



Defense aims to bounce back

CU faces another potent offense at Texas A&M

By Kyle Ringo

Wednesday, October 29, 2008

This Colorado defense is a head-scratcher. It has been all season from week to week and even play to play.

Take the past two weeks as a prime example. The Buffs played what might have been their best game of the season two weeks ago in a victory over Kansas State, holding the Wildcats at bay with a one-point lead for nearly half the game.

They followed it up --- admittedly against one of the nation's best offenses --- with a less-than-stellar showing at Missouri. They allowed 58 points to be scored and appeared out of the game and deflated almost from the start.

"I'm kind of stumped like everyone else is," linebacker Shaun Mohler said. "I mean, they're a great team. I don't know. We just didn't really come out to play."

The Buffs face another tough task this week at Texas A&M against an Aggie offense hitting its stride behind dangerous sophomore quarterback Jerrod Johnson. Defensive coordinator Ron Collins has to find a way to get the Buffs flipped around and going in the right direction again.

"It's very hard week in and week out to prepare yourself for these games," Collins said. "I mean, you've got to be on top of your game mentally, emotionally and physically each and every week, and I don't think we were last week."

Collins was at a loss to explain how the Buffs went from playing so well to having their worst game of the year in a seven-day span. He called it a step back in the defense's progression, but he said they have responded well with crisp practices and good attitudes this week.

"We definitely got to keep these guys out of the end zone," Collins said. "We're going to catch them at the peak of their season. They're doing a great job and we're going to catch them at a time when they're very confident."

Brace mulls future

Colorado defensive end Jason Brace could be done playing football after suffering a serious concussion two weeks ago in practice.

Brace has not been seen at practices recently and has missed the past two games. When asked about Brace on Wednesday, coach Dan Hawkins said it's possible he could choose not to continue his career.

"We're giving him some space right now," Hawkins said.

Brace has played in only one of the Buffs past five games and has struggled with assorted injuries through much of this season and last. He also dealt with a prolonged illness last winter that led to him dropping significant weight.

Colorado head athletic trainer Miguel Rueda confirmed Brace is suffering from the effects of a serious concussion. Rueda declined to say how many concussions Brace has suffered while at CU, in the interest of protecting Brace's privacy. Right now, it's a waiting game in determining whether Brace will be able to continue his career.

"That's what you have to do with concussions is wait until everything passes and the individual recovers before you can address that," Rueda said. "When you do address it, you look at how many concussions like these has he had, what's the frequency and how long did it take for him to recover from each one?"

Brace would be the second Buff in two seasons to have his career cut short by concussions if he is not able to continue playing. Former linebacker R.J. Brown had his career cut short in his junior season last year after suffering a serious concussion against Florida State. It was the sixth of his career.

Rueda said he talks to the athlete and parents and coaches when addressing concussion cases. He said calling on experts is another option in order to make sure the best decision is made in terms of the athlete's health and safety.

Communication breakdown

Colorado is spending the final hour of each practice this week inside the bubble with the sound of jet engines blasting over huge speakers in an effort to simulate the crowd noise at Kyle Field.

Coaches and players have cited communication problems as a significant issue for both offense and defense last week. Extra time is being spent this week making sure everyone knows hand signals and calls.

Notable

Defensive tackle George Hypolite was named one of 20 quarterfinalists for the Lott Trophy, given annually to college football's defensive IMPACT player of the year. It is named after Hall of Famer Ronnie Lott. ... Colorado quarterback recruit Jordan Wynn told Scout.com he will graduate early and enroll at CU in January and participate in spring football. Wynn is one of two quarterbacks who have pledged to CU in the 2009 recruiting class. The other is Clark Evans. Both are from Southern California. ... Legacy defensive lineman Nick Kasa, the top-rated recruit in Colorado in the 2009 class, has been invited to participate in the Army All-American game Jan. 3 in San Antonio. Kasa lists CU and Florida as his favorite schools.



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Bufs focus on fixing offense ills

Coaches simplify work in practice

By Kyle Ringo

Wednesday, October 29, 2008

Plenty of young quarterbacks would be overwhelmed with the stress and pressure to perform that Cody Hawkins and Tyler Hansen face right now in trying to resurrect the Colorado offense.

Both take the challenge seriously and want to lead the team to success. But they haven't allowed themselves to get snowed under by negativity this week in the wake of an awful outing at Missouri, the program's first shutout in 20 years.

