



By: Joel Broida

QB Connor Wood hopes to bounce back Saturday against No. 2 Oregon.



Brooks: Lindgren Wants Wood To Be Playmaker vs. Ducks

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By: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER – The headlines go to Oregon’s warp-speed offense and its insane point totals, miles of rushing yards and ridiculously fast scoring drives. But Brian Lindgren’s focus this week has been on the Ducks’ flip side – a defense that has been anything but downy soft.

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Lindgren is Colorado’s offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach, and Saturday’s matchup against No. 2 Oregon at Folsom Field (4 p.m., Pac-12 Network) finds him plotting, perhaps praying, for ways to make headway and just enough points against a unit that’s tied with Washington at fourth nationally in scoring defense.

Oregon and U-Dub, which CU faces in Seattle on Nov. 9, are allowing 10.8 points a game. The Ducks, said Lindgren, have been difficult to score on because they are “super, super athletic and have really good size. Their secondary is really impressive to me – one of the best I’ve seen in a long time, particularly at corner.

“Both of them (juniors Terrence Mitchell, Ifo Ekpere-Olomu) are able to play a lot of man coverage. They’re physical on the perimeter. It’s going to be a good test for our receivers.”

As well as his tight ends, running backs, offensive line . . . In truth, the test runs across the board, and if the Buffs – an early 38.5-point underdog – are to shock the college football world, Lindgren’s outfit and quarterback Connor Wood must find a way to score about twice the number of points the Ducks are allowing.

The speed of the Ducks’ defense, said Lindgren, mirrors their offensive speed: “They cover a lot of ground at every position. There’s really not a lot of holes. They try to create turnovers and they get after you up front.”

The Ducks have four interceptions in four games and have registered 11 quarterback sacks. CU offensive line coach Gary Bernardi called Oregon’s defensive front “very well coached . . . Nick (Aliotti, defensive coordinator) has done this for a long time. They’ve got good players, they’ve got a good scheme and they’re very well coached. I think people overlook that part of it.”

Unless they’re infected with turnovers, be assured the Ducks will get their points. (They’re averaging 59.8, No. 2 in the FBS). So it becomes incumbent on the Buffs and Wood to shake the offensive malaise encountered in last weekend’s 44-17 loss at Oregon State and let Oregon know they’re on the field.

Buff’s coach Mike MacIntyre’s hope is to have a close game at halftime, keep it that way through three quarters and see how the Ducks react to this strange scenario. Oregon’s four halftime leads thus far

have been 38-3, 28-10, 38-7, 41-3. Being close at intermission is tough to do.

"Nobody's done it, so that's our goal to be able to do that and compete in every play," MacIntyre said. "To be able to have the chance to take it into the second half and see what happens. Nobody has taken them into the second half yet and that's what our goal is, and to win the game is our main goal. I mean seriously, we want to win . . . period. But, the first goal is that we have to get them into the second half, which nobody else has done, then you have to win the game."

Oregon is tied with BYU at No. 23 in total defense, allowing 320.5 yards a game. The best way to attack the Ducks, said Lindgren, is to "keep them off balance, change up what you're doing, keep them guessing . . . I think we have to challenge their secondary. At the same time, complete some (passes) underneath, the high-percentage stuff, then mix in screens and be able to run the ball.

"It's really kind of basic stuff, but you have to change it up and keep them off-balance. I think if they make you one-dimensional, then that's where they really get after you."

And that's where a more efficient Wood must enter the picture. In the nasty weather at Oregon State, his overall effectiveness dropped from CU's previous two games. Of course, the second of those was played 21 days earlier, with the long unscheduled break courtesy of Mother Nature followed by a scheduled open date.

Averaging 370.5 passing yards after his first two games, Wood's output dropped to 146 yards on 14 completions (34 attempts) with two touchdowns and two interceptions last weekend. Neither MacIntyre nor Wood would blame the layoff for the ineffective afternoon, probably because neither is into excuses.

Wood, said Lindgren, began practicing for the Ducks with renewed purpose: "He was disappointed in the way he performed and really came back with a chip on his shoulder and was ready to work on Sunday . . . I've been impressed with the way he's responded. He's had a good week of practice."

Here's the improvement Lindgren wants to see Wood make this weekend: "I want to see him finish throws. I want to see him make plays that are there, the opportunities that are there. And he's got to do a better job on third down. He struggled on third down (at Oregon State) and I think he would tell you there's some opportunities to keep our offense on the field and keep drives moving – and at the quarterback position we missed some of those throws."

CU's defensive players have enough on their plates with Oregon's offense to become overwrought with what's happening (or not) on Wood's side of the ball. But they are hopeful of something other than an afternoon littered with three-and-outs.

