



By: Joel Broida

End Chidera Uzo-Diribe and CU's D-line needs to increase its pass pressure on Saturday.

Brooks: Buffs See Pressure On Carr As Key Saturday

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By: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

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BOULDER – Fresno State's offensive line protects Derek Carr like he was worth millions of dollars – and very soon he might be. But Carr's return for a fifth year on campus already has paid off nicely for the unbeaten Bulldogs, who are hovering just outside the Top 25 in both major college football polls.

Carr, the 2012 Offensive Player of the Year in the Mountain West Conference, has been sacked once in two games this season. A sports hernia – he underwent corrective surgery in January – limited his mobility last season and helped contribute to 27 sacks.

None of them were registered by Colorado and Carr took advantage of that feeble pressure, throwing for 300 yards and five touchdowns in the first half of the Bulldogs' 69-14 mauling of the Buffs. With a new cast of coaches and a new defensive scheme, CU is hoping an increase in pressure will lead to a decrease in Carr's numbers when he visits Folsom Field on Saturday (12:05 p.m., Pac-12 Network).

"If we don't get pressure on him, he'll throw for a thousand yards on us," said Tyler Henington, a sophomore defensive tackle. "He's a heck of a quarterback. He'll hurt you with his feet, but he's definitely a great thrower . . . a great weapon. We've been harping on keeping him contained and trying to get pressure on him. We know how he can be if you don't."

Added freshman defensive end Jimmie Gilbert: "You give the quarterback years to throw the ball and any defense can get beat. We're really working on the pass rush and collapsing the pocket and trying to contain."

In their first two wins, the Buffs' pass rush has been adequate but not what defensive line coach Jim Jeffcoat hopes for against Carr. CU has registered three sacks and eight quarterback pressures, with Gilbert, end Juda Parker and linebacker Addison Gillam accounting for the sacks. Last season's sack leader – end Chidera Uzo-Diribe with seven – has a team-best three QB pressures.

Getting his line's pass rush up to speed, said Jeffcoat, is "a learning process for them. They're learning what we want and how we want it. It's different from what they've done in the past. There's going to be some bumps, but I'm not worried about that. But as the season progresses they'll get better and better at what we're trying to do."

A 10-player rotation in the D-line has helped Jeffcoat keep his players fresh – a huge factor in a game like Saturday's when keeping pressure on Carr will be paramount. "No doubt," Jeffcoat said. "We've actually used more (than eight players in the rotation). The goal is to keep guys fresh and active . . . and that's very important this week going against a tempo offense."

Henington acknowledged the advantages of staying fresh with a rotation system, but also said CU's

revamped off-season conditioning program has made all the D-linemen capable of playing faster and harder for longer periods.

"Honestly, I have not been tired," he said. "First off, we're in great shape, and then with the rotation I don't know if any of our guys get tired. We can go 100 percent for three or four plays and get a sub in. We'd like to just come in waves. That's kind of how our defensive line works – just come in waves at the quarterback."

And that, he added, "is really important when you're going against a team that throws a lot. You want to keep fresh bodies in there, maybe tire out those offensive linemen and keep us fresh so we're going 100 percent every play."

After two games, Uzo-Diribe tops the play count among the D-linemen with 127. Next are tackles Josh Tupou (107) and Nate Bonsu (99), with seven other linemen seeing from two (end De'Jon Wilson) to 64 (Gilbert) snaps. Gilbert admitted that being in on that many plays has been somewhat of a surprise.

"To be honest, coming in I was debating whether to redshirt or not because of my body size," he said. "I was wondering if I could help the team given my size (6-4, 220 pounds)."

But with help from CU's upperclassmen, Gilbert caught on quickly. "The older guys gave me confidence, helped me pick up the stuff during summer," he said. "I got to camp and things clicked a little bit for me."

But he still says his pass-rushing abilities "can use a lot of work. There are times when I feel it's just crap and times when I feel like, 'OK, I get this, but at the same time I need to do this better.' It's all in the building process."

By the time he's a junior, Gilbert hopes to weigh 245. Jeffcoat says that's a realistic goal, but adds he's more interested now in how Gilbert plays at 220: "Getting bigger comes with age. I'm not worried about that right now – only about him showing up and doing the things we ask."

"Like any freshman, he's got a lot to learn. Everything's new to him; he's like a baby, still taking steps and trying to figure out what we do and how we do it. But he'll continue to improve if he continues to focus and study things we give him."

Carr, who threw for 4,104 yards and 37 TDs (seven interceptions) in 2012, has averaged 330.5 passing yards (eight TDs, one interception) in this season's first two games. He has thrived so far with his quick release and short- to medium-range completions. He doesn't have a completion longer than 27 yards, but he's completed passes of 11 yards or longer to seven of the 10 receivers he's used in two games. Davante Adams, a 6-2 sophomore, leads the Bulldogs with 19 catches for 179 yards and three scores.

