



# Bufs endure growing pains

## CU set to take on pass-happy Texas Tech today in Lubbock

By Kyle Ringo  
Saturday, October 27, 2007

LUBBOCK, Texas — If Colorado quarterback Cody Hawkins didn't have 14 interceptions — at least six of which can't be blamed entirely on him because they were catchable balls for receivers — fans might be talking about the dramatic turnaround in passing production this season.

Maybe they ought to be, anyway.

Hawkins, a redshirt freshman, will make the ninth start of his career today at Texas Tech (10 a.m., Channel 7), where passing the football has been developed into an art form. He needs only 33 yards in completions to eclipse the 2,000-yard mark for the season, something that has been accomplished only 11 times previously at CU.

Hawkins, one of 12 freshmen starting quarterbacks in the nation, is on pace to throw for 2,950 yards in 2007, which would be the second-best season in CU history.

Koy Detmer threw for 3,156 yards in 1996. He is the only player to throw for more than 3,000 in one season at CU, but Hawkins could join him with only a slight increase in his average over the final four games of the regular season.

Hawkins also is threatening to establish a new single-season interception mark. He is two away from tying the current record, and that single statistic has suddenly skeptical fans questioning whether he is the long-term answer for the program at quarterback.

One of Hawkins' 14 interceptions was returned for a touchdown. Seven others led to opponents scoring points on the ensuing possession. In all, eight of his interceptions have led to a total of 48 points, but not all of those incidents had a dramatic impact on the game.

For instance: Hawkins threw his third interception of the day late in the fourth quarter at Kansas State and the CU defense immediately surrendered a 68-yard touchdown run. Hardly Hawkins' fault. Three Hawkins' interceptions led to a total of 21 points in games against Oklahoma and Baylor, both CU victories.

It was only a year ago that the Buffs couldn't pass consistently to save their lives with a different quarterback at the reins. The Buffs passed for seven touchdowns and 1,422 yards in a miserable 2006 campaign.

"Where is all this heat coming from for a change at quarterback?" one puzzled CU official asked this week. "Don't people realize what he's done as a freshman?"

Criticism goes hand-in-hand with losing and the Buffs are on a two-game losing streak and have struggled to move the ball since blowing out Baylor three weeks ago. They have fallen to .500 at 4-4 overall and 2-2 in the Big 12 Conference and need a lot of help to accomplish their goal of winning the conference title.

The prospect of that happening seemed much more promising a month ago after CU stunned the nation by upsetting then-No. 3 Oklahoma. With four games left, the Buffs must win three to assure themselves of a bowl game.

"We've got a good football team. We do," coach Dan Hawkins said this week. "But we're also playing a great schedule.

Bufs endure growing pains

So we just have to be a little bit more efficient and create a couple more things here or there.

"I've said this before: No one wants to be close, but I don't think you have to sit around and mope when you're in the thick of it."

The Buffs have never won in four previous trips to this west Texas city, but a victory today would go along way toward making those postseason hopes a reality just one year after finishing 2-10. The Buffs face their second-consecutive opponent needing a victory to solidify its bowl hopes as well. Texas Tech has a string of 14 consecutive bowl appearances.

The Red Raiders are already bowl eligible at 6-2, but need only look back a year to see Kansas was denied a bowl game with a 6-6 finish.

The Red Raiders are coming off a bad outing at Missouri in which quarterback Graham Harrell was intercepted four times. Harrell leads the nation in passing in an offense built to pummel teams with points and move the ball through the air.

His primary target this season has been a remarkable freshman wide receiver, Michael Crabtree, who leads the nation in receptions and receiving yards and now holds the NCAA records for a freshman in both categories.

Coach Mike Leach's program has led the nation in passing the past four seasons and regularly competes for the title of highest-scoring team in the land as well. The Red Raiders average 45 points per game.

The Buffs were able to shut down this attack last year in Boulder, winning 30-6 to snap a 10-game losing streak. But they won't be overlooked this week, as some in Lubbock have hinted they were last season.

