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A leaner Webb moves up CU's depth chart

By [TOM KENSLE](#) |  No Comments

It's hard for a son of the South to push away from fried food, but Colorado linebacker Derrick Webb has done his best to eat better.

That, along with additional running, has enabled the redshirt freshman to shed at least 20 pounds since last summer.

Webb, who grew up in Memphis, Tenn., said he now packs a leaner 220 pounds on his 6-foot frame. He expects to have a playing weight of about 225 pounds by the beginning of August camp.

"I came in last year at about 242, 243 pounds," Webb told me this week. "I knew that if I was going to be competitive, I needed to lose the weight. I just tried to give myself a little discipline."

Less fried food. Fewer desserts. No late-night snacks.

"The dorms have all this free food," Webb said with a grin. "I had to tell myself not to take advantage of all of it, and to just eat when I was hungry."

Webb, who redshirted last fall, already has been called one of the toughest hitters on the team by coaches. Expected to make a big impact this season, Webb is currently practicing with the second team at middle ("mike") linebacker, behind senior Michael Sipili.

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Colorado's Lockridge laying out lofty goals

By Patrick Ridgell
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BOULDER — There are few certainties when it comes to Colorado football in 2010, but a recent conversation with junior running back Brian Lockridge revealed a couple.

One is that he'll be returning kickoffs in the fall, and two, he'll enjoy doing so.

"I'm loving it," Lockridge said.

Lockridge, who said he and Arthur Jaffee "will be back there" when 2010 starts, smiled widely when asked how much he's looking forward to returning kicks next fall. He finished fifth in the Big 12 with an average of 23.3 yards per return in 2009. He brought one back 98 yards for a touchdown at Oklahoma State in the season's next-to-last game.

Lockridge took over for Darrell Scott after Scott was injured midseason. Scott averaged 26.9 yards per in 21 tries.

Lockridge said the touchdown he scored at Oklahoma State provided him confidence. He's confident enough to state publicly that his goal for 2010 is to return "three or four" for touchdowns.

"That's a good goal to have," he said.

Lockridge wants to match, if not exceed, the success Kansas State's Brandon Banks had returning kicks in 2009. Banks took four back for touchdowns, and averaged 28.9 yards per try.

"He's the only that had more than two (touchdowns)," Lockridge said. "Hopefully I can beat him this year."

Topping Banks, Lockridge said, will require a combination of luck and "everyone doing their own part." It'll also help him to lean on the experience garnered returning 30 a year ago.

"You see things differently," Lockridge said. "You get used to it after awhile and you know where to hit it. I'm not like a punt returner, where you have to be more shifty. Kick returning is mostly one step, cut, and go."

Starting tailback Rodney Stewart wore a smile similar to Lockridge's when Stewart discussed returning punts, which he said he "expects" to do in 2010.

"Hopefully I'll return punts this year a lot," Stewart said. "That's up to coach (Kent) Riddle, (CU's special teams coach) if he puts me back there."

CU totaled 100 punt return yards on 30 tries in 2009. No return went longer than 15. Stewart, the program's best running back, could provide play-making skills at a spot those were lacking last season.

Coaches value ball security, though, and Stewart, who returned no punts a year ago, fumbled five times in 2009. CU lost three of them. Running backs coach Darian Hagan said he thinks Stewart can be a sure-handed punt returner.

If Lockridge and Stewart fill those roles in 2010, CU will be using its only two experienced tailbacks to carry the ball on special teams.

"I don't think we can, you know, try to shelve guys or hide guys for the sake of doing whatever," Hagan said. "I think we need to play our best guys. Those two guys happen to be our two best guys with the ball in their hands. Anytime we can get the ball in their hands, we need to do it. I don't think we need to worry about a guy getting hurt."

CU listed Toney Clemons, Jason Espinoza, Will Jefferson, Scotty McKnight, Quentin Hildreth and several others among its punt returners in its pre-spring depth chart. Espinoza returned a team-most 22 in 2009.

Read Patrick Ridgell's CU sports blog at www.timescall.com/blogs/ridgell. He can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.