"He's very athletic, no question about that," Jeffcoat said. "He's got a quick release and a real good understanding of what they're trying to accomplish. He can throw whatever you need him to throw. He's obviously one of the most talented quarterbacks in college football right now."

When Carr torched the Buffs last September, Gilbert was a senior at A&M Consolidated High School in College Station, Texas. He played wide receiver, tight end, outside linebacker and defensive end, saying his comfort zone was found in a hybrid 'backer/end spot that allowed him to drop back in coverage but also still rush the passer.

The first time he was made aware of Carr's success against the CU defense was in a darkened room watching tape – and he was impressed by what he saw.

"I didn't see (last year's CU-Fresno State game)," Gilbert said. "But, yeah, I heard about it."

Probably often, too. The Buffs who made the trip to Fresno haven't talked much about it publicly, but that doesn't mean they've kept the nightmare to themselves.

NOTABLE: Rather than practicing on their fields adjacent to Boulder Creek on Thursday morning, the Buffs worked on Kittredge Field at a later time (10:15-11:30 a.m.) . . . Saturday's game is on as scheduled. However, all grass parking lots will be closed, as will some other lots affected by the flooding. Updated parking information will be made available Friday.

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Colorado football: Buffs' Jered Bell finally feeling healthy

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

The brace on Jered Bell's left knee was supposed to make him feel more secure every time he took the field for the Colorado Buffaloes.

Instead, Bell realized that the brace was hurting him more than it was helping.

"The brace is a mindset," said Bell, a junior safety at CU. "You feel like with the brace you're limited. I didn't like that, so I felt like I can't be the player I want to be with a brace. I threw it away, took it off and said, 'I'm going to go for it; all or nothing.'"

Playing loose and free, Bell is finally making an impact at CU. Through two games, he has 11 tackles and his 79-yard interception return for touchdown on Saturday helped the Buffs to a 38-24 win against Central Arkansas.

"It feels good to come through for my team in a time of need," he said of his interception, which tied the game at 24-24 with 10:43 to play on Saturday.

Bell came to CU in 2010 as a cornerback and was one of just seven true freshmen to play that season. The next season, in 2011, he had his eyes on one of CU's top three cornerback spots, but just three days into camp, he tore the ACL in his left knee.

After his 2011 season was lost, Bell played in all 12 games last year, but was never right, he said.

"I wasn't healed," he said. "The coaches have to play the best players and they can't go out there with somebody who is not 100 percent. I understand that. I couldn't really cut. I wasn't feeling good."

He did have his first career interception, helping CU to its only win of the season at Washington State, but played in just 201 plays. Throughout the season, he played with that brace on his left knee.

This past spring, Bell, with the brace still a part of his uniform, tried out for cornerback in front of new CU head coach Mike MacIntyre and his staff.

"Second day they moved me right to safety," said Bell, who was admittedly disappointed initially because he wanted to play corner. "They felt like this would be a good fit. They've been around football for a long time, so they know what they're talking about and I trust them.

"It's working out now, so I can't complain."

Shortly after his position switch, Bell decided to ditch the brace. He's been a different player ever since.

"About halfway through spring practice, really when we came back from spring break, it seemed like he clicked," MacIntyre said. "About the same time (quarterback Connor Wood) did. I think maybe both of them didn't have the year they wanted (in 2012) and they came back and said, 'Hey, I've got a new chance. I can get it done.'"

"He took his knee brace off and ... started flying around and making plays and I said, 'This kid is good!' I just think he's kind of got new life, so to speak, and he's a good player."

Bell finished the spring as the starter at free safety. He has remained in that spot since.

"I'm embracing it," said Bell, who has been on the field for 147 of CU's 148 defensive snaps. "It's a better fit now, especially after surgery. After surgery, I'm probably not the same player -- to play corner, at least."

At first, Bell had to get used to the new responsibility of being a safety. He has to be more of a leader and make calls on defense as a safety. It didn't take long for him to realize he could benefit from the switch.

"You get to see the field a lot more and I feel like I can make a lot more plays this way," he said.

So far, he has.

Bell is no longer wearing a brace, he's no longer a part-time player and he's no longer wishing he could play cornerback.

"I'm a safety now," he said with a smile.

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

Friday, September 13, 2013

Colorado gets another crack at Fresno

By Ted Miller

Think of your worst moment as an athlete. Recall how it felt. Maybe you missed a free throw to win a game. Maybe you blew out your knee. Maybe you lost the state championship game.

Most often, it's about falling just short of something good. Feel lucky to have that sort of pain, for there's something much worse in sports: Knowing you didn't even try. That you quit.

