Pac-12 changed?

Baer: They've all changed. This whole spread idea and all that stuff has really evolved over the last five to 10 years, but really more the last five, six or seven years. My last year in the Pac-12 was six years ago, so they've all changed. There's not too many traditional offenses anymore, so your thinking has got to change a little bit. You have to recruit a little bit different. It's not the old days. It's changed a lot.

Buffzone: Anything you have learned this season from going against the Pac-12 that you feel you need to adapt in order to catch up?

Baer: We learn stuff every day. We look at a lot of different defenses. Probably the teams you really like to study are teams that their offense runs the spread and you like to see how they line up and defend the spread, because it's definitely changed. The traditional line up with four down linemen or four stances, it doesn't work most the time anymore. That's the kind of thing we watch. A lot of the coverage concepts are the same, but it's how you play your front more than anything else.

Buffzone: Eventually at San Jose State (Baer was defensive coordinator at SJSU from 2010-2012), your defense got to be pretty good, but it took a couple of years to do that. What's the most difficult part of your defense for the guys to really grasp?

Baer: When we first started at San Jose State, we had a whole bunch of young guys playing -- freshmen and sophomores. It was about the middle of the second year where they really started to grasp it. The hardest part is all the checks and adjustments and pre-snap reads and communication that you have to have. We just don't call a defense, line up and play as much any more. You're always checking and adjusting and moving the front a different way or checking the coverage. That's the hardest part. That's an evolving process that ... it just takes time.

Buffzone: Looking ahead to the second half of this season, do you see some opportunities for your defense to have some success?

Baer: I do. I think we've gotten better. We've played some really, really good offensive football teams. We played three teams in the Top 25, in this league alone. I think we learned a lot from it, but I see us getting better every day. So, I think there are some opportunities down the road, but we've got to line up and do it.

Buffzone: When you look around your defense and you see Addison Gillam, Chidobe Awuzie, Tedric Thompson and Jimmie Gilbert, there are a lot of good freshmen on the defense. How excited are you about the freshman class?

Baer: It's exciting, but you want them to do all the right things right now. That's the nature of a coach. It's exciting to have those guys, as long as they'll continue to learn and listen, and I think they do. I see those guys getting better every day, but they've still got so much to learn. It's just amazing how much they've got to learn. But, they're all good kids, it's important to every one of them, and they ask great questions. As long as that continues, we'll be fine.

Buffzone: Among your entire defensive roster, including redshirts, which players have made the biggest leaps forward from spring ball to now?

Baer: Well, those two kids who have started every game, Chidobe and Addison, have certainly come a long way. Addison had the benefit of being here during spring ball, but he knew nothing (at first). To see him develop and come through has been good. I see Greg Henderson and Jered Bell getting better all the time. I think they've taken a huge leap from last spring. I think Justin Solis has really come around and is starting to play better. He's got his body more in shape, so I've seen a big leap from him, too.

Buffzone: Looking ahead to the future, in 2014, 2015 and beyond, what's the biggest improvement needed for CU to become a pretty good defense?

Baer: All the things I talked about earlier, about understanding how we want things done, the communication pre-snap on the line of scrimmage. I think if we continue to do this, they're going to get better all the time. And, then getting a little bigger and stronger with some of the young guys. Addison Gillam is 218 pounds right now; he can be 230-235 and still run. There's a lot of things. There's not just one thing I could mention. As long as they continue to listen and learn, they'll get better.

Contact staff writer Brian Howell at howellb@dailycamera.com or twitter.com/BrianHowell33.

Howell blog: How does CU Buffs' Gillam compare with former greats?

By Brian Howell, Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Throughout this season, Addison Gillam has been one of the most impressive players on the Colorado football team.

As a true freshman, he leads the Buffaloes with 67 tackles, 13 of those coming at or behind the line of scrimmage.

Gillam is having the type of success that freshmen don't normally have. But, what Gillam is doing is not just impressive for a freshman. He's putting up numbers that a lot of seniors haven't put up.

Let's take a look at some of Gillam's impressive numbers and how they compare to other current and former Buffs.

1. Total tackles

Gillam is on pace to finish with 134 tackles this season. A year ago, Derrick Webb led the team with 88 and no Buff has reached 100 tackles since Jeff Smart in 2008 (118). Should Gillam get to 130 tackles, he'll join some elite company. Since 1990, here's a list of CU players that racked up at least 130 tackles in a season. All are linebackers unless noted:

Player	Year	Tackles
Ryan Sutter (DB)	1997	170
Jordon Dizon	2007	160
Greg Biekert	1990	150
Ted Johnson	1994	147
Greg Biekert	1991	139
Jordon Dizon	2006	137
Matt Russell	1996	137
Greg Biekert	1992	137
Jashon Sykes	1999	134
Ted Johnson	1993	131
Hannibal Navies	1997	130

At his current pace, Gillam would finish his career with well over 500 tackles. Barry Remington (1982-86) holds CU's career record with 493. Just five players have as many as 400.