Senior linebacker Derrick Webb said Wood & Co. understand that: "There are some great leaders on that side of the ball. Guys like Connor Wood, he might not have had the best game (last weekend) but he knows that. He's a great leader and a great player. I guarantee he's going to do everything this week that he can fix it and get ready for Oregon.

"There are some great competitors on that side of the ball. (But) if they have a day off the defense has to play that much better for them. We've got to make up for any weaknesses in other areas of our team . . . that's what good teams do."

Webb and his defensive buds don't expect to face the Ducks' leading rusher De'Anthony Thomas, who suffered an ankle sprain last Saturday on the opening kickoff against California. But Oregon rolls in fast tailbacks like General Motors rolls cars off the assembly line. When Thomas went down, sophomore Byron Marshall subbed for him with 19 carries for 130 yards and two TDs – all career highs. Plus, quarterback Marcus Mariota offers a running threat out of the spread that the Buffs haven't experienced this season.

Oregon also presents a special teams threat in return specialist Bralon Addison, who returned a pair of punts 75 and 67 yards for TDs against Cal. The Buffs encountered coverage difficulties in their first two games, but appeared to have shored up that area last Saturday.

The Ducks, who have won 16 straight road games, are the highest-ranked team to play in Boulder since No. 5 Texas visited Boulder in 2008 and won 38-14. The Buffs' most recent game against a team ranked as high as No. 2 was last season at Oregon, and the Ducks won that one 70-14. Oregon has won three straight meetings with CU, the last two in Pac-12 play.

Against the Ducks Saturday, MacIntyre simply wants his first Buffs team to "enjoy the moment. I mean, you're getting to play against the best team in the country on national television. You're at home, great crowd. That's what you dream about all your life is always playing and you get another day to play."

Top-ranked Alabama and its fans might scoff at MacIntyre calling Oregon the nation's best team, but he

claimed he didn't misspeak: "I would say that right now to me, they look like one of the top two or three teams in the country. But, I would say right now the way they're clicking off and beating everybody, I mean it's not even close. At halftime, it's over every game . . . it's over. So, hopefully this one won't be over and we will be right in it – and that's what we're planning on doing."

FAMILY GATHERING: The Gary Bernardi family will be well-represented at Folsom Field on Saturday. Bernardi's son, Joe, is a graduate assistant on the Oregon staff. Also, Bernardi's daughter, Briana, is married to CU cornerbacks coach Andy LaRussa.

Gary Bernardi says he talks to Joe "every day in most weeks . . . but this week I haven't done that. When we've talked, it's been briefly. He's kind of used to that and so am I."

Joe Bernardi was a four-year starter (2007-10) at center for Fresno State. He is in his first season at Oregon.

Also on the Ducks staff as a graduate assistant is Cha'pelle Brown, who played corner at CU (2006-09) and spent the past two seasons with the Buffs as an undergraduate coach and graduate assistant. Brown's playing career at CU coincided with Oregon head coach Mark Helfrich's tenure in Boulder as offensive coordinator/QB coach.

Contact: BG.Brooks@Colorado.EDU

Colorado Buffaloes Football

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Colorado braces for potent offense of No. 2 Oregon

By PAT GRAHAM, AP Sports Writer | October 4, 2013 | Updated: October 4, 2013 2:30pm

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Photo By Don Ryan

Oregon quarterback Marcus Mariota unleashes a pass during the first half of an NCAA college football game against California in Eugene, Ore., Saturday, Sept. 28, 2013.

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BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — The Colorado Buffaloes want to see **Marcus Mariota** play a full game because at least that would mean they're still hanging around.

The sophomore quarterback operates the fast-paced offense of No. 2 Oregon with such efficiency that he's only played four complete games in his career — and none this season.

Usually, Mariota's chilling on the sideline for the fourth quarter after dismantling defenses. The Ducks (4-0, 1-0 Pac-12) are averaging nearly 600 yards of total offense and beating teams by an average of almost 52 points. Oregon is a 39-point favorite against the Buffaloes (2-1, 0-1) on Saturday.

"At halftime, it's over every game. It's over," Colorado coach **Mike MacIntyre** said. "So, hopefully this one won't be over and we will be right in it."

Maybe accidentally, or perhaps even a little strategically, MacIntyre referred to the Ducks as the best team in the country. No offense to top-ranked Alabama, but as far as MacIntyre is concerned, the film doesn't lie and Mariota has them moving at "hyper speed."

"I would say right now, the way they're clicking and beating everybody," MacIntyre said.

Mariota definitely makes this team go, with his arm and his wheels. That's why MacIntyre compared him to current 49ers QB **Colin Kaepernick**, who was a standout at Nevada when MacIntyre was coaching at San Jose State.

"(Mariota) can make all the throws, he can run and he is an excellent, excellent player," MacIntyre said. "We've got our work cut out for us."

