

Rams vs. Falcons

Air Force drops a bomb on CSU

by Dave Gibson

For a branch of the military highly regarded and feared for its aerial capabilities, the Air Force Falcons' ground attack won the war against the CSU Rams last Saturday in Fort Collins. Seventy-four of Air Force's seventy-eight offensive plays in the triple-option were runs that totaled 242 yards in the first half and 418 for the game. Fullbacks Jacob Stafford and Taven Birdow accounted for 171 of those yards and three touchdowns. Quarterback Arion Worthman scampered for 117 yards and one touchdown. Tailback Tim McVey contributed 93 yards from scrimmage on twelve carries.

Winner of four straight games and favored to win by ten points before kickoff, CSU found themselves on their heels early when Falcon running back Taven Birdow punched into the end zone on a three-yard dive. The Rams wasted no time answering with a four-play 96-yard scoring drive capped by a 76-

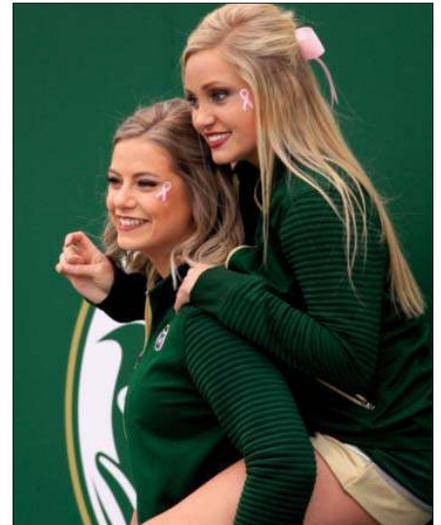
yard run by Dalyn Dawkins. At 4:19 remaining in the first quarter, CSU quarterback Nick Stevens connected with standout receiver Michael Gallup on a trick play and over-the-shoulder catch for 55 yards to make the score 14-7.

Air Force Academy's Taven Birdow scored his second rushing TD of the day to start the 2nd quarter to even the score. CSU pulled ahead with a 1-yard touchdown pass and Air Force's Jacob Stafford ripped a 53-yard touchdown run. A 76-yard Ram TD run was called back for holding. Then with 6:45 remaining until halftime, a harried Nick Stevens forced the football resulting in a Falcon interception return by LB Shaquille Vereen for a touchdown. The half concluded with the score 28-21 with Air Force leading. The game was shaping up as a back-and-forth offensive battle whose outcome would be influenced by mistakes.

A little over four minutes into the second half, CSU tied the game with a nifty 9-yard Izzy Mathews rushing TD. The Ram's high-octane offense that salvaged wins the last couple of weeks, despite less than stellar defensive play,



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was once again in high gear. A 20-yard field goal by the Falcons, after a methodical 17-play grind-it-out drive that used 9:57 of the clock, made the score 31-28.

Air Force quarterback Arion Worthman would hook up across the middle with a wide-open Ryan Reffitt for seven more points culminating a 98-yard drive that chewed up another 7:09 minutes. Worthman's 7-yard sweep into the end zone on their next score put

the Rams away. Late in the contest and time ticking away, Ram's QB Stevens threw his third interception of the afternoon, effectively sealing the victory for the Falcons. Final score: Air Force Falcons 45, CSU Rams 28.

Falcon linebacker Jack Flor stated after the win, "We practice hard every day, so eventually something's going to work out - that's been our mentality."

The Rams are now 4-1 and the

Falcons 3-2 in the Mountain West Conference Mountain Division. They both play 4-0 Boise State and 3-1 Wyoming in the coming weeks which will determine the 2017 champion.

Dave Gibson has been a contributor at the *Weekly Register-Call* for over a dozen years. To view past articles and pictures go to www.DaveGibsonImages.com.



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