



Bufs welcome No. 5 Longhorns

Heisman candidate McCoy leads Texas into Folsom Field

By Kyle Ringo
Saturday, October 4, 2008

The numbers point toward the Texas Longhorns in a big way today. Maybe not 70-3 big, the score the last time Colorado and Texas tangled on the football field, but big nonetheless.

Most of these Buffaloes have been in this situation before, heavy underdogs on their home field. Just a little more than a year ago in fact, a top-five team from the South Division of the Big 12 Conference came to town to begin conference play on Homecoming weekend.

It ended up being a week-long celebration with the Buffs and their fans storming the field at the end of game day and the stampede being shown over and over in video clips on SportsCenter for days following an upset of then-No. 3 Oklahoma.

The 3-1 Buffs hope to recreate that magic this evening (5 p.m., FSN), and having done it once gives them confidence they can do it again.

"Oklahoma is over first and foremost," defensive tackle George Hypolite said when asked for his upset recipe today. "It's basic football. They run the ball pretty well. So we've got to stop the run. We've got to put some pressure on the quarterback. Hopefully, force some turnovers and get our offense in some easy situations because they have a really good defense."

The Longhorns enter today's game undefeated at 4-0 without having faced a serious challenge in the first month of the season. The average margin of victory in their first four contests has been 38.7 points. Coach Mack Brown's team has beaten three of those four opponents by the same score of 52-10.

But Brown is banking on the best test of the season to date today from the Buffs.

"This will be a game that's going to be tight, it'll be tough," Brown said.

The last time the Buffs beat the Longhorns was in the 2001 Big 12 championship game in Dallas. In three games since, Texas has whipped CU by the combined score of 143-27, including the infamous 70-3 shellacking in the 2005 title game in Houston.

"I haven't really worried a whole lot about what happened in the past between CU and Texas," CU coach Dan Hawkins said. "I think we're dealing with the here and now, and what we have, and what they have."

The Buffs hope the Longhorns will be looking ahead today to next week's annual grudge match with top-ranked Oklahoma in the Red River Shootout. That is the first of three consecutive games against fellow members of the top-25 for the Longhorns, who are led by quarterback Colt McCoy.

The fourth-year junior is completing 80 percent of his passes and has thrown 14 touchdown passes with just one interception. He's also leading his team in rushing, averaging 70 yards a game on the ground.

Hawkins joined a growing number of people in college football this week who believe McCoy is a serious contender for the Heisman Trophy. He is the second quarterback the Buffs have faced this season with this kind of reputation. The Buffs contained Pat White and beat West Virginia a little more than two weeks ago in overtime.

They have another tough assignment slowing down McCoy tonight.

"I think he's much more assertive," Hawkins said. "I think he's playing with a lot of confidence; he's been very efficient with the ball. That being said, I think he's probably healthier than he's been in a while. I know he's been beat up in seasons before, so I think that's helped him."

Colorado faces a number of problems it must correct from last week's loss against Florida State as it takes the field tonight. Topping the list is the play of quarterback Cody Hawkins, who is coming off one of his worst outings in his brief career.

Cody Hawkins is hoping to play his first turnover-free game of the season tonight and add to his nine touchdown passes. But Hawkins isn't the only Buff who needs to make drastic improvement.

The Buffs are coming off a dreadful game on special teams, and the defense has given up 570 rushing yards in the past two games. Hawkins' teammates could make things much easier on him if they can improve in those two areas and find a way to run the ball themselves against the No. 2 rushing defense in the nation.

It's a difficult assignment with the fourth different starting lineup used on the offensive line this season. Redshirt freshman Matt Bahr makes his first career start against the nation's No. 1 pass rush.

Bahr and his buddies hope to get running backs Darrell Scott and Rodney Stewart running downhill. Scott will be playing with a little added motivation against the team he spurned in recruiting to become a Buff. He is also as healthy as he has been since early in fall camp when he was injury free but out of shape.

Texas expects the Buffs to run the ball.

"I'm really not sure yet that we're as good against the run as we need to be because we haven't been tested, and I think we'll know that leaving Boulder on Saturday night," Brown said.



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CU vs. Texas: Just the facts

KICKOFF: 5 p.m., Folsom Field (53,750).

TELEVISION: Fox Sports Net with Joel Meyers (play-by-play), Dave Lapham (color commentary) and Jim Knox (sidelines)..

