



# High-octane OSU pays Folsom visit

## Win in home finale would make Buffs bowl eligible

By Kyle Ringo

Saturday, November 15, 2008

The numbers suggest a lopsided contest not in favor of the Colorado football team at Folsom Field tonight.

The last time the Buffs faced an opponent with this kind of offensive talent, a historic day in the program unfolded. They were brutalized last month at Missouri in one of the worst defeats in CU history. The 58-0 result ended a 20-year run without a shutout.

The No. 11 Oklahoma State Cowboys arrive losers of two of their past three games, but those setbacks came against Texas and Texas Tech, teams that have combined to lose one game by one point this season.

The Cowboys average 43 points and nearly 500 yards total offense and feature the top running game in the Big 12 Conference. Tailback Kendall Hunter, who was named a Doak Walker Award semifinalist this week, has already rushed for more than 1,300 yards. Only one other Big 12 running back has even reached the 800-yard mark.

"I think every defensive game plan starts with stopping the run," coach Dan Hawkins said. "I think that's where you have to go. That always happens, no matter who you play. They sure are talented and they're very good in a lot of areas. They have plenty of weapons."

It's a homecoming for OSU quarterback Zac Robinson, who attended Chatfield High School and never seriously considered attending CU because of problems in the program under former coach Gary Barnett.

Robinson has a slew of weapons at his disposal, including wide receiver Dez Bryant and tight end Brandon Pettigrew, two of the best players at their positions in the nation.

It seems like an awful lot for the offensively challenged Buffs to measure up to, even after a stirring rally last week led by sophomore quarterback Cody Hawkins, who threw four second-half touchdown passes in a win over Iowa State.

Hawkins is expected to start today with true freshman Tyler Hansen getting playing time as well.

The Buffs are the lowest scoring team in the conference by far, registering just 19 points a game and even fewer in conference play. But there could be a little emotional mojo working in the Buffs favor.

Fifteen seniors will be honored before they play their final home game, which is expected to be available

on television for about half the country to see on ABC (6:12 p.m.). Five of those seniors have been in the program since 2004 and have become its heart and soul. The group includes team captains Daniel Sanders, Maurice Cantrell, Patrick Williams, and Ryan Walters as well as Brad Jones.

It was Jones who spoke this week about making the final memory on their home field last a lifetime.

“Make it good one,” he said. “Make it memorable.”

An unlikely Colorado upset would make the 5-5 Buffs bowl eligible for the second time in Dan Hawkins’ three years at the helm. It has become the focus of a team that has endured a rocky road this fall.

A young team with uncertainty at quarterback, special teams issues and a lot of veterans departing from the defense could use all the additional practice time a bowl game brings.

Oklahoma State coach Mike Gundy promised earlier this week that his team wouldn’t overlook the Buffs with the annual Bedlam game against in-state rival Oklahoma up next. The Cowboys, at 8-2, still have an outside shot at earning a Bowl Championship Series bowl berth if they win their final two games and Texas and Texas Tech falter. Gundy’s team could become the first 10-win team at OSU since the 1988 and 1987 teams each finished 10-2.

The Cowboys have never won 11 games in a season.

“I think the most important thing for our team now is to win number nine,” Gundy said.



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## Woelk: Complete game should be Buffs' goal

By Neill Woelk

Saturday, November 15, 2008

Before the season began, I wrote that in order for Colorado to legitimately claim to be an improved team this year, the Buffs needed to win at least seven games.

Obviously, that came without knowing that Dan Hawkins' team would be decimated by injury. Since the beginning of the season, the Buffs have lost nine players for the year to injury, including three key offensive linemen and the team's leading rusher -- more than a third of the starting offense.

One way to calculate the impact is this: to date, CU has lost a total of 97 "player games" to injury, with 86 of those by players who figured in either the two-deep or prominently on special teams.

Those kinds of circumstances can waylay even the best of plans.

Equally concerning is the compound effect. Every game that tackle Ryan Miller didn't get to play this year will delay his development for the 2009 season. It's even more of an impact for the younger players, such as Max Tuioti-Mariner, who would have entered next season as an experienced linemen, but will now be a still-green kid.

Simply, next year's progress is also being set back.

But we also know that football is a game of injuries waiting to happen. Even when they come in droves, the basic measure is still wins and losses. Reasons may be many, but the bottom line is nevertheless how programs are ultimately judged.

So we'll stick to that magic number of seven. It's a goal still within the Buffs' reach, but to get there, it wouldn't be a bad idea to move one step closer tonight when Oklahoma State pays a visit to Folsom Field.

Of course, that's easier said than done.

