



Bufs-Wildcats a mirror-image affair

Colorado seeks to stretch win streak to four tonight vs. KSU

By Kyle Ringo
Saturday, October 13, 2007

MANHATTAN, Kan. — This one is a dead heat.

Only small advantages exist when comparing the Colorado and Kansas State football teams scheduled to meet in Bill Snyder Family Stadium in Manhattan, Kan., tonight (7:20 p.m., ESPN2).

Browse through Big 12 Conference team statistics and it becomes obvious quickly these squads have performed at nearly the same level almost across the board so far this season.

Both have strong defenses. Both have made game-winning plays in the kicking game. Both have upset wins over highly ranked and heavily favored opponents and both have lost games they felt like they should have won.

The Wildcats (3-2, 1-1) are coming off one of those losses last week at home to rival Kansas while the Buffs (4-2, 2-0) ride a three-game winning streak and a first-place standing in the Big 12 Conference North Division into the contest.

A CU victory tonight, with three home games remaining, would make the Buffs a favorite along with Missouri to win the North division. A Kansas State victory today tightens the standings once again with five games remaining.

Colorado coach Dan Hawkins said he sees a lot of similarities between the teams, including one that got him talking about his counterpart this week Kansas State coach Ron Prince.

"They play hard and they get after it and do what they are supposed to do and that stuff shows up," Hawkins said. "I think every coach who has ever coached football loves it when the other coach comes up and says, 'Your guys played hard.' I don't know what it is in your business, but in our business, when another coach goes, 'Your team plays hard,' you are thinking 'Alright, that is a big deal.' "

So with two teams so evenly matched ready to punch each other in the mouth, tonight's game figures to be decided by who makes the fewest mistakes, who can pull off a trick play or two and who gets the best performance from their quarterback.

While the teams are similar, the guys taking snaps from center couldn't be more opposite in appearance. Kansas State's Josh Freeman is 6-6, 250 pounds with a powerful arm. He seems tailor-made for the NFL. Colorado's Cody Hawkins is 5-11, 190 pounds and prides himself on looking like every other college kid on campus.

They do share some similarities within the game. For instance, both quarterbacks are having trouble early in their careers avoiding throwing the ball to the opposition.

Freeman has thrown seven interceptions with only four touchdown passes so far this season and since taking over as the Wildcats' starter early last season, he has thrown 22 interceptions and only 10 touchdowns.

Hawkins is making the seventh start of his career tonight. He has thrown 10 touchdown passes this season (tied for sixth in the Big 12) with nine interceptions. Hawkins has gotten away with a half-dozen other bad passes that should have been picked off this season.

"I think that I have always been pretty comfortable with the guys around me and the scheme that we play, but there is definitely a learning curve your first couple of games," Cody Hawkins said. "You start to get used to things and things start to slow down."

Hawkins and the CU offense will face the first odd-front defense of the year tonight against the Wildcats.

Kansas State uses three defensive linemen with four linebackers in an era when most defenses have the opposite structure. The Wildcats rank 20th in the nation in total defense and are allowing just 20 points per game.

The Buffs feel confident they can handle it, but the challenge will be magnified with coaches deciding to award true freshman tackle Ryan Miller for his hard work by making him a starter.

Miller is slated to start at right tackle with senior Edwin Harrison moving over to right guard and sophomore Devin Head moving back to a reserve role.

The Buffs now have two true freshmen in the starting line with Miller and left guard Kai Maiava. Both have played well in the time they have received and the CU running game has been improving in recent weeks because of it.

Tailback Hugh Charles has three consecutive 100-yard rushing games and redshirt freshman Demetrius Sumler scored on three touchdown runs last week.

Kansas State has struggled to run the ball most of the season, particularly against top-level competition it has faced in three of its five games. The Wildcats are averaging 110 yards a game, but that average is somewhat inflated by a 221-yard day against an overmatched Missouri State team.

"One of the things that we need to be able to do on an ongoing basis is be able to run to win," Prince said. "I'll continue to say that a running game is a quarterback's best friend. If you don't have a running game, then it obviously limits the effectiveness of play-action passes. That takes quite a bit of your passing game away from you."



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Woelk: Another opportunity on the table for Buffs today

By Neill Woelk
Saturday, October 13, 2007

It's been a rarity in the Dan Hawkins era at Colorado — rare as in never — that this corner has been able to write that the Buffs need to take care of business.

That's exactly what's on the table tonight vs. Kansas State in the Little Apple. The Buffs have the opportunity to drop a Big 12 North opponent two games back in the standing and establish themselves as bona fide contenders at the same time.

Simply, they need to take care of the business at hand.

Not that most Big 12 observers aren't giving the Buffs their due. Their win over Oklahoma, followed up by a thumping of Baylor, has Colorado back on the conference radar.

But that's by no means a guarantee the Buffs will turn out to be anything more than a momentary blip. Their margin for error is still razor thin, and mistakes tonight against Kansas State will likely not easily be forgiven.

Certainly, the Buffs can't be leaving points on the table as they did a week ago against Baylor and figure to come out ahead.

