

# High-octane offenses meet

A high-flying offensive show is on the docket Saturday when Colorado and Texas Tech do battle

By Will Shanley  
Colorado Daily (U-WIRE)

BOULDER, Colo. — If watching a defensive struggle on any given Saturday tickles your football funny bone, then be advised: Stay clear of Lubbock, Texas, this weekend.

The reason: when Colorado and Texas Tech hook up Saturday, the game will feature two of the top 15 passing offenses in the country, and it will also feature two of the bottom five passing defenses in the country.

It doesn't take a mathematician to know that combination adds up to

points, and plenty of them.

"Of course you get excited when you see numbers and you see teams put up points versus a defense," said CU quarterback Joel Klatt of the Tech defense. "Because you know if you execute you're going to be able to move the football. We have to sustain drives and not give Texas Tech a short field because they'll convert those. Those are our goals this week."

What's an even bigger priority for CU? A win. The Buffs (3-5, 1-3 Big 12) are in fifth place in the Big 12 North and must win three of their final four games to achieve bowl eligibility. Thus, losing to the Red Raiders (5-3, 2-2 Big 12) would bring CU's margin of error to nil.

Accomplishing that is no easy task. Under the leadership of head coach

Mike Leach, Texas Tech has emerged as a passing juggernaut, finishing in the top five nationally in that category a year ago. This season, the Red Raiders have replaced quarterback Kliff Kingsbury, the school's all-time leading passer, with the potent arm of B.J. Symons, the nation's leader in total offense (501 yards per game).

Those numbers could spell doom for a CU defense ranked No. 115 in pass defense (303 yards per game) and No. 116 in scoring defense (39 points per game). But then again, everyone thought Oklahoma would hang 50 points on CU in the first half last week, and the Buffs' defense responded with a solid game and managed to hold OU to 34.

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thrown for 2,187 yards and 11 touchdowns in 2003, including 274 yards against the Trojans on Saturday.

The Huskies could also use another big game from senior running back Rich Alexis, who amassed 122 yards and two touchdowns against the Ducks last November. He is averaging more than four yards per carry in 2003, with 566 yards and four touchdowns on 138 attempts.

Defensively, Washington is led by senior linebacker Marquis Cooper, who has 60 tackles. Senior tackle Ter-

ry Johnson has a team-high eight sacks, while junior cornerback Derrick Johnson leads the team with four interceptions.

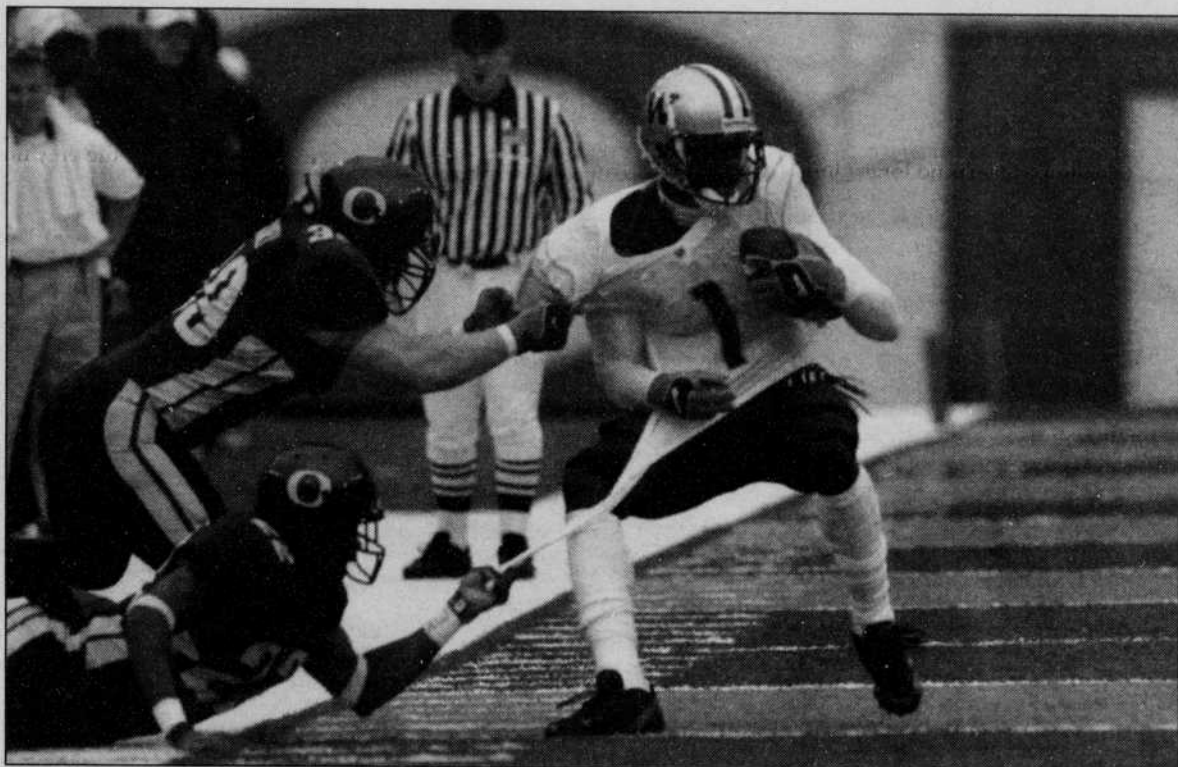
The defense will need to step up against the run as Oregon is second in the conference with 151 rushing yards per game. Defensive linemen Manase Hopoi, Jerome Stevens, Donny Mateaki and Johnson have been struggling of late, allowing 121 yards per game, which ranks seventh in the Pac-10. After Terrence Whitehead ripped off 172 yards and two touchdowns against Stanford, this will be an area of concern.

