



Quentin Hildreth had two scores for the Buffs during the second spring scrimmage on April 2.
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04/02/2010 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

Brooks: Simplified Offense Needs Shot Of Adrenalin

BOULDER - One subpar afternoon in early April is no cause for panic, but late Friday several coaches and players agreed: The simplified offense simply must get better. But very few of the explanations cited Friday will hold up come September, and the Colorado offensive staff left Folsom Field fully aware.

Before nightfall, they already were plotting for a more productive finish in next week's final four days of spring drills.

Offensively, CU's second spring scrimmage - 106 plays in length and mostly situational in nature - lacked tempo and felt almost as raw as the weather. There were reasons . . .

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"We don't like using excuses (but) it's hard getting in a rhythm when you're doing a lot of segmented



situational stuff," coach Dan Hawkins said. "Clearly, we had a few penalties here and there (11 for 72 yards, with seven of the flags on offense), and we've got to convert kicks.

"We had good Tuesday and Thursday practices. Maybe the length and intensity of yesterday took a little out of them today. That's an excuse, but we've still got to get lined up and know the snap count and make kicks when we've got a chance to make them."

After hitting all four of his field goal attempts and averaging 37.2 yards punting in the first scrimmage, redshirt freshman Zach Grossnickle was one for four on field goal attempts and averaged 31.5 yards on six punts Friday. Walk-on kicker Marcus Kirkwood missed both of his field goal tries.

"We just have to make it," Hawkins said of the kicking game overall. Of Grossnickle, he added, "He's been decent . . . but the young guy gets rattled a little bit and his rhythm gets off. It was good to see him come in there and make one later (a 27-yarder)."

Offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau alluded to the absence of a number of key players - receivers Markques Simas, Will Jefferson and Scotty McKnight (previously injured), tailbacks Rodney Stewart and Brian Lockridge, offensive linemen Bryce Givens and Ryan Miller (previously injured) - in explaining his unit's difficulties.

Execution is problematic, said Kiesau, when "we don't have the right personnel out there. But it's also the circumstances of the scrimmage. It was so situational it was kind of hard to get in a rhythm . . . We just have to keep getting better. It's a hard gauge because of the way the scrimmage was set up."

Junior quarterback Tyler Hansen's critique of the offense mirrored that of his coaches: "We had a tough day except for the goal line and the red zone stuff. We kind of came out and were out of rhythm. At first I think we started off good, then hit a low spot and kind of relaxed a little bit. We definitely have to clean some things up before the spring game."

With Stewart injured Thursday and Lockridge hobbled early Friday, two running backs - Quentin Hildreth and Corey Nabors - shared 25 of the afternoon's 28 carries. In goal line situations, Hildreth scored two touchdowns and Nabors three - with none of the runs over three yards. Hildreth averaged 3.1 yards on his 11 carries, Nabors 2.0 on his 14.

"We ran the ball better on the goal line, (that) period was good when we put the ball down and drove at the beginning of the scrimmage," second-year offensive line coach Denver Johnson said.

But a good start wasn't a precursor for an efficient finish - either to the scrimmage or the week. Johnson called the three practices preceding the scrimmage "tremendous . . . probably the best week since I've been around here. We had some pretty high expectations for (Friday), and I don't think we achieved them. But until I see the film, it's hard to say that definitively."

NO SEPARATION AT QB: Kiesau said Hansen was "a little out of sync early; he wasn't mentally into it like I was hoping," while senior Cody Hawkins "was a little sharper mentally; he made better reads."

Still, Hansen, who completed 12-of-22 for 102 yards and two touchdowns (one interception), finished with a 114.4 QB rating and accounted for 24 points in his time with the first and second offenses.

Hawkins, meanwhile, went 10-of-22 for 111 yards, accounted for 12 points with the Nos. 1-2 units and finished with a rating of 87.8. Hansen was sacked once, Hawkins twice.

Their afternoon of shared work did little to resolve the starting QB issue, and it appears the Buffs might end spring ball with the question still hanging.

Asked if there had been any separation between Hansen and Hawkins, Kiesau answered, "No, and I like it that way. I want them to battle, to compete and know that they have to produce . . . get completions and play ball. I like it like that."

Kiesau said he has no timeline for naming a starter: "I want the best guy," adding, "The separation is not my decision. Those guys have to separate themselves. It's whenever they decide to separate themselves. I just kind of have to wait and see . . . I like the way they're both playing."

