



CU's Geer to honor fallen friend

Buff TE will play against Kansas State

By Kyle Ringo

Saturday, October 18, 2008

An important college football game will be played this evening at Folsom Field between two old rivals in the Big 12 Conference each trying to keep their seasons pointed toward a bowl game with a victory.

Colorado coaches, players and fans will be very interested in how their offense performs after a three-game losing streak in which points have come at a premium and moving the ball with consistency has been a chore.

Those on the Kansas State side will be eager to see how their beleaguered and inconsistent defense performs against the CU offense.

There will be screams of approval and boos of woe, arguments with officials and plenty of media scrutiny.

One player deep in the fray will play with a fresh perspective on just how insignificant all of it really is.

Colorado tight end Riar Geer will put on his pads and pull his No. 87 jersey over his head today to honor a dear, old friend senselessly murdered a week ago in a Grand Junction driveway.

Flo Gallagher was shot and killed a week ago this morning as she prepared to leave for Las Vegas on vacation. It appears to be the totally random act of a suicidal man, according to Grand Junction police.

Gallagher, 61, and her friend, Terry Fine, 60, died of their wounds. Gallagher's husband, Michael, a former president of Mesa State College, was unhurt in the attack in which a 22-year-old man approached the victims in a quiet neighborhood and began shooting indiscriminately. A neighbor, Paco Larson, also was shot but suffered only minor wounds.

The gunman later turned the weapon on himself and died Sunday of a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head.

Geer could have chosen to miss the game today and attend Gallagher's funeral, but he believes she would have wanted him on the field in black and gold.

"I thought that I would be really sad and really heartbroken," Geer said. "But it has made me really angry that someone could do something like that.

"What kind of animal could just go out and kill people just cold-blooded like that? It has put things into perspective for me."

Geer said he plans to write Flo Gallagher's name on his arm today before taking the field against the Wildcats (5 p.m., FSN). He writes the name of another friend on his gloves before every game. That friend died several years ago.

Geer hopes to have his best game of the year, but just playing and doing his best to help the Buffs win is all he says Gallagher would have wanted.

Geer missed the first two games this season after minor knee surgery but has returned to become a vital blocker and pass catcher for the Buffs. He has made three catches for 29 yards and a touchdown. The Buffs' leading receiver in 2006 has been hoping to contribute more to the offense.

But that won't be his only goal tonight.

"I get to play a football game and honor her and her husband and her daughter," Geer said. "I'll just play for them, play my heart out and hopefully have another good game."

Flo Gallagher was a recently retired high school teacher in the Grand Junction area. Her daughter, Lauren, and Geer's sister, Ashlan, became good friends as kids. Riar also became close with the entire Gallagher family, often sharing a laugh with Flo and helping Michael Gallagher with heavy lifting around the house.

"I find it fitting for Riar to play the game," said Alison Geer, Riar's mother. "I know he will finish the job. I know he will do the job precisely. I know he will demand mighty things from himself.

"I also know, regardless of the outcome, he will enjoy what is put before him and he will find laughter."



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Woelk: Improvement should be tops on CU's mind

By Neill Woelk
Saturday, October 18, 2008

Square one.

With three up, three down and six to go, the Colorado Buffaloes are just about where they were when the season began: Young team, an opportunity to improve, a bowl berth still in their sights -- and all kinds of possible pitfalls and potholes ahead.

Just a thought here, but today might be a pretty good time for the Buffs to end a three-game slide and take a step forward.

Some folks might insist that today's game against Kansas State should be seen as a "must-win" affair. Certainly, Colorado can ill-afford to let a chance for a win at home slip away, particularly with the Buffs in an 0-2 Big 12 hole.

Earlier this week, though, head coach Dan Hawkins refused to anoint today's game as any more -- or any less -- important than any other.

"They're all (important)," Hawkins said. "You're scrapping to improve, you're scrapping to have a better season than last year, you're scrapping to get a bowl game; it's all of those things. The mountain only gets steeper."

OK, we'll stop short of calling it a "must-win" game. After all, such a designation would technically mean that a loss would nullify the rest of the season. That, of course, isn't true. Win or lose, there are still five games remaining after today.

But using Hawk's criteria -- improvement, better season than last, bowl game -- today's game against Kansas State is no doubt pretty doggone big in moving closer to those goals.