It will be like that for the rest of the season. The Big 12 North will be won through a battle of attrition. We'll bet that no one in the division runs the table, meaning the team with the fewest slip-ups will be the one left standing in November when the dust clears.

Kansas State has already endured one of those slip-ups, losing to rival Kansas last week on the heels of an upset win over Texas.

The Buffs have to make sure this week doesn't turn into their first conference pratfall.

As has been the case virtually every week this season, tonight's game will provide a new test for Hawk's Buffs. This will likely be the most-hostile crowd the Buffs have encountered this year.

How they enter that atmosphere and perform will be the latest barometer of how much this team has improved since the season began.

"We definitely know it's going to be really loud, probably the loudest we've played in this year," said Buff QB Cody Hawkins. "I have heard Manhattan is a crazy place to go ... and they get a lot of energy in that stadium. I think we have to go in there and make plays to keep the crowd out of it, whether that is keeping the ball on offense or making some plays on defense."

The Buffs' QB could play a significant role in that respect by limiting his turnovers. Hawkins has thrown 10 touchdowns and nine interceptions this year, a trend he needs to address. Hawkins still has a tendency to force passes into coverage. He's escaped giving up the big play thus far, but just barely.

If he follows that trend tonight, he might not be so lucky against an unforgiving Kansas State defense.

A loss today would by no means eliminate the Buffs from North contention. But a win would add to their confidence and momentum, commodities that are finally becoming a regular part of their routine.

"Good teams always get fired up," Dan Hawkins said. "The good teams get fired up and it doesn't matter if you're home or away or who your opponent is or when it is. They see an opportunity and they maximize that opportunity."

No doubt, there's an opportunity in front of the Buffs today. In the last two weeks, they've made themselves relevant again in the Big 12, a situation most folks didn't see coming for at least another year.

But a conference win on the road against a division foe is something the Buffs still haven't accomplished under Hawkins.

Today would be a good time to start.

Simply, they need to take care of business.



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Putting a stop to it all

Bufs' Dizon an every-down force

*By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call*

MANHATTAN, Kan. — It looks like Jordon Dizon will never get a break.

Spread offenses. Running attacks. Third-and-long. Third-and-short. Close game. Blowout.

Colorado's senior middle linebacker and defensive captain is going to be on the field, no matter what. We saw that irrefutably last week when Colorado led Baylor by 20 in the final minute. There was Dizon, still out there on the field, still running around tackling guys.

As long as Dizon stays healthy — he admitted to feeling a “dull pain throughout the body” this week — this will be a good thing in 2007 for the Buffs, who play at Kansas State tonight. Because halfway through the season, Dizon leads the nation in tackles. And the varied offenses CU faces in the Big 12 are affording him chances to showcase some versatility.

“No doubt,” CU linebacker coach Brian Cabral said. “I’ve made this comment to several scouts. I’ve had a lot of good players, and a lot of those guys in games like this would come off the field. They’re just bigger, run-stopper guys. That’s how the game has progressed.

“Jordon is a more complete player. He’s an every-down player. It showcases him in that he’ll never come off the field, no matter what the situation is.”

NCAA statistics list Dizon with 78 total tackles, 51 unassisted. CU has him at 85 and 62. Both figure are the nation’s best by wide margins.

Dizon’s constant presence is partially out of necessity. R.J. Brown’s concussion, Michael Sipili’s suspension and Marcus Burton’s ineligibility have thinned CU’s depth at linebacker. That’s an ongoing story for the Buffs in 2007 that’ll become much more intriguing if another linebacker goes down.

But Dizon isn’t complaining about the minutes. He’s just not the complaining type.

“That’s what I’m here for; that’s what I get my scholarship for,” Dizon said. “I’m here to play four quarters every game. I do the same thing every game: tackle the ball, tackle the ball, tackle the ball. I don’t really do anything differently.”

In some ways, he does. Dizon and CU won’t face a spread offense today in Kansas State like the one they faced last week at Baylor. But Dizon showed a nose for the ball last week that he hadn’t unveiled before. Before the kickoff, CU safety Ryan Walters did what Dizon called a little “aura dance” around the linebacker, and Dizon wound up making the first interception of his career later that night.

“I’m going to tell him to do it again,” Dizon said.



Whether going by NCAA or University of Colorado statistics, CU linebacker Jordon Dizon (44) leads the nation in tackles. **Times-Call / Joshua Buck**

Said safety Daniel Dykes: "He's been working on it a lot and getting better at the passing game. He's a real quick learner, and he picks up on everything fast. He's just out there making plays."

Tonight, Dizon will probably find himself tonight chasing Kansas State quarterback Josh Freeman, an imposing 6-foot-6 athlete whose listed weight of 250 pounds tops Dizon's by 25. CU players say Freeman has some nice agility for his size, but he's throwing more than 43 times a game and averages 261.8 passing yards per game.

Just assume that no matter what Freeman and Kansas State do, Dizon will be out there all night, trying to stop it.

"He's huge, for many reasons. He's a great player, but he's a great man," CU coach Dan Hawkins said.