Texas Tech still has a chance to win the South Division if it can sweep its remaining four games. It has never played in the Big 12 Championship game.

Leach seems comfortable with where his team is at this point. He explained last week's performance at Missouri as part of the growing process.

"I think as a team we've improved a lot and the group is very driven to get better," he said. "That is apparent to me. Sometimes as you improve, you try to improve more and you get ahead of yourself. I think we went out and pressed much of the game and continued to press."

If the Buffs can keep things close in the early going today, perhaps the pressing will continue.



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# CU at Texas Tech matchups

Camera staff

Saturday, October 27, 2007

**CU RUN OFFENSE VS. TTU RUN DEFENSE** — The Buffs need to be able to run the ball today and it should happen. CU has been wildly inconsistent on the ground this season, rushing for 200 yards one week and miniscule totals the next. The offensive line has had its problems with some shuffling of positions and two true freshmen playing. The good news is they face a defense that has been consistently subpar against the run this season. Texas Tech is allowing 170 yards rushing per game. The Red Raiders have given up 12 rushing touchdowns and an average of 3.8 yards per carry. **Edge: CU.**

**CU PASS OFFENSE VS. TTU PASS DEFENSE** — If CU can avoid adding to its 14 interceptions, it ought to have some success. The Buffs figure to be able to run against the Red Raiders and a big part of the CU passing game relies on play-action passing and keeping the defense guessing. The Texas Tech defense ranks second in the Big 12 and 14th nationally against the pass. Some of that has to do with opponents choosing to run to work the clock and because running works against the Red Raiders. CU must do a better job protecting quarterback Cody Hawkins this week. The Buffs have given up 13 sacks and Texas Tech has 18 sacks to its credit. **Edge: EVEN.**

**TTU RUN OFFENSE VS. CU RUN DEFENSE** — CU has to be mindful of the run today, but the Red Raiders won't ever grind it out regardless of small successes. Texas Tech is the 117th ranked rushing offense in the nation because it is so dedicated to the passing game. If the Buffs surrender any meaningful yardage on the ground today, they deserve to lose. Texas Tech averages a meager 3.2 yards per carry and 70 yards per game. CU is giving up 130 yards per game this season and have been hurt by mobile quarterbacks. They won't face that problem today either. **Edge: CU.**

**TTU PASS OFFENSE VS. CU PASS DEFENSE** — The Red Raiders are going to complete passes and move the ball. They are just too efficient in their spread system to be completely shutdown. They rank first in the nation in passing as usual and second in scoring. Freshman wide receiver Michael Crabtree is setting records, averaging 15 catches, 165 yards and two touchdowns per game. The key here is finding a way to force some interceptions through pressure on quarterback Graham Harrell or some fumbles after the catch. The Buffs haven't proven they are able to sack the quarterback or force turnovers on a consistent basis. If the Red Raiders find their rhythm, it could get ugly. **Edge: TTU.**

**SPECIAL TEAMS** — The Buffs appear to have the edge in the return game with Chase McBride and Terrence Wheatley having good seasons taking back punts and kicks. The Red Raiders are superior at covering kicks. Whoever wins those matchups could play a big factor in the outcome. Texas Tech place-kicker Alex Trlica has never missed an extra point in 215 tries but he doesn't get a whole lot of opportunities to kick field goals. He and CU's Kevin Eberhart are about even in terms of distance and accuracy. Both have been a little inconsistent. **Edge: EVEN.**

**PREDICTION — CU 34-31**

— Kyle Ringo



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# Woelk: CU needs to regain positive momentum

By Neill Woelk

Saturday, October 27, 2007

Two-thirds of the way through the season, the Colorado Buffaloes are just about where optimistic folks hoped they might be when the season began.

Four wins, four losses, and still with a chance to extend their season past the Nov. 23 Nebraska game. For a team that finished with a 2-10 record a year ago, that's a step forward.

