



COLORADO BUFFALOES



By: Joel Broida

CU quarterback Connor Wood believes the Buffs are primed after a 21-day break.



Brooks: Buffs, Beavers Could Produce Torrent Of Points

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By: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

CORVALLIS, Ore. – Saturday's infallible forecast here calls for wind, cloudy skies, temperatures in the mid-60s, a high likelihood of rain and the very real possibility of a Pac-12 Conference shootout – weather permitting.

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Oregon State's and Colorado's offenses average 41.0 and 39.5 points, respectively, while their defenses are allowing 35.2 and 25.5 points. Just guessing, but if somebody manages a stop or two, that somebody probably wins. Then again, given the weather forecast, who knows?

There are no guarantees for either the Beavers or the Buffaloes, but CU quarterback Connor Wood is taking a well-grounded approach to the prospect of an arm-to-arm duel with OSU's Sean Mannion.

"As a quarterback you just go play-by-play and not worry about anything else," said Wood, who like Mannion is stationed among the top five QBs nationally in passing yards per game (Mannion is at 401.0, Wood at 370.5). "At the same time you understand that they have a good offense. When we score you can't get too high on yourself because they might get ball back and go right down and score . . . you've got to be ready for a quick turnaround."

"But," added Wood, "I'm confident in our defense; they've played very well the past two games. Yeah, you can't just celebrate . . . you might be back on the field in a couple of plays."

Wood and the Buffs welcome the opportunity to simply be back on the field. "I feel like it's camp again," cornerbacks coach Andy LaRussa said earlier this week. "I don't care who we play, but yeah, I'm anxious to get into the Pac-12 and see how we match up in one of the best conferences in the country. Just that challenge week in and week out is going to be good."

Due to circumstances beyond anyone's control, CU hasn't played since Sept. 7. So the burning question in Buffsville and now in Beaverland is how will CU react to its 21-day break between games?

Calm down, say the Buffs, we'll be just fine.

"It can only help us," said senior safety Parker Orms of the long and unprecedented regular-season hiatus. "Starting camp and going right into the season, guys got banged up. Three weeks off – that's got to help your body. I know mine's feeling better. But I think it's going to help us. We've practiced a lot on (Oregon State), two weeks so that will help us out."

The Buffs are looking for their first 3-0 start since 2008, but since that season ended the CU football program has won only twice in 27 road trips. Ironically, both of those wins came under deposed coach Jon Embree, whose 2011 team won 17-14 at Utah and 2012 squad rallied for a 35-34 victory at Washington State. It was last season's only win against 11 losses, and Embree was replaced by Mike

MacIntyre.

Now, Wood believes the Buffs are better prepared for the perils of the road under their new coach. "Road games are very, very important for us," Wood said. "In the past it's not been good for us on the road. But with coach MacIntyre and our new leadership, I think they're going to get us out of that cycle. When we go on the road I think we're going to be even more intense and focused instead of playing on our heels. It's an attitude, a mindset."

It also helps the Buffs to hit the road with players like Paul Richardson, the FBS leader in receiving yards per game (208.5). He's caught four of Woods' passes for touchdowns, including a conference-long 82-yarder. But right behind "P-Rich" on the national pitch-and-catch chart is Oregon State's Brandin Cooks, who averages 159.8 receiving yards and has snared seven of Mannion's passes for TDs.

Did we mention this could be a look-to-the-skies shootout?

Yet a key for both teams in Reser Stadium on Saturday (1 p.m. MDT, Pac-12 Network) will be discovering a running game to help work the clock and keep that other QB off the field. Neither OSU's nor CU's ground work has excelled thus far, but in light of the expected conditions this would be the day to get a running game revved up. The Beavers are averaging a conference-worst 55.0 ground yards a game, the Buffs are No. 10 at 96.5. And OSU is expected to be without top tailback Storm Woods, who is out indefinitely with a concussion.

Paltry stats or injury reports don't matter, said CU cornerback Kenneth Crawley: "We always have to respect the run . . . that's how we go into every game."

Just as critical as the run game for both teams, though, is rushing the passer. In August, OSU's O-line featured four returning starters but that number now has dwindled to two. Missing are right guard Roman Sapolu and right tackle Grant Enger, which might benefit CU defensive end Chidera Uzo-Diribe and his fellow frontmen in generating a better pass rush.