Start with improvement.

The Buffs could use a heavy dose of that commodity, particularly on the offensive side of the ball.

CU's defense has been relatively steady. There has been a disturbing tendency to give up a big play now and then, but fact is, the Buff defense has played well enough to keep Colorado in the game more often than not this year. If the Buffs can limit the big play today -- i.e., keep K-State quarterback Josh Freeman in check -- they'll have done their job.

But the Buffs desperately need their offense to hold up its end of the bargain.

Colorado's offensive production has been spotty at best, non-existent at worst. The Buffs have been plagued by inconsistency, beginning -- but certainly not ending -- with quarterback play.

Today, we'd love to see the Buffs line up today and run the ball like they did against West Virginia. Control the line of scrimmage, control the clock and control the tempo of the game. At the same time, we'd like to see QB Cody Hawkins pick up some of that confidence he had at the end of last season.

That would be a nice step forward in the "improvement" category.

Better season than last?

Actually, this goes hand-in-hand with the third part of Hawk's assessment, a bowl game.

Colorado won six regular season games last year, just enough to get to a bowl game.

To become bowl eligible this year, the Buffs need three more wins. To actually guarantee themselves a bowl berth, they would be much safer with four more victories and a 7-5 record, something that would also fill the bill in terms of a better season than last.

Pick three wins out of the remaining six games, and you have to look at today's game as one of CU's best opportunities for a win.

Not many folks will be counting on a Colorado victory next week at Missouri. Ditto for Nov. 15, when Oklahoma State comes to Boulder.

That leaves K-State, at Texas A&M, Iowa State and at Nebraska as games that present the Buffs with solid opportunities to meet the goals Hawk laid out earlier this week.

Someday, the Buffs should be to the point where folks will look at the schedule and put a few automatic notches in CU's holster.

That day hasn't arrived. The task of identifying even one more "lock" for these Buffs isn't easy. It's the same with Kansas State.

Every game is indeed important. Every game is indeed an opportunity to do the things Hawkins stressed.

But the Buffs are also running out of time to get things right, at least for this season.

Today would be a good time to send a message that they are still planning on making something out of this year.



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Bufs take on season one game at a time

By Patrick Ridgell
Longmont Times-Call

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BOULDER — This is not do-or-die — so say the Colorado Buffaloes.

A loss today to Kansas State (5 p.m., FSN) would extend their losing streak to four, with a trip to No. 11 Missouri awaiting next weekend. A loss would jeopardize their bowl hopes and further sap what confidence remains after three straight decisive losses.

But would it spell doom for the rest of 2008? No, insists coach Dan Hawkins, who spouted the “every game is pivotal” line this week, refusing to acknowledge belief outside the program that if the Buffs (3-3, 0-2 Big 12) can’t beat Kansas State (4-2, 1-1) at home, winning many more games in 2008 will be difficult.

What Hawkins did do is attempt to refocus his team, starting Sunday, when he told players, “Hey, this ain’t over.” That, according to defensive tackle George Hypolite, rang true with him and other Buffs, who might have needed a reminder that their recent schedule has been nasty.

“A lot of people are going to write you off. A lot of people are going to lose faith. A lot of people are going to be fair-weather fans and say, ‘You’ll never make it,’” Hypolite claimed Hawkins said. “The reality is, we’ve played four really good teams in a row. Our schedule is going to not always be conducive to showing we’re a good football team, too.”

Three-game losing streaks won’t boost confidence, an issue that coaches acknowledged this week. Also a bit cloudy these days is CU’s identity. A proud group that values tenacity and toughness has been pushed around for three weeks. There’s a need to push back.

“We need to make a statement,” linebacker B.J. Beatty said. “It’s a big game for us. Every game is a big game. But we need to get our identity back and who we are as a team.

“We started those first three games, and we were a physical team and we wouldn’t quit being physical. I think some of the injuries took away from that and set us back a little bit.”

The injuries have hit the offensive line hardest. Redshirt freshman guard Blake Behrens, who’ll make his seventh straight start today, said there have been moments when the line was a “little flat,” especially in the Texas loss. He said injuries and attrition can’t cause such lapses.

“We try to be as physical as we can and be the most physical offensive line in the country,” Behrens said. “It’s a big focus we’re trying to keep throughout the season.”