2. Tackles for loss

So far, Gillam has seven tackles for loss (TFL), including two sacks. That puts him on pace for 14 TFLs this season. That would be the highest total by a CU defender since linebacker Brad Jones had 14 in 2008.

Obviously, Gillam has a long way to go in his career, but at his current pace, if he stays healthy and gets 14 TFLs per season, he would finish his career with 56 - which would be the second most in program history (Alfred Williams had 59 from 1987-1990).

3. Tackle frequency

This is a stat I've never seen, and it may not mean much. But, I thought it was interesting: Gillam has made a tackle once every 6.13 snaps he has played. Some of the great linebackers of CU's past have dwarfed that number. Dizon, for example, had a tackle every 4.98 snaps as a senior in 2007.

But, in recent years, nobody has made stops as frequently as Gillam. Jeff Smart (5.82) and Marcus Burton (6.11) both topped that number in 2009, but Gillam has led that category since.

The top numbers from 2010-2013 (among players with 40-plus tackles for the season):

Player	YearPlays per tackle
Addison Gillam	20136.13
Doug Rippy	20116.35 (played 7 of 13 games)
Liloe Nobriga	20106.48
Anthony Perkins (DB)	20116.50
Jon Major	20106.51 (played 7 of 12 games)
Derrick Webb	20126.82
Terrel Smith (DB)	20106.90
Michael Sipili	20106.97

This season, Gillam is by far CU's leader. Fellow linebackers Woodson Greer (7.73) and Derrick Webb (9.19) are next on the list, among players with at least 20 tackles.

All of these numbers confirm what we've all season this season, that Gillam is really good. Should he keep it up for all four years, he may just go down as one of the all-time greats.

Contact staff writer Brian Howell at howellb@dailycamera.com or twitter.com/BrianHowell33.

**ESPN.com:** Pac-12[\[Print without images\]](#)

Friday, October 25, 2013

Q&A: Colorado's Addison Gillam

By Kevin Gemmell

Colorado linebacker [Addison Gillam](#) is one of several explosive, true freshman linebackers in the Pac-12 this season. With 59 tackles through six games, he leads the Pac-12 with an average 9.8 tackles per game. He's second in the conference in solo tackles. He took a few minutes this week to chat with the Pac-12 blog about his decision to follow coach Mike MacIntyre to Colorado, his impact, and what he hopes the program looks like 10 years from now.

You had originally committed to San Jose State. You commit to an 11-win team, then end up with a one-win team. Is that just following the coach and believing in the man?

Addison Gillam: Yeah. Absolutely. That was solely based on Coach MacIntyre coming here. I liked how he coaches. What his philosophies are. And you saw how he turned around San Jose State.

Did you expect to make the kind of impact you've had so far?

AG: Not at all. I thought I would be sitting out or switching off reps with [Brady Daigh](#). I thought I'd be used more as a situational guy if anything. I was pretty surprised to get as much time as I did.

What's been the biggest adjustment for you so far in the college game?

AG: Getting my reads down with the speed and everything. It's pretty fast.

What have you done to improve that?

AG: A lot of game film. A lot of studying. And the amount of reps I get in practice help a lot.

What are your impressions of the Pac-12 so far? You were committing to a Mountain West team. But the Pac-12 is a different animal.

AG: Yeah, definitely. It's really intense. It requires a lot of speed and a lot of focus. It's a good conference. Real good. Every week is a new challenge.

What do you think is your biggest strength as a linebacker?

AG: I would say my speed and my ability to get to the ball.



Colorado's Addison Gillam (44) is among the Pac-12 leaders in tackles as a freshman.

What's the biggest thing you want to improve on?

AG: Still getting my reads down. There's a lot of footwork that goes with that. Knowing when to stay square when I need to and knowing when to flip and run when I need to.

Obviously you knew Colorado was struggling before you came. Coach MacIntyre comes in and wants to turn things around. Is there something to be said for being in on the ground floor and being one of the first guys in to try and change the program?

AG: We're all just really excited, all the freshmen. We feel like we've got things moving in the right direction, so we'll see where it goes.

For the young guys, is it easier that you weren't here the last couple of seasons to see and experience the lean years?

AG: I think so. Last year, you get the impression that some guys just got used to losing. I think a lot of the guys coming out of high school come from really good teams. We're used to winning and we all hate losing, so I think that's a good thing. We're bringing that approach. That's a big thing.

Ten years from now, what do you want Colorado football to look like?

AG: I want it to be one of the best teams out there. I want it to be an Oregon and an Alabama.

What's something about you people might not know?

AG: I like the outdoors and reggae music.

So do you mix and match? Do you go hiking with reggae on the iPod?

AG: No, I keep them separate.