RADIO: KOA (850 AM) will broadcast the game with Mark Johnson (play-by-play), Larry Zimmer (color commentary) and Charles Johnson (sidelines). The pre-game show begins at 3 p.m.

ODDS: Texas by 13.

THE COACHES: Dan Hawkins is 11-18 in his third year at Colorado and is 64-29 in his eighth season as a Division I head coach. Mack Brown is 107-25 in his 11th season at Texas and is 193-99-1 overall as a college head coach.

RANKINGS: The Buffs are unranked. The Longhorns are ranked No. 5 in the Associated Press and USA Today coaches' polls.

THE SERIES: Texas leads 9-7. The Longhorns have won five of the past six and have a three-game winning streak. The programs have split the six games played in Boulder.



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Colorado vs. Texas matchups

CU RUN OFFENSE VS. TEXAS RUN DEFENSE -- Colorado fans aren't going to like much of this portion of our report today. Almost everything about this game points to a lopsided outcome for the Longhorns. The Buffs rank 79th in the nation in rushing offense and most of that ranking was earned with two regular starters on the offensive line who are now out for the year. We'll say this about the Longhorns and where they stand in the national leaders. They certainly haven't played teams of the caliber CU has faced the past two weeks, so their statistics are a little skewed. But this is a darn good football team with the No. 2 rushing defense in the land. The Longhorns should win this battle.

Edge: TEXAS.

CU PASS OFFENSE VS. TEXAS PASS DEFENSE -- We mentioned the Buffs have a lot of youth and inexperience on the offensive line with right tackle Matt Bahr making his first college start today and Nate Solder, Blake Behrens and even Devin Head, a junior, continuing to develop. How do you think all of that is going to factor against a defense tied for the national lead in sacks this week? Our guess? Not good. Could be a long day for quarterback Cody Hawkins, who is coming off a game in which he sustained several hard hits. The Buffs are going to have to use short routes, screen plays and extra blockers to move the ball through the air. On the bright side, Texas is giving up 250 yards a game through the air, but it is allowing only a 53 percent completion rate with three touchdown passes and two interceptions. **Edge: TEXAS.**

TEXAS RUN OFFENSE VS. CU RUN DEFENSE -- The Longhorns' leading rusher the past two games has been quarterback Colt McCoy. That's probably not a good thing for the Buffs, who have struggled to contain running quarterbacks. The Longhorns didn't get Darrell Scott in last year's recruiting war with the Buffs, but they still have plenty of weapons in the backfield to go along with McCoy. Texas is averaging 205 rushing yards per game and will be looking forward to seeing a CU defense that has surrendered 570 yards on the ground in the past two games. The Buffs have to gang tackle and keep an eye on McCoy at all times, and it might not be enough. **Edge: TEXAS.**

TEXAS PASS OFFENSE VS. CU PASS DEFENSE -- McCoy is not being mentioned as a Heisman Trophy candidate at this point because of his rushing ability alone. He's pretty good in the passing game as well. All he's done to this point is complete 80 percent of his passes for just more than 1,000 yards and 14 touchdowns. He's thrown one interception. McCoy has a nice mix of targets to throw to, including senior wide receivers Quan Cosby and Jordan Shipley, who have combined to catch 43 balls for 666 yards and nine scores. We say it every week. The Buffs need to pressure the quarterback and force the Longhorns into lengthy third-down situations. The Buffs have recorded six sacks in four games. Not very intimidating numbers. **Edge: TEXAS.**

SPECIAL TEAMS -- The Buffs and Army are the only two Division I teams that have allowed two kickoff returns for touchdowns in the first month of the season. CU is coming off a bad game in the kicking game that special teams coach Kent Riddle called embarrassing and the worst he has coached. Not a good time to need a rebound performance with the No. 5 team in the country visiting. Return man Josh Smith needs to hold on to the ball. When he does, he's a threat to go the distance just about every time. The Longhorns are third in the nation in net punting, but the rest of their kick teams haven't been real impressive. If the Buffs weren't so awful last week, we might have given them a tie here. **Edge: TEXAS.**

COACHING -- Think Mack Brown isn't worried today after watching the Buffs derail Bob Stoops and Oklahoma in Boulder last season? Brown knows Dan Hawkins will have the Buffs prepared. The fact is Brown is one of the most successful coaches in the modern era leading his team to seven consecutive 10-win seasons. He's done everything

Hawkins seeks to do, including winning a national title. CU might have to use some tricekry today to pull off another stunner and make SportsCenter. Hawkins has done it before. **Edge: TEXAS.**

PREDICTION -- Texas 31-21

-- **Kyle Ringo**



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Woelk: CU needs best game yet to stick with 'Horns

By Neill Woelk

Saturday, October 4, 2008

Let's put this out front right away today:

Nobody -- at least nobody willing to wager a few bucks on the game -- expects the Colorado Buffaloes to win today.