He also indicated that with just four spring practices remaining - next Monday is a review of Friday's scrimmage, next Saturday is the spring game - it is unlikely that either Hansen or Hawkins has time to emerge as a clear winner.

After the first scrimmage, Hansen described the duel with Hawkins as "dead even." After Scrimmage No. 2, he wasn't prepared to alter that assessment.

"I think we're both making plays," he said. "I don't know where we are right now. But I think we're both doing the right things, going in the right direction."

To reclaim the starting job, which he moved into last October, Hansen said he must "work harder, be more accurate and be smarter with the ball - just make the right decisions, be good with my reads, know what the coverages are. Be in the game more."

DON'T DISS THE 'D': In addition to the explanations cited above, Denver Johnson's search for an answer to the offense's rough afternoon also took him to an obvious place - the guys across the line of scrimmage.

Noted Johnson: "Our defense, to its credit, is showing us a lot of different looks, a lot of different things and that's going to pay off for us in the long run."

Defensive coordinator Ron Collins called his unit's Friday performance "overall good . . . our front line guys are playing well. The next guys in line - the twos and threes - need to pick up their games a little bit in their alignments and assignments. The guys are playing fast and physical."

Collins went into spring ball emphasizing more turnovers and improved tackling. On the first count, "We're close, but you always want more. I think we're getting there," he said.

Is his group tackling better? "Yes and no," Collins said. "We missed a few today that I thought were tackles that should have been made. It's something we have to constantly work at. It's not something we'll ever arrive at; you're playing against good players who'll make you miss. We

definitely have to get better at that."

Friday's leading tacklers were freshman cornerback Josh Moten and sophomore linebacker Jon Major with seven each. Moten's total included six solo stops, with two tackles for loss and one quarterback sack.

Outside linebacker B.J. Beatty was held out of the scrimmage.

SIMPLE ANSWER? Add this to the theories for a struggling offense: For simplicity's sake, the number of plays the offense is running this spring has been pared down, therefore, the defense knows more of what to expect.

"We're running against the same guys, the same plays, every day," Hansen said. "I think when you simplify, you're going to do less stuff. You've just got to mix up the formations, the motions, kind of try to find new ways to be creative with the stuff you're simplifying."

Dan Hawkins agreed that offensive approach might make life a little easier for the defense in practice: "To some degree, yeah. But I think they (defense) are a little bit more adaptable in terms of what they're doing, too."

WEBB EMERGING: Redshirt freshman Derrick Webb eventually might make names for himself at two positions - inside linebacker and fullback.

At linebacker, he was credited with four tackles and a sack Friday, and he also was used at fullback on the goal line. Webb played tailback as a junior in high school, then switched sides.

"I know (fullback) well enough to do what I'm doing right now . . . I'm not doing too much in the offense right now - just the goal line," he said.

But he believes his prospect of playing time will increase: "If I keep working as hard as I am right now, I definitely feel like I'll earn some playing time - especially on special teams."

Webb, a 6-foot, 220-pounder, saw some duty Friday with the first defense. Linebacker coach Brian Cabral's plan was to assimilate his younger players into the lineup with veterans.

"Coach wanted to switch up the rotation so we had a veteran guy out there with young guys like me and Pat (Mahnke)," Webb said. "It helps to have somebody (experienced) out there, so if something comes up, we talk . . . it helps me pick up on things I'm not sure about."

Dan Hawkins called Webb "intense . . . he loves the game, has good tempo and a good motor. He can bring it. He's kind of like 'B-Lock (Brian Lockridge)' - he only knows one speed."

BETTER TO RECEIVE: With receivers Simas, Jefferson and McKnight out, junior transfer Toney Clemons - a primary target regardless - stepped up and caught six passes for 37 yards and two touchdowns.

Just behind him was Kendrick Celestine, with five catches for 83 yards - a 16.6 yard-per-catch average that was the afternoon's highest.

Kiesau on Celestine, a 2007 scholarship signee who has worked his way back onto the team: "We're still kind of waiting for him to break out and have that day. He's slowly but surely getting back into it. He hasn't done anything terrible, hasn't done anything great."

But after struggling with his receiving before spring break due to a broken right ring finger, Friday might have been the re-start Celestine needs.