Call of the day

All the California transplants here in Colorado know it's Santa Ana winds. Santana is a band.

10.17.08

I would just like to say Nov. 5 will be a great day, with no more campaigning of either candidate for any elected office.



CU's ground games, both running the ball and stopping the run, have become sore spots during the losing streak. Florida State outrushed the Buffs, 259 yards to 124. Texas' advantage was 169 to 49. Kansas' was 151 to 86.

Hypolite said CU knows its identity well because its tough opponents have pinpointed the team's weaknesses. On defense, that weakness has become stopping the run, the top priority every week. CU is ninth in the Big 12 in rushing defense, allowing 168 yards a game, at 4.3 a carry.

"We can be much more physical, but I don't think that's always been our problem," he said. "At times in the last few games, we've put pressure on the quarterback, we've gotten to the quarterback, and we've played the pass pretty well, forced some turnovers. We just haven't consistently stopped the run.

"That's what we have to do. We have to focus on up front, stopping the run and playing from there."

Of course, stopping the run might prove useless if Kansas State's 6-foot-6, 250-pound quarterback Josh Freeman continues to go crazy. He's run for 12 touchdowns and thrown for another 12.

"We have to get that big guy to the ground," Hypolite said.

CU must also contend with Kansas State's special teams and find solutions to its bogged-down offense, which won't get a better chance to revive itself than today, when the league's worst statistical defense visits. Speculation is swirling over the chance freshman quarterback Tyler Hansen will debut today. Hawkins said it's very unlikely.

With so much to worry about, it's little wonder the coach refuses to label today's game bigger than any other.

"People lamented us letting the Iowa State game get away last year, but then we were able to beat Nebraska," Hawkins said. "They all will be that way."

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Rocky Mountain News

CU report: Hitting the brakes?

By **B.G. Brooks**, Rocky Mountain News ([Contact](#))

Published October 17, 2008 at 11:05 p.m.



Kevin Kreck / The Gazette

DOWN Air Force lineman Jake Paulson drops Southern Utah quarterback Cody Stone for a safety during an Aug. 30 game. Paulson continues to lead the nation in sacks.

As explained at installation, the no-huddle offense would rev up the game's tempo, perhaps utilize the altitude factor at home and make it more difficult for defenses to make strategic substitutions.

Through the season's first half, that plan has, and hasn't, worked. CU's version of an up-tempo attack appeared significantly slower last weekend than the Kansas version, but the Buffaloes brain trust says the methodical movement is by design.

"I think it's been awesome for practice purposes - a lot more plays, a lot more reps," coach **Dan Hawkins** said. "I think we'd love to go faster, but when you go fast, that limits other things you can do. So there's a trade-off there.

"We really didn't get into it trying to prohibit people from substituting against us. There are so many no-huddle teams in the (Big 12) conference that, by and large, people are pretty well adjusted to subbing that way."

Added quarterback **Cody Hawkins**: "There are times when I thought we were doing a great job of pushing the tempo faster. But it all kind of varies on game plan and what some teams will do (defensively).

"We've slowed it down a little bit, but it's not because we can't speed it up. We still go into every game with a 'tempo package' that we can pull out if we need to."

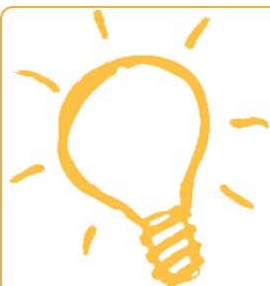
Back on track

Sophomore **B.J. Beatty**'s spring improvement was so convincing that he was viewed as a challenger to starting outside linebacker **Brad Jones**, a three-year starter.

But in preseason camp, a lower-leg hairline fracture worsened, sidelining him for the season's first month. Now he's recuperated, adding speed and depth behind Jones.

"I was a little rusty, (and) getting back into the groove was hard," said Beatty, a Hawaiian with

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Rocky Mountain News

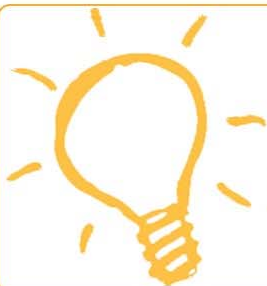
flowing red hair. "I definitely had to do a lot of extra work, watching film and getting used to alignments."