Texas is ranked No. 5 in the nation for a reason. Actually, for about 22 reasons. The Longhorns are big, fast and strong. They are not only talented at every position on the field, they are deep. The Longhorns' second team would contend in plenty of conferences; the first team might be as good as any group in the nation.

The Buffs, meanwhile, are young and beat up. They've lost a pair of starting offensive linemen in the last two weeks, and attrition across the board -- from injuries to ineligibility -- has taken a toll on a team that wasn't exactly overflowing with depth in the first place.

It's enough of a difference that oddsmakers are calling the Longhorns two-touchdown favorites, a number that would be much larger if the game weren't on the Buffs' home turf.

The Longhorns also come to town with a slight chip on their shoulder. As crazy as it may sound, UT has spent the last few months flying under the radar -- at least as much under the radar as the nation's No. 5 team can be.

When the season began, the chatter around the Big 12 centered on Oklahoma and Missouri. Oklahoma was just about everyone's pick to win the Big 12 South. Missouri, with its high-octane offense, was everyone's pick to win the North and challenge OU for the Big 12 title.

And the Longhorns? Well, they were picked to do what they almost always do -- beat everyone except OU, win 10 games and play second fiddle in the big picture.

(Statistical tidbit: For those of you hoping the Longhorns will look past Colorado today because Oklahoma is next on UT's schedule, think again. Texas is 8-2 in the last 10 games before the Oklahoma contest.)

Thus far this year, however, the Longhorns have not displayed even the slightest hint of playing second fiddle to anyone. They've scored 52 points in three of their four wins (42 in the other) and their defense has been outstanding: sixth in the NCAA in points allowed (only three touchdowns given up this year) and second in the nation against the run (just 52.2 yards per game).

So what chance do the Buffs have?

The same they had a year ago when No. 3 Oklahoma rolled into town (coincidentally, also the week before the Oklahoma-Texas tilt).

A puncher's chance. A chance to put their name on the already lengthy list of upsets this year in college football. The

same chance Oregon State had against Southern Cal; the same chance Ole Miss had against Florida.

Certainly, it will take a near-perfect game, something the Buffs haven't come close to putting together yet this year. For starters, that means no turnovers on offense and eliminating big plays against the defense and special teams.

Easy to say, hard to do.

The Buffs have already turned the ball over eight times this year (four fumbles, four interceptions), and opponents have converted those turnovers into 28 points. Meanwhile, CU's defense or special teams have given up a scoring play of at least 40 yards in every game this season.

If those numbers pop up again early in the game, CU fans might be exiting Folsom in time to catch the Dodgers-Cubs on TV.

Game plan we'd love to see develop today?

Run the ball. Just a gut feeling here, but we won't be surprised if this is the week Darrell Scott makes his "impact" debut for the Buffs. The running back just about everyone in the nation wanted -- including the Longhorns -- has been hampered by a slow start in camp and injuries thus far.

But word is Scott enjoyed a solid week in practice and is raring to go. If the Buffs can hit Texas with a healthy dose of Speedy Stewart and Scott, they can control the clock.

Of course, establishing a running game behind a patchwork offensive line will be a monumental task. But it still might be the Buffs' best hope, particularly if it means taking a little pressure off quarterback Cody Hawkins -- and it would also open up the opportunity for young Hawk to work CU's play-action passing game. (Another gut feeling here: watch for a solid game from young Hawk.)

Defensively, the task is simple, at least in name: control quarterback Colt McCoy.

It's not often you see one of the nation's best passers also lead his team in rushing, but that's exactly what McCoy is doing. The Longhorns have struggled to find an every-down running back (it's why they desperately wanted Scott), but McCoy thus far has filled in nicely as UT's top running threat.

In tests against two quality opponents this year, the Buffs earned one passing grade and flunked another.

Today, they face their toughest test yet.

It doesn't mean the Buffs have to be perfect -- but they do have to put forth their best effort yet in order to have that puncher's chance.



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Longhorns have earned Buffaloes' full attention

By B.G. Brooks

Friday, October 3, 2008

After a win, after a loss - doesn't matter which - Dan Hawkins is into turning the page. Quickly.