"I think he exemplifies what you want your kids to be like, what you want your team to be like. He's very tough; he's very consistent. He's very considerate. He's smart, he's a leader, he prepares.

"We always talk to him about being abnormal, being a little bit different. I think if you want those magical things in your life, you have to be a little bit different. You have to look at things differently and interpret things differently. He understands it's a team game and he's part of it. He's awesome in all of that."

Patrick Ridgell can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.

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College football notebook, October 13

October 13, 2007

CU

In space, in time

Happy he's not redshirting, freshman receiver **Kendrick Celestine**'s goal is to be able to use his speed and athleticism "in space" - or on the offensive perimeter.

Receivers coach **Eric Kiesau** has no doubt that day will come, but it might take awhile. He said that while Celestine, who averages 18.6 yards a catch (second on the team), is picking up the offense and run blocking, he still is most effective as a receiver when "going from Point A to Point B. He still needs to be detailed, in kind of a 'we have to take you there' route."

Kiesau said Celestine is "very, very talented" and still growing into his offensive capabilities.

"I just wanted to get the experience of playing (this season)," said Celestine, of Mamou, La. "It didn't really matter if I was playing five plays a game - I just wanted to get in so I could have the experience of a college game. It's so different from high school - the crowds, the players, knowing where you've got to be all the time."

Three and counting

When the running game is operating poorly, the starting tailback always is the No. 1 culprit. As CU lagged through its first three games and found itself near the bottom of the NCAA rushing statistics, **Hugh Charles** was that guy.

Though he missed one game and was hobbled in another because of a hamstring injury, the senior was singled out as the poster boy for the Buffaloes' struggles.

What a difference three weeks makes.

Charles is healed and has posted three consecutive 100-yard efforts. It marks the first time a CU player has accrued three straight triple-digit rushing games since 2002, when **Chris Brown** achieved the feat in six consecutive games.

Charles' weekly goal is to surpass 100 yards rushing, trying to reach a seasonal goal of 1,000.

"I know when I'm healthy, I can be a dominating back and reach those goals," he said, adding that his offensive line "is really getting those yards. They've proven themselves over the last three weeks."

The swift Mr. Smith

Freshman receiver **Josh Smith**, confident beyond his years, believes he can run with any cornerback on CU's schedule. He's averaging a team-best 24.4 yards per reception and has made four catches of 20-plus yards, including a 65-yarder last week at Baylor.

Here's his take on Kansas State's secondary: "They're going to try and press, then bail, and that's going to get them in



David Zalubowski © AP

Freshman receiver Kendrick Celestine is happy he has been given an opportunity to play. While Celestine has much to learn, he is averaging an impressive 18.6 yards a catch.

trouble."

Smith was in a little trouble himself last week; he sat out the first half for being late to a team meeting the week of the Oklahoma game. He said he was not disciplined then because his tardiness occurred late in the week and CU's offensive personnel groupings for the Sooners game already had been set.

"It was one of those situations that happened . . . it was unfortunate," he said.

Etc.

- CU mascot Ralphie IV will appear today at a Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge celebration. The event runs from noon to 5 p.m.
- **Cody Hawkins'** 126 pass completions have been spread among 16 receivers. He averages throwing to almost nine receivers a game.
- Kansas State is No. 1 in the Big 12 Conference in red-zone offense, scoring on 95.2 percent of its red- zone opportunities. Through five games, the Wildcats have been in the red zone 21 times and have scored points on 20 of those drives.

He said it

"It was the first conference road game for a lot of freshmen, (and) a place like Waco, it was definitely different than going to Phoenix, because there's not a lot down there."

Hawkins, on CU's trip last week to Baylor.

CSU

Revenge not a factor

Colorado State blew a 21-3 halftime lead last season at Air Force in a 24-21 loss, but coach **Sonny Lubick** doesn't believe in the concept of revenge.

"You never use revenge or vengeance, because it never gets you anywhere," Lubick said this week. "In all the years I've been here, I can't say I've ever brought that up to the players.

"I'm not saying payback doesn't feel good, but I don't use that as a coach. Air Force is a good football team and we'll have to play well to win the game, but last year's in the past."

Etc.

- With both starting safeties unable to practice this week and unlikely to play today, CSU will be dependent on the play of senior substitutes **Zac Bryson** and **Jermaine Walters** against Air Force's option-oriented scheme. Starting free safety **Klint Kubiak** is recovering from a bleeding ulcer; strong safety **Mike Pagnotta** has an ankle sprain.
- Lubick is providing tickets to 40 children from the Sky High Hope Camp for the game today. Lubick and his son, wide receivers coach **Marc**, have been involved for more than a year with the Fort Collins-area camp for youths battling various forms of cancer. Marc Lubick is now in good health after undergoing surgery last year for a rare form of cancer found mostly in children.
- A crowd of about 25,000 to 28,000 is expected today at 34,400-seat Hughes Stadium. Tickets will be available at stadium ticket booths.
- Weather forecasters are calling for clear conditions for the 3:30 p.m. kickoff, but they say a front with rain, wind and cooler temperatures might move into Fort Collins about halftime.