Washington will also have to

match Oregon's intensity, as the Ducks enter Husky Stadium ticked off from last year's extended on-field celebration by the Huskies. Gilbertson said there's nothing he can do about it as this point, while reminding others that he was not the head coach at the time of the celebration.

"You guys know how I am," Gilbertson said. "I certainly can't control how (Oregon head coach) Mike (Bellotti) or anybody talks to his team about it. It wasn't in my lane last year in any fashion. I certainly can't go back and change it."

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Adam Amato Photo Editor

Wide receiver Reggie Williams (1) has caught 58 passes for 776 yards and seven touchdowns with the Huskies this season.

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talented in USC last week.

"Well, all the teams basically have decided to put someone in (Williams') face, disrupt the route early and have a safety over the top," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said earlier this week. "Obviously, that allowed Charles Frederick, when Oregon State tried to do it, to go off in a big way. We'll see what we can do with it given our personnel. I think the biggest thing is try to get the best personnel matchups that you can and try to mix pressure with coverage."

The Ducks are likely to lose arguably their best cover corner in Steven Moore, who suffered a knee injury in Oregon's 35-0 win over Stanford last week.

That leaves a fight at the corner positions, although Justin Phinisee and Rodney Woods are most likely the duo to fill the spots.

What becomes important now is who backs up the two. Junior Charles Favroth is the only player listed on Oregon's two-deep this week who fills that hole.

"Phinisee and Woods (will start), and (Marques) Binns, (Aaron) Gibson and Favroth will backup," secondary coach John Neal said. "We're down a guy, but we've got two guys that have started a lot of games here this season. So, I'm not

overly concerned about it."

The problem with the Oregon corners matching up against Williams is size. The junior stands 6-foot-4-inches. Oregon is notorious for a lack of size in the secondary — something that Williams knows he can toy with.

That size has helped Williams become one of the best in the nation. He is the Terrell Owens of college football, able to muscle corners to the ball, and if needed, jump over them with ease.

That's where the possibility of double-teaming comes into play, yet again.

"Reggie Williams requires double coverage," Bellotti said. "He demands double coverage. That part, we're going to have to figure out. Without our best corner, it's obviously a greater challenge."

Williams will come out Saturday and establish a presence, whether that's by his physical nature or his speed or both. He will demand attention from the Ducks. He will demand attention from the fans in the stands. He will demand attention from the TBS Superstation broadcasters.

He will be the key that will open doors for the Washington offense.

All the Ducks have to do is change the lock. It'll be interesting to see if they can do it.

Contact the sports editor at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.

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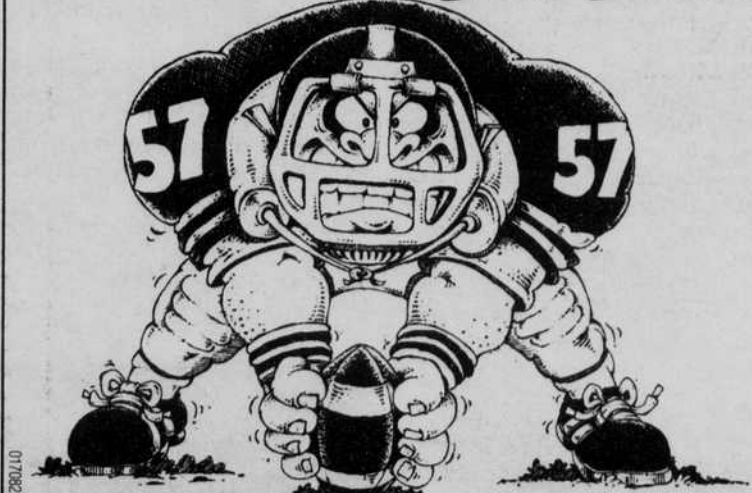
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