So when his Colorado Buffaloes returned last weekend from Jacksonville, Fla., and a 39-21 loss to Florida State, very little time was wasted before refocusing on No. 5 Texas, which visits Folsom Field tonight (5 p.m., FSN Rocky Mountain).

It is, after all, the Big 12 Conference opener for both schools, which offers more reason to swiftly flush a first loss, more incentive to move forward, more of everything.

Right?

Well, no, according to Hawkins and senior defensive tackle George Hypolite, two kindred spirits when it comes to philosophizing.

"I don't always look at it like, 'OK, let's put the nonconference on the back shelf, and ooh, now we've got Big 12 action,' " Hawkins said.

"In college football now, you kind of look at (the season) in its entirety - at least I do."

Added Hypolite: "(Last week's loss) would be flushed regardless. You can't dwell on the past. If you dwell on the past, you'll end up four games in the hole. And now you're fighting to go to a bowl game.

"Hey, it's Texas, there's a lot of bad blood here. They've done some pretty good things against us and we want to stop that."

Indeed, those "pretty good things" are pretty horrific for the Buffs. Texas hasn't merely beaten CU in their most recent three meetings, the Longhorns have won by a combined score of 143-27 - a total that includes a 70-3 mauling in the 2005 Big 12 championship game.

That game helped point CU in Hawkins' direction, but like the other two, it has no more significance for him than the jaunt last week to Jacksonville. With those pages long since flipped, he's now focused on quarterback Colt McCoy and a confident Texas team that won three of its four nonconference games by identical 52-10 scores. (The other was 42-13.)

Hawkins sees an opponent steeped in greatness: "They've got great personnel and great schemes with great players. I think the other side of it, too, is that they're getting their edge a little bit."

Reserve another "great" for McCoy's season thus far. Hawkins calls him "a Heisman-type player," and the stats support

it. In four games, McCoy, a junior, has completed 80-of-100 passes for 1,018 yards, 14 touchdowns and one interception.

He also has rushed 34 times for 278 yards and four scores, totals that CU safety Ryan Walters believes boost McCoy into elite status.

"He can do some pretty special things on the ground," Walters said. "Everybody talks about (Todd) Reesing (Kansas) and (Chase) Daniel (Missouri) as being sort of the premier running quarterbacks in the league, but I'd say Colt McCoy is right up there."

"He's more dangerous sometimes outside the pocket than inside it," Hypolite said. "But if you're completing 80 percent of your passes, you're dangerous anywhere."

Containing McCoy is central for CU, as is protecting its own quarterback, Cody Hawkins, from a demonic Texas pass rush that has 16 quarterback sacks. The problem there for the Buffs: Recent injuries have sidelined two starters for the season, which makes balancing the offense even more vital.

"You have to mix things up, you have to run the ball, have a package that's able to keep them off-balance to some degree if you possibly can," Dan Hawkins said.

"But at the end of the day, it comes down to man-on-man to some degree. That'll be part of the reality we face."

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CU report: Unexpected bonus

By B.G. Brooks

Friday, October 3, 2008

BOULDER — Defensive tackle **Curtis Cunningham** arrived at CU willing to sit or play in his freshman season. He's playing, and pretty well at that.

The 6-foot-1, 275-pounder from Columbine High School is averaging "eight to 10" snaps a game "and every week the concept is getting easier for me," he said. "If I couldn't contribute right away, I wanted to use my (first) year to get bigger. But the way it's turned out is fine with me."

Cunningham was credited with an interception against Florida State last week, although he batted a pass and picked the football off a fallen player's shoulder. No matter, it still counts among the Buffaloes' five picks this season and it's the only one recorded thus far by a down lineman.

Bump in the road

Quarterback **Cody Hawkins** started erratically last week, settled down somewhat and finished with three touchdown passes. Still, he had season lows in completions (17) and passing yards (154), while adding one to his interception total (four, one in each game).

His dad, coach **Dan Hawkins**, acknowledged the subpar performance but credited the Seminoles' pressure, and on his weekly radio show he alluded to "some other issues" that affected Cody's play.

Cody accepted blame for the loss, but his father said, "When you're the quarterback and you're the head coach, you always take the brunt of the criticism, so I think he's got that well in perspective. It's part of the journey . . . there's going to be bumps in the road."

Etc.

* More than a dozen prospects will be at the game tonight, making this CU's biggest recruiting weekend to date.