Perhaps most important of all, they have kept a sense of humor about things.

As they stood together talking following Wednesday's practice, a reporter asked if they or any of their teammates had come up with a good nickname for themselves as the team's rotating quarterbacks.

"Harry and Lloyd" they deadpanned in reference to the 1994 movie "Dumb & Dumber."

Hansen said he has been watching funny movies this week in an effort to keep his spirits up after the first start of his college career didn't exactly go as planned last week against the Tigers. He's excited to get back on the field again this week in College Station, Texas, where he will face Texas A&M.

"I think you've just got to treat it like water under the bridge. Let it go and move on, Hansen said. "The biggest thing this week is Texas A&M, just totally forget about (Missouri). It's a bad memory so let it go."

The duo will continue to rotate and coaches might play one more than the other if either gets a hot hand. Coaches say they continue to play both because Hawkins still has the ability to do some things in the passing game that his true freshman friend hasn't mastered yet. Hansen is clearly a bigger threat to the defense at times with his running ability.

"Certainly, Tyler gives us a dimension that Cody doesn't have, and vice-versa," offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich said. "Tyler had some freshman moments there the other night, as did everybody. We had some seniors who had some freshman moments, so that was not a unique deal to him."

Hansen said it bothers him a little that his first collegiate start came in the game that ended the program's 242-game scoring streak. He said he felt he let his older teammates down, particularly the seniors. But he hasn't let it diminish his confidence. He said his long-term goals in the program include being named to the All-Big 12 Conference team at some point in his career.

The offensive problems the program is struggling to fix are far from just a quarterback issue, and this

week coaches have drastically simplified things in practice, trying to get players to focus on getting their assignments done. Coaches have said the first two practices of the week have been solid, but they continue to emphasize the point.

Coach Dan Hawkins addressed the team as he always does following Wednesday's session. He asked for a show of hands among coaches and players for those who have won a road game while at CU. Then he asked for those who had won at Texas A&M. Only longtime linebackers coach Brian Cabral and his former standout Jashon Sykes could make that claim. It drove home the point that everyone in the program has a job to do this week to beat the Aggies.

Coaches figure simplifying things is the best approach at this point on offense with so many young players contributing, including "Harry and Lloyd."

"We're going to definitely simplify it and slow the game down for us as an offense," Hansen said.

"We're just concentrating on what our position needs to do as individuals. We need to do our job first.

"I think people we're kind of panicking and trying to do other people's jobs and not concentrating on their job. As a whole offense, we weren't executing because of that."



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Buffs turn up sound at practice

By Patrick Ridgell

Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — It's noisy at Colorado football practice this week.

The Buffaloes have spent the latter parts of their daily workouts toiling in the bubble, where a sound system with potent speakers has blared the sounds of jet engines at top volumes. The intention is to simulate the racket CU faces Saturday at Texas A&M's Kyle Field (noon, no TV), where 82,000 fans are expected to make it difficult for the Buffs to communicate.

"It's definitely good preparation," quarterback Cody Hawkins said. "Even if we weren't playing with crowd noise, it really makes you emphasize preparation. You can't hear anything. You're on an island."

Hawkins said the offense had miscommunication errors last Saturday at Missouri that contributed to its struggles.

CU used similar methods before playing at Georgia in 2006, but that was pre-bubble. Coach Dan Hawkins said this is the first time the team has practiced with loud noise pumped into practice.

The Buffs played the Nebraska fight song during practices in the days leading up to their date with the Cornhuskers last year.

DEJA VU: Saturday's 58-0 loss at Missouri was a new to experience to several Buffs. Some know people who can empathize, though.

For freshman quarterback Tyler Hansen, one is his father, Rick.

He was a San Diego State quarterback from 1978 to 1983 who lost at Missouri, 45-14, in 1979. Rick Hansen played in that 1979 game, and made the trip to Columbia, Mo., for Saturday's defeat to see his son make his first start.

"I got a lot of calls after the game saying it's going to be OK," Hansen said.

Eric McCarty, CU's director of sports medicine, who played for the Buffs from 1984 to 1987, lost, 52-7, at Missouri in 1984, coach Bill McCartney's third season.