The Beavers have a solid defensive front, anchored by ends Dylan Wynn (6-2, 260) and Scott Crichton (6-3, 265). Said Wood: "Oregon State is really good up front . . . they got active defensive ends, very athletic." Wynn and Crichton have accounted for 9.5 tackles for loss and 2.5 sacks, with Crichton getting six of the tackles and 1.5 QB sacks.

Wood was sacked four times by Central Arkansas in CU's most recent game, while Mannion has been sacked four times in four games. The Buffs' 'D' has registered three sacks in two games, the Beavers 11 in their four.

This is CU's first trip under MacIntyre, and his approach to a road game mirrors his detailed approach in virtually all things. "I think the primary aspect is they have to go with a mindset that it's not a trip, it's business," he said. "You always hear coaches say it's a business trip but you're going there with one thing in mind and one thing only – win the football game. You have to understand that . . . the way we travel and the things we do and the way we meet all work towards that."

Wood called MacIntyre "a very detail-oriented guy" and said that in Thursday's practice he "cranked up the intensity and told us to really get the focus going."

MacIntyre already is dialed in. When Thursday's practice ended and his team huddled around him, he asked everyone except his players, his nine full-time assistant coaches and his strength/conditioning and training staffs to back away. Then he spoke to that group for a little over five minutes, undoubtedly underscoring everything Wood said about intensity and sharper focus on the road.

Will it be enough to restore the Buffs' edge and offset a 21-day break between games?

"We'll see on Saturday," Wood said, "but I feel very prepared and I think our team feels very prepared to get back into the speed of the game. Absolutely, I'm ready to play."

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Colorado Buffaloes Football

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Colorado football: Buffs defense ready for Beavers screening

By Kyle Ringo Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

File this under keys to the game Saturday for the Colorado football team: The defense has to get its eyes right.

The Buffs are not only facing the leading individual passer in the Football Bowl Subdivision in Oregon State quarterback Sean Mannion and the third-ranked passing offense in the nation, they're facing an offense that uses a screen game expertly for big gains.

"They try to throw you off with the motion, get motion one way and screen back to the other," CU defensive coordinator Kent Baer said. "You just have to understand formations and situations when they like to do it. It's a multiple number of things."

There are plenty of firsts to be noted in this one (1 p.m. MDT, Pac-12 Network). It's the first time the Buffs have ever played at Oregon State. It's the first time the Buffs have gone on the road under coach Mike MacIntyre. (The road wasn't exactly friendly to the last two CU coaching staffs). And it's the first Pac-12 Conference game of the season.

The Buffs (2-0) are also coming off a first of sorts. They haven't played a football game for three weeks because of historic flooding in and around Boulder that postponed a Sept. 14 game against Fresno State that was schedule ahead of a bye week.

And they won't escape the rain in Corvallis. Saturday's forecast calls for a 100 percent chance of rain with winds from 25-35 mph and gusts up to 50 mph, according to Weather.com.

If the Buffs are going to overcome all the adversity they have faced in recent weeks and remain undefeated, they will need to slow down the Oregon State offense while not losing any of the momentum they built in their two victories when they made big plays on both sides of the ball.

Baer had his hands full this week as he prepared his defense for everything it will face from the Beavers.

"It uses the backs, the wide receivers and the tight ends," Baer said of the OSU screen game. "It utilizes a multiple number of screens. I don't know how many it is but we're going to see at least 10 and maybe more. A lot of their big chunks in the game are off screens. They will screen to (wide receiver Brandin Cooks), slip screens to the back, middle screens to the tight end, middle screens to the back, bubble screens, a bunch of them."

Oregon State (3-1) hasn't been running the ball well in the first four weeks of the season. It hasn't helped that it lost starting running back Storm Woods to a concussion in the second half of an overtime victory at Utah two weeks ago. Woods is unlikely to play against the Buffs.

The Beavers are last in the Pac-12 in rushing offense averaging just 55 yards a game on the ground. They're the only team in the conference without at least one run of 20 or more yards. Their longest run through four games went for 12 yards.

But all of that can be misleading because the short passing game in offensive coordinator Danny Langsdorf's offense is really an extension of the running game or supplemental to it. And the screens the Beavers offense employs are a big part of that.