* Texas received one first-place vote in this week's *USA Today* coaches' poll. **Dan Hawkins** would "neither confirm nor deny" whether that vote was his.

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Longmont, Colorado
Saturday, October 04,
2008



Publish Date: 10/4/2008

Buffs seek return role as giant-killers

Colorado has stood tall against ranked teams

*By Patrick Ridgell
Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — The Buffaloes hadn't a prayer against Oklahoma in 2007, nor a snowball's chance at Georgia the previous season.

Please note the heavy sarcasm attached to the previous sentence.

When Colorado has found itself up against the elite of the elite in recent seasons, it hasn't been intimidated, daunted or overmatched. It's just been good. When the Buffs hosted No. 3 Oklahoma as a 22-point underdog at Folsom Field last year, they beat the Sooners. When they went to No. 9 Georgia as a 27-point dog in 2006, they should've won but came up short, 14-13.

Of course, Missouri came to CU ranked No. 9 last year and ran all over the Buffs, so there are exceptions.

For the most part, though, the Buffs have showed the gumption to stand up to the best. With No. 5 Texas (4-0) visiting today, can the Buffs (3-1) do it again?

"We like to prove to people that we can play with anybody, and we don't feel like people believe that we can play with anybody yet," safety D.J. Dykes said. "We're not going to get respect. We're not going to get any love in this game. No one's going to think we're going to do anything. And we take pride in the fact that we're just as good as anybody in the country."

Does that mean a chip resides on a few shoulders?

"No doubt about it," Dykes said.

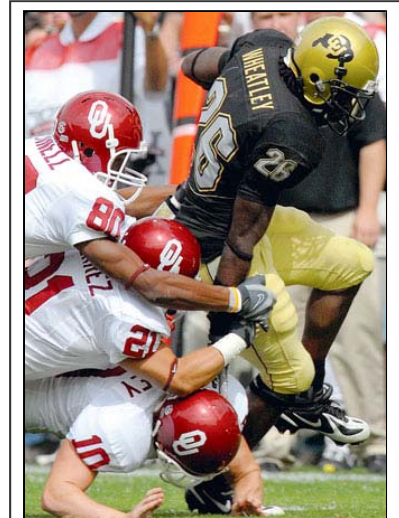
Ten ranked, unbeaten teams have lost their first games at Folsom Field since 1989. Prior to Oklahoma in 2007, the last one was No. 13 Kansas State in 2002. Including its defeat of then-No. 21 West Virginia on Sept. 18, CU is 2-7 under coach Dan Hawkins against ranked teams.

Texas fits the Oklahoma-Georgia profile of recent years. The Longhorns, 13-point favorites, are smashing opponents like bugs on a wall. They have a great offense, a great defense, great special teams ... blah, blah, blah. Yet they haven't left their state in 2008, and they talked this week as if they haven't played a team like the Buffs, whose win over West Virginia caught Texas' attention.

"Colorado has been doing a tremendous job on their season so far, beating West Virginia," Texas defensive end Brian Orakpo said. "It's another off-the-radar team that is very good. They have a lot of talent. It's a huge step for us going on the road again, and we know they're going to have a huge surge. We just have to have our surge as well."

Should anyone wonder if Texas is peering ahead to next week's game with No. 1 Oklahoma, think again. In most of coach Mack Brown's 10 seasons, the Longhorns have faced the Sooners in the second week of Big 12 play. Under Brown, they're 9-1 in conference openers.

Should anyone wonder if hard feelings exist over the recruitment of Darrell Scott, today might provide an answer. Both head coaches



Colorado's Terrence Wheatley returns a 27-yard kickoff in the third quarter against Oklahoma at Folsom Field in Boulder in September 2007. CU upset the No. 3-ranked team, 27-24, and will look for a similar result today against No. 5 Texas. **Joshua Buck/Times-Call file**

denied them this week.

The 3-1 Buffs are limping a bit. They did not play well last Saturday against Florida State, and they're missing right tackle Ryan Miller from the offensive line.

They are a decided underdog today, probably as big of one as they'll be in 2008. So might this be a good time to face Texas?

"We play pretty well in big games," defensive tackle George Hypolite said. "The problem was in (2006 and 2007), we'd play really well against the Georgias and the Oklahomas, and we'd (face) some other teams that people think we should beat, and we'd play down to their level, let them hang around the whole game. They'd make more plays than we would and win the football game.

"I think that's the difference. I think we've stopped playing to the level of our competition and just started playing to our level — where we want to be, what kind of excellence do we want to put out there."

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