Last weekend against Kansas, Beatty "made some plays. . . . He has a great motor," Dan Hawkins said. "We'll see what his endurance level is. . . . We really missed him early on."

Colorado connection

Kansas State's roster lists five players with Colorado ties: sophomore long snapper **Corey Adams**, Monument; junior defensive back **Chris Carney**, Mullen; junior linebacker **Ross Diehl**, Douglas County; freshman quarterback **Colin Klein**, Loveland; and receiver **Aubrey Quarles**, Grandview.

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Rocky Mountain News

Buffaloes rush toward their crossroads

Stagnant CU offense hankers for injection of points against KSU

By **B.G. Brooks**, Rocky Mountain News ([Contact](#))

Published October 17, 2008 at 1:48 p.m.



Charlie Riedel / Associated Press

CU quarterback Matt Ballenger, left, fumbles the ball after being sacked by Kansas safety Patrick Resby, right, during the fourth quarter a week ago in Lawrence, Kan. The Buffs recovered the fumble but lost the game 30-14.

If the Colorado Buffaloes are a second-half team, they still can make something of their 2008 football season. If the season's first half was as good it gets, let's just say the wait for 2009 will be painful.

Going 3-3 in their first six games - but currently mired in a three-game losing streak - the Buffs enter the season's second half with at least one of their preseason goals still intact.

After losing last weekend at Kansas and falling to 0-2 in the Big 12 Conference, winning the North Division doesn't appear feasible unless hard times hit the three teams ahead of them - Kansas, Missouri and Kansas State, which visits Folsom Field today (5 p.m., FSN Rocky Mountain).

But the Buffs still have ample opportunity to reach a bowl game for a second consecutive season - if they win three of their final six and reach the required six wins for postseason eligibility. Three South Division teams are already there.

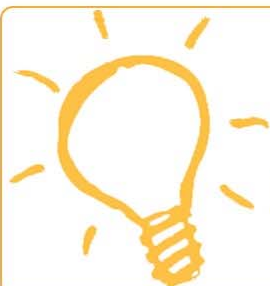
With three home games remaining, coach Dan Hawkins was reluctant to attach any added importance to the first of those today. Several of his players weren't so bound.

"This is really the crossroads for us," outside linebacker B.J. Beatty said. "We can either get back into it and say that (first) part of the season's done, or we can say, 'Hey, we're 3-3,' and give up.

"But that's not the mentality we've got around here. We're going to take this week by week now. Some of the captains are saying this is our Super Bowl. We have to come out playing our best every week. . . . We have to step up every week."

From now through November, added senior safety Ryan Walters, "Every week is definitely a one-game season . . . the level of importance has definitely increased."

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Rocky Mountain News

The biggest challenge is regenerating an offense that has slipped to last in the Big 12 in the four major categories (total, scoring, passing, rushing).

Injuries and ineligibility have pushed inexperienced players into more prominent roles on the offensive line, but senior center Daniel Sanders classifies that as an excuse for the declining offensive performances.

Youth and inexperience can't be blamed anymore, "Because we've got guys who have played the whole season and other guys who played last year," Sanders said. "It comes down to everybody staying focused and not letting the outside things affect them - things they can't control. Guys just need to stay focused on their jobs and worry about doing their jobs right."

Still, the Buffs aren't the emerging offensive team they appeared to be three weeks ago. After averaging 360.4 yards in total offense in their first three wins, they have averaged 259.0 in the past three losses. Points have dropped from 28.1 to 16.1.

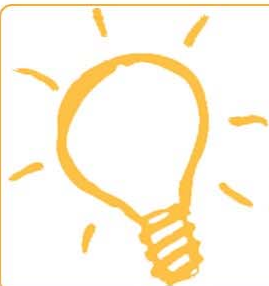
"It's just been lots of small mistakes (on offense)," Sanders said. "It all just keeps rolling and rolling until we finally stop ourselves."

Hawkins pointed to "lots of things" that have sabotaged the offense during the three-game skid. "And some of those you're not going to talk about publicly."

But he says he still believes in his coaches, their

schemes and the players. "We know what it looks like, we know what it smells like, we know how to get there," he said. "We just have to keep battling."

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