NOMINEE: Defensive tackle George Hypolite is one of 20 quarterfinalists for Lott Trophy. The award will honor a player who "performed at a high level on the field and exhibited selfless characters off the field."

Hypolite is involved with various community charities in home, Los Angeles, donating hundreds of hours to homebound AIDS patients and shelters for battered women.

EXTRA POINTS: CU lists tailback Demetrius Sumler as day to day with a concussion. Running backs coach Darian Hagan said CU's best blocking running back after Sumler would be fullback Jake Behrens, though tailback Darrell Scott has improved. ... Dan Hawkins said, "It's a secret," when asked which quarterback will start. ... According to Rivals.com, CU has five commitments for its 2009 class. Hawkins said that's about the same number CU has had at

this point in past years. He has said in past months CU will sign around 18. "We're on some really good guys. ... Most of the guys we're on, a lot of other schools are on them, too."

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

Rocky Mountain News

CU report: Buffs will make changes on offense

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

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Last in scoring. Last in passing. Last in total offense. Eleventh in the Big 12 Conference in rushing.

Those numbers have haunted Colorado offensive coordinator **Mark Helfrich** this week, and he's made it clear the status quo won't cut it anymore.

While he couldn't speak about specifics of a game-plan change, Helfrich made it clear some modifications will be unveiled Saturday against Texas A&M.

"We're just trying to find our best solution because we have a lot of moving parts that aren't working in synchronization," Helfrich said.

Helfrich indicated specific personnel changes won't be emphasized as much as the attempt to find the right combinations of personnel.

Some have suggested a back-to-basics approach for the Buffaloes, who are averaging 13.3 points in the past six games, and Helfrich partly acknowledged that.

"The last few weeks we were very simple

schematically," Helfrich said. "We've had a pared-down scheme, but Missouri is a darn good football team. . . . Part of (the solution) is simplify, part of it is personnel. It's a combination of those things."

In their own hands

With CU's offense struggling and the Buffs likely needing a win against the Aggies to maintain any legitimate hopes of becoming bowl eligible, the onus has fallen directly on the CU defense.

"I kind of see it that way," CU safety **D.J. Dykes** said. "I have confidence in our offense that they can put it together and start putting some points on the board. But as far as our defense, we're going to put it on ourselves not only to win the game but to score some points ourselves."

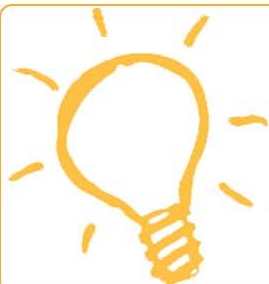
Despite being ransacked at Missouri, CU is a middle-of-the-road sixth in the Big 12 in total defense and ninth in scoring defense (29.1 points a game).

Don't forget, this is the unit that helped forge wins by holding West Virginia to 14 points and high-scoring Kansas State to 13. Because of those successes, the Buffs aren't necessarily going back to the drawing board after surrendering 58 to high-powered Missouri.

"It was an off week and everyone has those," Dykes said. "We're moving on, keeping a smile on our face."

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Rocky Mountain News

The Buffs alternated punters **Matt DiLallo** and **Tom Suazo** against Missouri, with the left-footed DiLallo punting when the Buffs were on the right hash mark and the right-footed Suazo punting when CU was on the left.

The theory was to keep the ball out of the hands of dangerous return specialist **Jeremy Maclin**

CU coach **Dan Hawkins** indicated he "might" employ a similar arrangement, but Suazo indicated even the punters might not know until Saturday.

"No idea," Suazo said. "I guess we'll see who's doing better for the team."

Suazo's season debut began inauspiciously when he muffed a good snap on his first attempt and was tackled deep in CU territory. He rebounded to average 37.6 yards on five punts with a long of 47.

"I think I did a good job bouncing back," Suazo said.

"Obviously, it was a tough situation at the beginning of the game, but after that, it was fine."

Etc.

* Asked who might be the starting quarterback Saturday, Dan Hawkins said, "It's a surprise." Freshman **Tyler Hansen** opened last week against Missouri but shared time with sophomore **Cody Hawkins**

* The Buffs have practiced for the past two days inside their bubble, with "crowd noise" simulating Texas A&M's Kyle Field.

* Senior defensive tackle **George Hypolite** is one of 20 defensive players to make the Lott Trophy quarterfinal list. The award recognizes athletic performance and personal character attributes.

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