"It's a way to kind of get a long handoff," Langsdorf said this week in a phone interview. "Instead of trying to pound it inside, we'll try to push the ball on the edge a little bit and that's kind of a replacement for our stretch running game is getting the ball on the perimeter fast and treat it like a run. It counts as a pass in the stats, but for us we're treating it as the run game and that's the way you get the ball to the outside pretty quickly without having to hand it off."

While OSU running backs aren't chewing up the yards on the ground, they have been effective as part of the passing game on screens and dump downs. Woods and fellow running back Terron Ward have combined for 24 catches for 199 yards through four games.

Baer believes the screen game could be an even bigger part of the OSU game plan this week because the Beavers' offensive line is banged up. Coach Mike Riley said he expects to be without three or four of his regular offensive linemen against the Buffs.

CU senior defensive end Chidera Uzo-Diribe is a prime target for screen plays. He is the Buffs' best pass rusher and screens are often designed to slow down the pass rush.

Uzo-Diribe said defending good screening teams is all about film study and not being fooled.

"You have to recognize it," Uzo-Diribe said. "When the offensive lineman pats you on your back, coach always jokes, he's not telling you, 'Good job.' It's usually an indication that it's a screen play. He's just trying to invite you up field and they can just dump it over your head."

While the CU defense will contend with a strong passing attack, the Buffs hope to get their running game going to complement the seventh-ranked passing attack in the nation in terms of average yards per game.

CU quarterback Connor Wood is off to as good a start as anyone could have asked from him this season, but now the competition level increases and the question to be answered is whether he and his teammates can rise to the challenge.

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Howell: Saturday's game to set tone for rest of Colorado football season

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Like the slow climb at the start of a roller coaster, the first two weeks of the Colorado football season have given the impression that this ride might not be so bad after all.

But, be careful. This ride is about to pick up speed.

On Saturday, the undefeated Buffaloes (2-0) will pay a visit to Corvallis, Ore., to take on Oregon State (3-1, 1-0) in their Pac-12 Conference opener.

So far, it's been fun watching the Buffs take care of business against Colorado State and Central Arkansas. After a 1-11 season a year ago, the 2-0 start has been a breath of fresh air in Boulder.

Hanging out there, though, is the stench from the last two seasons of Pac-12 play. We don't need to rehash all the scores, but it's been brutal. More often than not, the Buffs have been overmatched and outclassed by their Pac-12 rivals -- rivals being a loose term at this stage of CU's Pac-12 life. They are 3-15 in Pac-12 games, and very few of them have been close.

To be fair, that 3-15 record and all those blowouts came with Jon Embree and Company on the sidelines. And, there was a different roster makeup in both of the past two seasons.

As the Buffs approach this game against Oregon State, they deserve the benefit of the doubt that the results will be better.

After all, new coach Mike MacIntyre and his staff had nothing to do with that 3-15 record. Quarterback Connor Wood wasn't the confident leader he is now. The overall talent level on the roster wasn't as good as it appears to be at this time.

It's also probably a benefit to the Buffs that Oregon State is the first Pac-12 opponent of the season. These teams haven't met since 1988, so nobody on the current CU roster has a reason to be gun-shy against the Beavers, and nobody at Oregon State has experience walking all over the Buffs.

MacIntyre and his Buffs get to walk into Reser Stadium with a clean slate. This is a chance to prove themselves all over again and really show that they are a different team.

So far, we've seen a different CU squad this year.

Then again, isn't this what was expected out of the first two weeks? Neither win, against CSU and Central Arkansas, was considered a gimme. But, CSU hasn't won more than four games in a season since 2008 and Central Arkansas plays in a lower division of football.

In reality, MacIntyre has done what he was supposed to do to this point. Give him credit, though, because his predecessor didn't do that.

Now comes the hard part. Beating CSU and Central Arkansas isn't enough to wipe away the memory of those Pac-12 beatings, and it's not enough to convince casual fans or national pundits that this team is on the way back. The only way to do that is to start playing well against the Pac-12.

Oregon State is not the best team in the Pac-12, but the Beavers are a very good team. They came into the season ranked in the top 25. They're a couple plays away from being 4-0 and still in the Top 25. They went 9-4 a year ago. They've got the nation's leading passer and receiver.

