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Utah's been in this spot before. In 2006, they drew hallowed Cal in the DI National Semifinal and lost 30-11. In 2002, the Utes fell 43-22 to the Bears in the National Title match. Saturday, in the College Premier Division semifinals in Glendale, Colo., they again are tasked with the unenviable chore of playing Cal.

How can they make this game different? How can the Utes, notorious for playing freewheeling, aggressive rugby, beat the methodically dominant giant of the college game? Some would say they need to play more conservatively, hope to milk the clock and just be within a puncher's chance at the end. Ask Utah coach Blake Burdette, and it appears that's not how he sees it.

"Everyone knows they're a very good team and they have a very good program and run a very good system. I think what we can do is try and disrupt their system with our style of play. I think we play a different style than most teams. It's more of an open play, but there is some rhyme and reason to it," said Burdette.

"First of all, we've got to tackle, and if we do that and do that well and get them out of their system a little bit, we can have some success."

Without a doubt, if the Utes are going to win Saturday, playmakers Thretton Palamo and Don Pati will be lynchpins of the effort. From what positions they'll be making a difference, however, is not so certain. Palamo is considered by most a midfielder or big wing, but he's spent a fair amount of time at flyhalf this season. Pati, usually a scrumhalf, has played some center this year.

"There's some games where we want the ball in Don and Thretton's hands most of the time, and when you have them in the halfback positions, then almost every play they're going to

have the ball in their hands. They’re our tow best players, and I think that’s where we have an advantage,” said Burdette.

“We’re not trying to hide anything from anyone, but it is nice to be able to put a team out there that these guys can all switch to different positions if we need to.”

Palamo is a very good player, but he’s not known for his tactical kicking skills. If Burdette plays him at 10, look for the Utes to run from any and everywhere. In basketball, you hear the phrase, 'live by the three, die by the three'. Perhaps Utah is willing to live, or die, by their running style.