But the fact is, much of the improvement the Buffs have shown this year came in the first half of the season. Lately, the Buffs have been a team that simply hasn't shown a whole lot of progress. A sloppy win over Baylor and back-to-back losses to the Big 12's Kansas schools have the Buffs treading water, doing their best not to sink under the pressure of an extended losing streak.

Today they have a chance to begin moving forward again.

Trouble is, that opportunity comes in a place in which Colorado has never won against a team anxious to put a disturbing loss as far in the rearview mirror as possible.

"We've got a good football team," CU coach Dan Hawkins said earlier this week. "We do. But we're also playing a great schedule. So we just have to be a little bit more efficient and create a couple of more things here or there."

With apologies to Hawk — and with the assistance of a friend of mine who has patiently explained the difference — the Buffs need to be more than just efficient if they are to prevent a midseason slump from becoming a trend.

Today, the Buffs have to once again become effective. It means not fumbling near the goal line, making the key third-down catches, and creating more turnovers than they give up.

Simply, it means making the plays they are in position to make.

The difference? The Buffs were actually relatively efficient against Kansas. They put themselves in position to make enough plays to win the game.

But they weren't effective. When the opportunity presented itself, they did not produce those plays.

It's not as if they can't. We've seen enough evidence this year (Colorado State, Oklahoma) that would suggest the Buffs have the potential to be effective in make-or-break situations.

Consistency, however, is another matter — and today would be a very good time to begin displaying a little of that commodity.

The Red Raiders have a potent offense, one capable of slapping points on the board at the rate of a basketball team.

But for whatever reason, the Buffs have historically played well against Mike Leach's offense. In three games against Leach's teams, the Buffs are 2-1, and the most points they've given up is 26.

The Red Raiders, though, have steadily improved under Leach, to the point that their offense may no longer be a

gimmick. Missouri is the only team thus far to effectively control Tech's offense, and it will take an outstanding effort from Colorado's defenders today to even come close to replicating that.

But just as important as CU's defense today will be Colorado's offense. It will be incumbent upon the Buffs to put together sustained scoring drives that consume the clock. Not only will that keep Tech's offense off the field, but it will give CU's defenders a chance to catch its breath from defending the Red Raiders' fastbreak attack.

Such an effort is by no means out of the question. The Buffs did exactly that a year ago in a 30-6 win over the Red Raiders, and they've put together such performances this year at various times.

But today, the Buffs have a chance to exceed expectations. They have an opportunity to take a step forward in a season that has seen some great early momentum grind to a halt.

A good team will effectively rebuild that momentum.



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# Rocky Mountain News

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## Local college football, October 22

By B.G. Brooks, Randy Holtz, Jim Benton & Pat Rooney, Rocky Mountain News  
October 27, 2007

### CU

### Systematic?

In eight seasons at Texas Tech, coach **Mike Leach** has heard way too much conjecture about his quarterbacks being "products" of his pass-heavy offensive system.

So when that theory was posed again earlier this week, he responded, "I think it's a dumb question," adding that he believes someone has an "agenda" when his current quarterback, **Graham Harrell**, is labeled a "product of the system."

Said Leach: "I think teams that don't have systems don't need coaches. All schools should save money on coaches and put it back in the programs . . . every team has a system. Anybody that has anybody working together has a system. I think some systems are better than other systems."

Harrell obviously fits Leach's: The 6-foot-3 junior leads the nation in passing and total offense and is No. 3 in passing efficiency.

### Tell it to the judge

Leach came up with an odd analogy in the aftermath of the Red Raiders' 41-10 loss to Missouri last week.

In explaining why his team buckled under pressure, he drew on the 1995 **O.J. Simpson** trial and the presiding judge.

Said Leach: "What happens with players, (it's) just like Judge **Lance Ito** gets in the middle of a big trial and decides it's more important for him to be a movie star than it is to be a judge.

"He had problems doing his (job) from one snap to the next. So if it can happen to good old Judge Ito, I'm sure it can happen to 18- to 22-year-olds."