The 11th-ranked Cowboys will bring with them the nation's fourth-leading rusher, Kendall Hunter. They also have the nation's No. 3 quarterback in passing efficiency, Zac Robinson; the No. 2 receiver in yards per game, Dez Bryant; and the overall No. 6 offense in the land.

And if comparative scores are your bag, CU fans will want to skip the rest of this sentence: the team that dropped a 58-0 stink bomb on the Buffs earlier this year, Missouri, lost a 28-23 decision to Oklahoma State.

It's just the latest in what has seemed to be a never-ending lineup of high-octane offenses on the Buffs' schedule this year. Conventional wisdom would suggest that CU's chances are slim and none, and slim has a bad ankle.

But despite conventional wisdom's insistence, we're here to say this is a game the Buffs can win.

It will require CU's offensive line to pick up where it left off last week, particularly in the area of pass protection.

It will require freshman running back Darrell Scott to once again fight through pain and continue what he started last week, when he showed more than just flashes of the ability that could make him one of the nation's best backs.

And, it will require quarterback Cody Hawkins to display the accuracy and decision-making ability that produced 229 yards and four TDs in 30 minutes of play just a week ago. (Also, nobody will be surprised if Tyler Hansen makes an appearance or two, just to keep the Cowboys honest.)

In short, the offense has to be at it's best. Anything less and it could be a long, cold night.

Defensively, the Buffs absolutely must prevent the big play and force a turnover or two in the process. The Cowboys have put the ball on the ground 18 times this year (losing nine). That means they are likely to put the ball on the ground a couple of times tonight — picking up at least one would be a huge boost for Colorado.

Since the debacle at Missouri, the Buffs have had their backs to the wall. They let a winnable game slip away at Texas A&M, and salvaged a victory last week against Iowa State by the absolute thinnest of margins.

Certainly, improvement has not been steady this season. Rather, it has come in fits and starts as CU's coaches have mixed and matched, simplified and strategized, trying to shore up glaring weaknesses and amplify what few strengths remain.

But what's been missing for most of this season has been a complete game. That's a solid effort by the defense from beginning to end, matched with a consistent, effective offense.

That should be the Buffs' goal tonight and two weeks from now in the regular season finale. Play their best football of the year. Make improvement a reality.

If they do that, these Buffs still have the opportunity to reach plenty of their goals.

Including seven wins.



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## CU used to power offenses

*By Justin Williams*  
*Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — Oklahoma State has an explosive offense.

Yep. So what's new?

If there's anything that's been consistent about Colorado's 2008 season, it's been taking on offensive powers week in and week out.

"Every week, we have to redial," CU defensive tackle George Hypolite said. "I guess you could say that the least productive offense we played was CSU, and they've been playing everybody in the WAC tough. They almost beat TCU and BYU. To say that is kind of crazy.

"Every week, we've dealt with a powerful offense, and Okie State is no different."

When the No. 11 Cowboys travel into Boulder today, they bring the Big 12's fourth-best total offense with them.

Running back Kendall Hunter is the league's top running back, by more than 500 yards. Receiver Dez Bryant has the most receiving yards. Quarterback Zac Robinson is second in the Big 12 in passer rating.

But if there's one thing the Colorado defense has going for it, it's confidence. The Buffs (5-5, 2-4 Big 12) rank first in the Big 12 in passing defense, fourth overall.

"We're a pretty confident and experienced bunch," safety Ryan Walters said. "We've been playing pretty well. We've had a few plays here and there that have busted and become explosive plays. But really, the couple plays that kind of put us in those negative positions are things that we could have controlled."

The Cowboys' (8-2, 4-2) potent passing attack with Robinson and Bryant is no secret. But they're running game has sort of flown under the radar.

Oklahoma State is sixth in the nation with 264.8 yards per game. Hunter's 133.2 yards a game ranks him fourth in the nation.

"We've got to stop the run," Hypolite said. "Most people look at them as a spread offense. But they run the football very well. That's what they want to do. They want to get their running back the ball, they want to control the clock and they want to dominate that way.

"The key is stopping the run. If we can control the line of scrimmage and put some pressure on the quarterback, hopefully we can force some turnovers and we'll put our offense in good situations."

Colorado needs to win one of its final two games to become bowl eligible. But the Buffs, who travel to Nebraska the day after Thanksgiving, haven't won a road game since last season's win at Texas Tech.

So pulling off a home upset today would take obviously take some of the pressure off when CU travels to Lincoln in a couple weeks.

“We have to win,” linebacker Brad Jones said. “Our team knows that we have to win. This is pretty much like a playoff game for us.”