Asked what he will tell his team before facing such a formidable squad like Oregon, MacIntyre simply said: "Enjoy the moment."

"You're getting to play against the best team in the country, on national television. You're at home, great crowd," MacIntyre added. "I think they'll really enjoy playing and it'll be a lot of fun."

As the Buffaloes scheme of ways to accomplish what few have been able to do — slow down Oregon's offense — here are five things to keep in mind:

HOMEcoming: Oregon coach **Mark Helfrich** was the offensive coordinator at Colorado from 2006-08 under **Dan Hawkins**. Helfrich's biggest advice to his players about playing in Colorado? Steer clear of Ralphie, the Buffaloes' mascot, when the big beast is making her trip around the stadium. "Ralphie is a mismatch for everybody," Helfrich said on the Ducks' website. "When (Ralphie) makes that U-turn, everybody becomes like a rodeo cowboy. We'll do our best to avoid that."

MARSHALL PLAN: With running back **De'Anthony Thomas** unlikely to play due to a sprained right ankle, **Byron Marshall** should receive a bulk of the carries. Marshall rushed for a career-best 130 yards and two touchdowns last week against California. He has gained 326 yards and scored four times this season.

KNOCK ON WOOD: MacIntyre is eager to see how quarterback **Connor Wood** bounces back from a game at Oregon State in which he completed just 14 of 34 passes for 146 yards. He also had two TDs and two interceptions. "(Hall of Fame coach) **Bill Parcells** used to always say, 'You find out about quarterbacks when you see how they respond after a bad game and everybody's saying you should be playing the second teamer,'" MacIntyre said. "That's all part of being a quarterback. ... Can you keep sustaining your work ethic and your confidence? I'm looking forward to seeing how (Wood) plays and he's also going to play a really, really good defense. So, it's going to be an interesting test for all of us."

THE OTHER COACH MAC: The Buffaloes will honor former coach **Bill McCartney** in a halftime ceremony. McCartney is the program's winningest coach and will be inducted into the college football Hall of Fame in December. More than 100 of his former players are showing up at Folsom Field for the event, including 1994 Heisman Trophy winner Rashaan Salaam. "(McCartney) kind of put the **University of Colorado** on the map," MacIntyre said. "Especially in football and all that, and he should be honored. I am excited that he is getting that and I am excited that I will be able to be there to see it. I probably won't notice any of it going on during the game, but I am excited for him."

BACK AT FOLSOM: Colorado is playing at home for the first time in nearly a month after a devastating flood hit the area and led to the postponement of the game on Sept.

Heisman front-runner Mariota leads high-scoring, fast-paced offense

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Last week on a soggy, cold field in Corvallis, Ore., the Colorado football team learned it's still a long way from being able to make mistakes and beat even a mid-level Pac-12 Conference opponent.

Saturday at Folsom Field the Buffs (2-1, 0-1) could play perfectly and still not get a victory with the No. 2 ranked and other-worldly Oregon Ducks in town (4:07 p.m., Pac-12 Network).

Oregon was picked to win the Pac-12 Conference at the start of the season and it has done nothing under first-year head coach Mark Helfrich -- a former CU offensive coordinator -- to make anyone think it won't happen.

Perhaps former CU coach Bill McCartney, who will be honored at halftime as CU's latest inductee into the College Football Hall of Fame, can conjure up some the magic that helped him win a national title here 23 years ago.

The Ducks are 4-0 and the second-highest scoring team in the nation, averaging 59.8 points per game. They have scored at least 55 points in each of their four games so far this season. Oregon has been setting offensive records for years but not even its powerhouse teams of the recent past have managed to score at this rate. Four consecutive games with 50 or more points is a school record and three of those four opponents were from Bowl Championship Series conferences.

Quarterback Marcus Mariota is one of the favorites to win the Heisman Trophy based on his play in the first month. The fact that starting running back De'Anthony Thomas isn't supposed to play today because of a sprained ankle almost seems insignificant.

On paper at least, it appears the Ducks could play nothing but second and third teamers and still beat up the Buffs, who haven't beaten a ranked team since an Oct. 17, 2009 win over Kansas. The Buffs haven't beaten a top-10 team since Sept. 29, 2007 when Helfrich was coaching here and helped orchestrate an upset of No. 3 Oklahoma.

CU coach Mike MacIntyre has previously said this season that two-time defending national champion Alabama is the best team in the nation, but this week he referred to the Ducks as the cream of the crop.

"I would say that right now to me, they look like one of the top two or three teams in the country," MacIntyre said when asked about saying the Ducks are the best team. "But, I would say right now the way they're clicking off and beating everybody, I mean it's not even close. At halftime, it's over every game .. it's over. So, hopefully this one won't be over and we will be right in it and that's what we're planning on doing."