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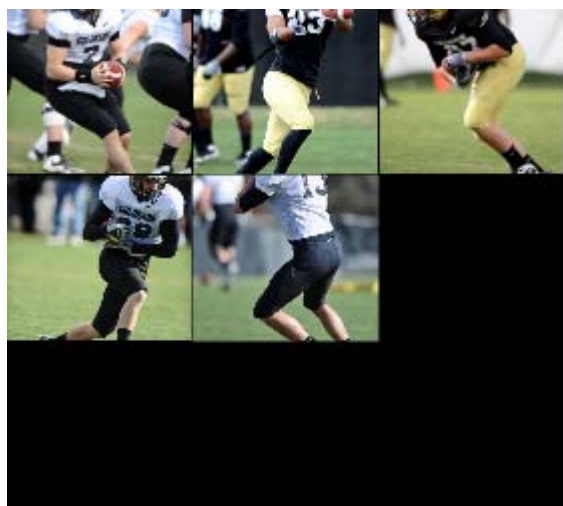


CU Buffs' Webb off to strong start

Redshirt freshman playing on both sides of ball for Hawkins' Buffs

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 04/02/2010 11:57:19 PM MDT



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If something good happens on a short-yardage play for the Colorado football team this spring, there is a better than average chance Derrick Webb is involved. It doesn't matter if we're talking offense or defense.

The redshirt freshman spent most of his time in the second scrimmage of spring ball Friday playing middle linebacker with the first-team defense. Linebackers coach Brian Cabral wanted to pair his younger linebackers with a veteran, giving Webb the opportunity to play alongside sophomore Jon Major.

Webb fit in well.

"He's kind of like B-Lock," coach Dan Hawkins said, comparing Webb to running back Brian Lockridge. "He only knows one speed."

Webb is also playing offense, serving as the fullback in goal-line situations for an offense that lacks a true fullback and has only four running backs this spring. Two of them watched from

the sidelines Friday with injuries.

Webb played tailback during his junior year in high school but being the blocking back is something new to him and he enjoys it.

"I know it well enough to do what I'm doing right now," he said. "I'm not doing too much in the offense, just goal-line situations."

Webb is roommates with redshirt freshman defensive back Parker Orms. They might be the two most impressive young players on the field this spring. They are feeding off each other's success. Both appear well on their way to earning playing time next fall.

"Derrick is getting better every day," defensive coordinator Ron Collins said. "He's a high-motor player. You look at Derrick and he doesn't look like your average Big 12 football player, but he's playing hard and fast for us and we feel very good about what he's doing."

Webb credits his relatively speedy development to the man with whom he is competing for playing time in the middle of the defense. Senior Michael Sipili has taken Webb under his wing, which some might find surprising considering Sipili has endured his own struggles during his time in Boulder.

"He helps me the most to learn the position," Webb said. "Mike, he always grabs me to come watch film with him. If I'm out on the field and he notices something that I'm doing wrong or something I can pick up on, he let's me know as soon as I come to the sideline."

Webb had four tackles and one sack in the scrimmage.

Offense struggles

Scrimmage No. 2 was a rough one for the offense. It was geared toward working on specific situations and did not feature the offense trying to drive the ball down the field, except for the first two possessions, one each for quarterbacks Tyler Hansen and Cody Hawkins.

Statistics from the scrimmage released by the school are skewed because the session was heavily focused on situational football. Fans should not read too much into them. But there were obvious problems for the offense.

The Buffs missed or failed to get off their first five-field goal attempts and did not score through the first 70 minutes. They finally found the end zone when the ball was placed at the 4-yard line for goal-line work and wide receiver Toney Clemons caught a short touchdown pass.

All seven scores in the 106-play scrimmage came in the goal-line session near the end of the scrimmage.

Hawkins was asked whether having several key players such as Rodney Stewart, Markques Simas and Will Jefferson out because of injuries was a reason for the lack of production.

"You know me, I don't like using those excuses," Hawkins said. "I think it's hard getting in a rhythm when you're doing a lot of segmented, situational stuff."

The injuries are not the only factor allowing the defense to dominate this spring. The offense has simplified things in an effort to perfect some basic plays and concepts making it easy for the defense to know what is coming, Hawkins said.

CU ran the ball 28 times for 61 yards, a 2.2-yard average per carry.

QB battle headed to fall

Offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau said Hansen and Cody Hawkins remain in a tight battle for the starting quarterback job and with three practice sessions, one of which is primarily review, and the spring game, there might not be enough time left this spring for one player to separate himself.

Hansen said at the beginning of spring practices that he hoped coaches would name a starter heading into the summer months, but it appears that probably won't happen. Kiesau said he has no timeline for naming a starter.