Huh?

### Spread the wealth

Like many of his peers, CU coach **Dan Hawkins** believes Leach's version of the spread offense has been a boon for the Red Raiders and has even played a part in the wackiness of the 2007 season.

"What he was able to do with that and kind of bring Texas Tech onto the national scene and establish some parity, if that's the right word, in playing with the Texas A&Ms, the Oklahomas, and some of those perennial big boys," Hawkins said. "It's definitely had a huge impact on all of football, high school football.

"You've kind of got that sort of genre in there, then you've got **Rich Rodriguez** (West Virginia) with the zone read and the running quarterback and the meshing of those two philosophies. . . . It's very popular."

Hawkins said he and his offensive coordinator, **Mark Helfrich**, have incorporated some of Leach's philosophy into CU's attack. In coaching, said Hawkins, "everyone cheats off of everyone else."

### Etc.



Lm Otero © AP

Texas Tech coach Mack Brown is irked when people ask if quarterback Graham Harrell, above, is a "product of the system," and he wonders if there's an agenda to the query.

- Texas Tech's offensive reputation is built around the pass, but the Red Raiders have scored a rushing touchdown in every game this season.
- Senior left tackle **Tyler Polumbus** is the only CU player, offense or defense, who has played every snap on his side of the ball (611).
- The Red Raiders have scored 30 points or more in 60 games during the Leach era, winning 51 of those games.
- At 52.5 percent (53-for-101), Texas Tech ranks second nationally in third-down conversions. That's up from finishing No. 73 in the category in 2006.

## Numbers game

**215** consecutive extra-point attempts have been made by Texas Tech senior kicker **Alex Trlica**. He hasn't missed a PAT in his college career.

## He said it

"You're also much more likely to throw interceptions if you're afraid to make a mistake on every play."

Quarterback Cody Hawkins, whose 14 picks - six have come on deflections - are the most in the Big 12 Conference.

## CSU

## Unselfish Rams

Throughout the extended misery of the 13-game losing streak snapped last week, at Nevada-Las Vegas, Colorado State coach **Sonny Lubick** has praised his players for their work ethic, unselfishness and refusal to back down in the face of failure. He used defensive back **Darryl Williams'** performance against UNLV as a prime example.

Williams, a senior who has started off and on at cornerback for three years, found himself on the bench at the start of the UNLV game.

But instead of pouting, Williams had a fine game on special teams and excelled when he was used off the bench in the secondary.

"I told Darryl he wasn't starting and he still went in there and made the first two tackles on special teams," Lubick said. "That really impressed me. I don't know if I'd have felt like that if I'd been a starter and the coaches told me I wasn't starting."

"But that's the way this team has been. They've always practiced hard and played hard, and they've always wanted to do anything they could to help the team win. I think it says a lot about the quality of guys we have in this program."

Williams, from Stanton, Calif., has 31 tackles this season and is tied for the team lead in interceptions, with two. He returned his most recent pick 30 yards for a touchdown, in the second quarter at UNLV.

## Turnovers huge

Utah coach **Kyle Whittingham**, whose team faces CSU today at Hughes Stadium (3:30 p.m., the mtn.), doesn't think it's a coincidence the Rams and Utes both won last week after forcing a combined nine turnovers.

"Turnovers are critical," Whittingham said. "They're the second-most important stat after the score. For the most part, you must win the turnover battle in order to win the game."

"In our game against TCU, we had four takeaways, effectively taking four possessions away from them. UNLV had five turnovers against Colorado State. UNLV outgained CSU in yardage, but the turnovers UNLV had were costly. You can't turn the ball over five times in a game and expect to win. That's going to be the big issue this week."

## Numbers game

**1** is Utah's rank in overall wins and winning percentage among Mountain West Conference schools since the league began play in 1999.

The Utes are 68-35 overall in that span, a winning percentage of .660. CSU is fourth on that list with a 57-48 overall record for a .543 winning percentage.