It's not much of a stretch to say that the worst moment for every member of the 2012 Colorado football team took place on Sept. 15 of last season. That's when the Buffaloes went to Fresno State and got vivisected 69-14. It was a quintessential white-flag performance for a team that already was riding a horrible 0-2 start, having lost the previous weekend to an FCS team.

When critics of former coach Jon Embree want to counter those of us who cringed over firing a coach in just his second year, that Fresno State game was exhibit A.

Fresno State led 35-0 after one quarter. The Bulldogs, a good team but hardly Oregon or Alabama, led 55-7 at halftime. Colorado was outgained 665 yards to 278. The Bulldogs rolled up 288 yards rushing.

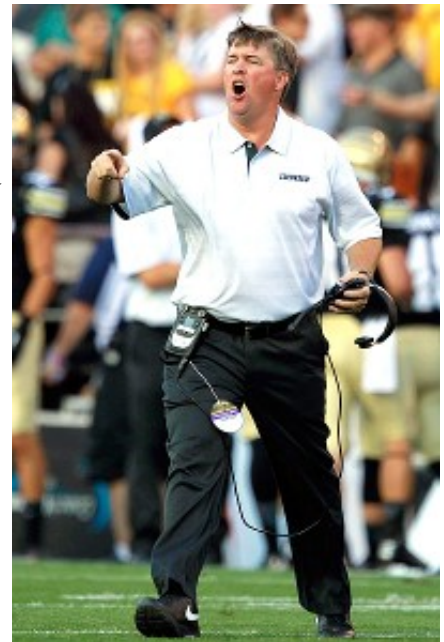
AP writers are typically restrained when describing a game, [but the story on this one noted](#), "The Buffaloes got there by playing perhaps their worst half of football ever."

New Colorado coach Mike MacIntyre is the sort who tries to fill the present moment with a surfeit of enthusiasm. He's not a look-back-in-horror sort of guy. He's what's right now and what's next. His team is 2-0 and playing better than just about anyone imagined it would.

And yet... he knows exactly what happened last year. And he's fairly certain his present players who experienced the Fresno State meltdown haven't forgotten. Yes, what happened last year matters for Colorado as it prepares to play host to Fresno State on Saturday.

"I think with any competitor it does," MacIntyre said. "For them to say it doesn't, I think they'd be lying. It's got to be sticking in the back of their minds, hopefully motivating them to prepare this week for the game."

It's not unreasonable to expect Colorado to look completely different on Saturday compared to last year. This team has found its mojo. Not only has it won its first two games, it has stared down critical moments in both



First-year Colorado coach Mike MacIntyre has the Buffs at 2-0, but they're a home underdog against Fresno State.

victories when the momentum appeared to be turning against the Buffaloes. They also seem to be enjoying themselves. That matters a bunch, particularly for a team that's not going to overwhelm anyone with its physical talent.

MacIntyre traces the program's frown being turned upside down to the midpoint of spring practices. Football practices are not supposed to be dour affairs. And yet that's what MacIntyre saw.

"It was just like pulling teeth. They weren't enjoying it or having fun," he said, adding that during a scrimmage, "Nobody got excited, nobody congratulated anybody."

So after said scrimmage he gathered his players.

"I told them, 'Hey, guys, we got better on the football field but we didn't get better as a team. You're not enjoying what you're doing. You've got to find some passion and have fun playing,'" he said.

Things changed thereafter, as leaders stepped up and the players remembered that they were, egad, playing football, which is fun.

Fresno State, however, represents a substantial step up from Colorado State and Central Arkansas. The Bulldogs are led by quarterback [Derek Carr](#), a third-year senior starter who is a future NFL draft choice. He's completing 71 percent of his passes with eight touchdowns and just one interception. He leads an offense that doesn't attack downfield very often but instead uses a precise array of screens and short passes. Carr is hard to pressure because he gets the ball away quickly, and he's very good at finding an open guy.

The Buffs' defense will have to pick its spots. So far, the unit has been opportunistic, particularly at creating turnovers at critical moments. The offense can't afford to waste too many possessions. The Bulldogs' defense is not terribly strong, so this could be a high-scoring affair. CU receiver [Paul Richardson](#) might need to become the first Pac-12 receiver to produce three consecutive games with more than 200 yards receiving. It also would help if the Buffs got their stagnant running game going against a poor run defense.

There's also the issue of severe flash floods hitting Boulder and surrounding areas. The campus has been closed for two days. It remains to be seen how this might affect the game.

Fresno State, which is looking to jump into the national rankings, is a 10-point road favorite, so the expectation is Colorado would do well just to keep it close. Close is certainly better than what transpired last season.

But expectations for the Buffs are changing. And they might play a bit angry on Saturday. They should.
