

Colorado football: Buffs, Sun Devils looking to bounce back

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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Throughout the offseason, Colorado head football coach Mike MacIntyre was as upbeat and energetic as a coach can be.

Through his team's 2-0 start, the first-year coach of the Buffaloes was still the most positive man in the program.

Now, after two consecutive humbling losses, MacIntyre hasn't changed a bit.

"We have to go play and play good and keep fighting," MacIntyre said with a smile on Sunday night.

The Buffaloes (2-2, 0-2 Pac-12) will visit Arizona State (3-2, 1-1) on Saturday in what figures to be another difficult test for MacIntyre's crew. But, just like they did a week ago, when they prepared to take on No. 2 Oregon, the Buffs aren't shying away from the challenge.

"It's a huge game," senior linebacker Derrick Webb said. "It's our second road game. It's another opportunity to prove ourselves against a good football team. What better time than to go do it on the road?"

After losing 44-17 at Oregon State and 57-16 at home against Oregon, the Buffs are in need of some kind of momentum shifter. Beating a very good Arizona State team would certainly turn the tide for the Buffs.

"We definitely need to get a W and keep going," MacIntyre said.

It won't be easy, of course.

ASU is coming off of a 37-34 loss against Notre Dame in Arlington, Texas, last week. The Sun Devils' other loss came at No. 5 Stanford. Despite those two defeats, ASU is considered to be a program on the rise, and the Sun Devils were ranked No. 22 in the country before last week's loss.

Todd Graham is in his second season as the Sun Devils' head coach. They went 21-28 from 2008-11, but went 8-5 in Graham's first season and figure to be bowl-bound again this fall.

The ASU offense ranks 16th in the country in scoring (42.2 points per game), and it is led by junior quarterback Taylor Kelly. This season, Kelly has thrown 14 touchdown passes, while also picking up 129 yards on the ground.

"They're very good," MacIntyre of the Sun Devils' offense. "They have the ability to explode and do some things. Their quarterback is excellent -- a really, really good passer and not quite the runner that (Oregon's Marcus Mariota) is, but nobody is. But he makes a lot of plays and does a great job on their offense."

So does Marion Grice. The senior running back has caught five touchdown passes, while also rushing for 307 yards and eight more scores. His 15.6 points per game leads the country.

Following Saturday's loss to Notre Dame, Graham said his team has to look forward and focus on winning the Pac-12 South Division.

"It's a new season," Graham said to the Arizona Republic. "We talked about the first five games. We talked about that all summer long. I would've loved to have been 5-0. We could've really easily been 4-1, but you put those behind you. We're 1-1 in conference play, and that's all that matters. Now it's Pac-12. Each game is a single-elimination tournament.

"We've got a good football team. We can win the South. We just got to eliminate those mental errors and get us a win against Colorado."

If this week is a new beginning for ASU, it certainly is for CU, as well. The Buffs are hoping to put their two-game skid behind them and start racking up wins of their own.

"Eventually we'll hit the jackpot if they keep positive and keep fighting like they did (against Oregon)," MacIntyre said.

CU at Arizona State

When/where: Saturday, 8 p.m. MDT at Sun Devil Stadium in Tempe, Ariz.

TV/Radio: Pac-12 Networks/KOA (850 AM)

The Sun Devils at a glance

2013 record: 3-2, 1-1 in Pac-12

2012 record: 8-5, won Fight Hunger Bowl

Last week: Lost to Notre Dame, 37-34, in Texas

Head coach: Todd Graham, 2nd season (11-7)

Key players: DE Carl Bradford, Jr., 6-1, 243; TE Chris Coyle, Sr., 6-3, 240; S Alden Darby, Sr., 5-11, 195; RB Marion Grice, Sr., 6-0, 207; DT Jaxon Hood, So., 6-0, 301; CB Osahon Irabor, Sr., 5-11, 186; QB Taylor Kelly, Jr., 6-2, 201; WR Jaelen Strong, So., 6-4, 205; DT Will Sutton, Sr., 6-1, 305.

Notable: Kelly is one of just three quarterbacks at the FBS level to throw for at least 300 yards in each game this season. ... The Sun Devils lead the country in fourth-quarter scoring, at 17.2 points per game. ... Strong has had 25 of his 39 catches go for first downs. In addition, he has drawn four pass interference penalties that resulted in first downs. ... While the ASU offense ranks 16th in the country in scoring (42.2 points per game), its defense ranks 84th, allowing 30.0 points per game. ... The Sun Devils could get Hood back

this week after his missed the last two games with a leg injury. ... ASU has scored on 22 of 25 trips inside the red zone, including 15 touchdowns.

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