For Colorado, this is an opportunity to start proving it can raise its game and beat somebody it isn't supposed to beat. It's the Buffs' first real test of the season.

Colorado is about to go on a roller coaster ride that'll take the Buffs up against some of the top teams in the nation over the next 10 weeks.

Is this going to be a white-knuckle, close-your-eyes-and-wait-for-the-end kind of ride like the last two years? Or will it be a thrilling adventure with ups and downs and a lot of happy faces at the finish line?

Beating Oregon State, or even playing well, would signal that CU and its fans could be in for a fun ride.

If the Buffs can't compete Saturday, though, we'll know they've still got a long way to go.

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CU Buffs head to Oregon State seeking 3-0 start after long hiatus

By John Henderson The Denver Post The Denver Post
Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — It's been so long since Colorado played a football game, the Pac-12 almost seemed like the Pac-11. Three weeks have gone by since the Buffaloes of first-year coach Mike MacIntyre launched out of the gates only to have a flood wipe out the momentum of CU's first 2-0 start in five years.

What momentum wasn't washed away will be revealed Saturday afternoon, when the Buffaloes visit Oregon State (3-1).

For the last three weeks, MacIntyre has steered his new ship through uncharted territory. The Buffs scrimmaged a lot, first string vs. first string. They did tackling drills. They had so much time to study Oregon State, they may know the name of quarterback Sean Mannion's high school coach.

"It's been a little bit of trial and error, and hopefully not many errors were made along the way in preparing us for this week," MacIntyre said.

While waiting to play again, the Buffs tried to simulate game-type speed with Paul Richardson replicating Brandin Cooks, the Oregon State wide receiver who alternates with him, No. 1 and No. 2 in the nation, in receiving yards per game and receptions per game. Maybe CU quarterback Connor Wood's improvement turned him into a decent impersonation of Mannion, the national leader in passing yards.

However, Saturday's forecast calls for 100 percent chance of rain — up to an inch — and 50 -mph wind gusts, which will likely affect the passing game.

Some good news coming out of the break? CU tailback Christian Powell should be 100 percent again after suffering a bruised thigh. More important, the Buffs bonded as part of a Boulder community that hung tough through trial and tragedy.

"By this point everyone is back on track," said wide receiver Nelson Spruce. "I know that it was kind of tough for a lot of guys getting displaced from their homes and having a lot of their stuff destroyed, but the team really rallied around the guys that were struggling."

Speaking of struggling, the Buffs hope Oregon State's defense didn't get well in a week. It has been, much of the year, awful. Quarterback Vernon Adams ran it ragged in leading Eastern Washington's massive season-opening upset, knocking the Beavers from the top 25.

Mannion had to be Manning in a 51-48 overtime win at Utah, where the Beavers gave up 539 yards. Mannion then led a furious comeback to erase a 27-14, fourth-quarter deficit at San Diego State. The Aztecs gained 248 yards in the first half.

Oregon State ranks 11th in the Pac-12 in total defense (allowing 432 yards per game), scoring defense (giving up 35.2 points per game) and pass efficiency defense (154.5 rating).

MacIntyre's biggest worry Saturday is physical rustiness. He hopes it won't show in the great Wood-Richardson connection displayed in the first two games.

MacIntyre inherited a CU program that has won only two of its last 30 games outside the state. But both wins came the last two years under Jon Embree, and MacIntyre's San Jose State team won all six games last year when it boarded a plane.

"I think it's just the maturity level of your team," he said. "Where we were before, every plane trip we took the plane was delayed an hour to five hours. It was crazy. I've never seen anything like it, and we won every single plane trip."

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Saturday's area games

- **Colorado at Oregon State**, 1 p.m., Pac-12
- **UTEP at Colorado State**, 1:30 p.m., CBSSN
- **Southern Utah at Northern Colorado**, 1:30 p.m.
- **Wyoming at Texas State**, 5 p.m.
- **Air Force at Nevada**, 6 p.m., CBSSN

NOTE: Pac-12 — 430 on Comcast-Denver, 5453 on Dish and not available on DirecTV
CBSSN — 412 on Comcast-Denver, 221 DirecTV and Dish 158