It seems farfetched at least and maybe even comical to suggest the Buffs could upset the Ducks today as nearly 40-point underdogs, but every so often these things happen in sports. If the Buffs are going to pull it off it would seem they would need:

A slew of turnovers from an Oregon offense that rarely turns it over

Big plays in the kicking game which mostly seem to be happening for opponents this season.

Stellar play from quarterback Connor Wood, who hasn't yet proved he is capable of it against BCS-level competition.

A big day rushing the ball from an offense that ranks 103rd in the nation on the ground.

And an extraordinary defensive performance.

All of that might not be enough.

The Ducks are the No. 1 rushing team in the nation. They average 332.5 yards a game on the ground. Mariota leads the nation in yards per carry at more than 14.

"They move people, they move the back a lot," MacIntyre said. "They go really fast and they get all these different formations and if you don't line up right then all of a sudden there's a big gap and they go so fast that they're gone.

"So you have to understand where to line up and hopefully we've practiced against ourselves enough, and we do fast speed periods, that we can line up correctly and then you have to tackle them in open space. That's what we have to do so hopefully that's what we do."

MacIntyre said in addition to playing the run well on defense, CU will need to get off to a solid start and be the first team to force Oregon's starters to play deep into the second half. If the Buffs can give themselves a chance to win in the fourth quarter, it would be a success story for the home team.

"So, we need to keep them at bay and not let them suffocate us too early and all of a sudden, we will have more options on offense," MacIntyre said. "We will move the ball better than people have moved on them if we (don't) let them get up 28 points -- bang, bang.

"So, that's a big 'if.' Nobody's done it, so that's our goal to be able to do that and compete in every play. To be able to have the chance to take it into the second half and see what happens. Nobody has taken them into the second half yet and that's what our goal is, and to win the game is our main goal."

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

CU Buffs facing long odds, special-teams mismatch vs. Oregon Ducks

By John Henderson *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*
Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — Trap games are always popular targets for wiseguys in Las Vegas. Take a flyer on an overmatched opponent that might sneak up on a ranked power looking ahead to a big showdown.

In Oregon's case, however, overmatched foes — even teams merely unranked — are just so much weekly smorgasbord. The No. 2-ranked Ducks (4-0, 1-0 Pac-12) come to Folsom Field at 4 p.m. Saturday against Colorado (2-1, 0-1) as 39½-point favorites.

If you think Oregon has one eye on Seattle, where it plays 15th-ranked Washington next weekend, take a look at the Ducks' recent history. Then wince.

Oregon has won 31 consecutive games against unranked teams. Since the beginning of the 2010 season, Oregon has won those games by an average score of 52-17. Only twice — a 15-13 win at California in 2010 and a 44-41 double-overtime win at Arizona in 2009 — has Oregon not won by double digits.

In other words, the Ducks have the killer instinct of famished coyotes. Don't expect first-year coach Mark Helfrich to take it easy on the school where he was Dan Hawkins' offensive coordinator from 2006-08.

"That's just kind of our way," Helfrich said on this week's Pac-12 coaches call. "We certainly talk about schemes. If we had to block (a certain player), we'd talk about blocking for a second, then we'd just worry about our deal, our preparation, our enthusiasm and our effort.

"If you take a deep breath and a sigh because you're playing a supposed team that you're going to beat and then have to ramp it up for a team that's supposedly better than you, you're not going to maximize your opportunities for success."

Colorado, meanwhile, hasn't beaten a ranked team since a 34-30 win over No. 17 Kansas in 2009. Since the start of the 2004 season, the Buffs are 3-31 against teams in the top 25. The last two games against Oregon have been mercy killings: 70-14 last year and 45-2 two years ago.

These Buffaloes can minimize damage with a little competence on special teams. The Ducks' uber return man, De'Anthony Thomas, is out with a sprained ankle. It hasn't mattered much. Keanon Lowe is averaging 28.3 yards on three kickoff returns, and in last week's 55-16 bashing of Cal, Bralon Addison had punt returns of 75 and 67 yards for touchdowns.

The Ducks have been licking their lips watching Colorado on tape. The Buffaloes are dead last nationally in kickoff return defense at 34.7 yards per return and 111th in punt return defense (15.7).

In its 44-17 loss at Oregon State last week, Colorado also fumbled two kickoff returns.

"We've got to take care of it," first-year coach Mike MacIntyre said. "I understand that, and we work those drills all the time. But covering, punting it, covering it down, covering their good returners, all the things that we did with it, pinning them down there ... I think we did a good job on that situation."

This, however, is a different Oregon. This is a different animal.

John Henderson: jhenderson@denverpost.com or twitter.com/johnhendersondp

On TV

Oregon at Colorado, 4 p.m., Pac-12 Network (Channel 430 on Comcast-Denver, 5453 on Dish; DirecTV does not carry the channel)