Kiesau said Hawkins was better with his reads and decision-making Friday.

"I thought Tyler was a little out of sync early," Kiesau said. "He wasn't into it mentally like I was hoping. Then Cody was sharp or sharper I should say."

Hansen completed 12 of 22 passes for 102 yards, one interception and two touchdowns both of which came in goal-line situations. Hawkins completed 10 of 22 passes for 111 yards. He threw no touchdowns or interceptions.

Notable

True freshman defensive back Josh Moten led the team with seven total tackles along with Major. ... Clemons led all receivers with six receptions for 102 yards and two scores. ... Zach Grossnickle and Marcus Kirkwood combined to make one of six field goals. Grossnickle was 1-for-4. Grossnickle also averaged 31.5 yards on six punts. ... Deji Olatoye and Marquez Herrod each made interceptions. ... Redshirt freshman Paul Vigo did not participate in the scrimmage because he is focusing on academics. ... The Buffs have the weekend off before returning to practice three times next week, starting on Monday. The spring game is a week from today at Folsom Field at 1:30 p.m. It will be broadcast live on KOA (850 AM).

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cu football

Orms makes a positive impression

The Wheat Ridge High standout has taken charge in spring drills and is pushing to start at safety.

By Natalie Meisler
The Denver Post

Posted: 04/04/2010 01:00:00 AM MDT



CU safety Parker Orms gets a hand on a pass intended for receiver Jason Espinoza during Friday's scrimmage. (Karl Gehring, The Denver Post)

BOULDER — When last seen at Invesco Field at Mile High, Parker Orms held aloft the Class 4A 2008 state trophy after carrying Wheat Ridge to the state championship. His five-touchdown masterpiece became an instant classic in Colorado prep folklore.

Orms' next trip to Invesco on Sept. 4 should

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fulfill a dream as a likely freshman starter in Colorado's secondary.

After a redshirt year to pack on a necessary 20 pounds, Orms (5-feet-11, 180 pounds) has grown into his own during CU's spring drills. He's already practicing with the first unit and was solid in the Buffs' two scrimmages.

"One thing about him is he's not afraid to hit. He will tackle. He's physical," CU defensive backs coach Ashley Ambrose said. "He has a real good chance of starting this year."

Orms, who gave a stirring acceptance speech as the Colorado Hall of Fame male high school athlete a year ago, said this past week he is just trying to earn starting status, oblivious to his praise. He knew he could play and overcome any questions about size.

"Football is my favorite sport. It's been my life," said Orms, who rushed for 2,813 yards and 32 touchdowns as a senior and a school record 4,372 yards in three years as a starter. "If I could do anything 2 4/7 it would be football. It's been a jump focusing on one sport, (academics) and they do that all year long."

Buffs coach Dan Hawkins uses the usual expressions to take focus off a player's size, calling Orms "a playmaker. He's a real tough kid. He's a gym rat. He just knows how to play the game."

Sure, Orms had the athleticism and drive to play

nearly every offensive, defensive and special-teams down in high school. He switched seamlessly to basketball and baseball.

But when opposing college receivers and ballcarriers line up against CU, Ambrose knows they will be thinking about the nickel/free safety.

"You look at him, and they think 'hah, he's little' until they get hit in the mouth and they realize he's bringing a little punch," Ambrose said.

During his senior season at Wheat Ridge, Orms had 102 tackles (66 solo), with 12 passes broken up, four interceptions, four forced fumbles and three sacks.

"He plays bigger than he is," Wheat Ridge coach Reid Kahl said.

Ambrose tried to sell the CU staff on Orms when he dazzled in a prep summer camp in 2008 before the start of his senior season. He finally got his offer from CU in mid-November — two weeks before the title game.

"He'd fly around. He's small," Ambrose said. "But you get a guy who loves playing and is playing with a passion. It doesn't matter if he's small."

"The whole thing people just wonder about is size. You look every week when you are playing 6-2, 6-3 receivers who are 220 pounds. Can his size hold up?"

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Orms steps into a CU secondary with proven 6-foot corners in Jalil Brown and Jimmy Smith and safety Anthony Perkins, the 5-foot-10 Northglenn star who came on last season. Now the goal is blending Orms' youthful exuberance with three returning starters in the defensive backfield.

"He's very enthusiastic," Brown said. "He's still making mistakes, but he's always doing it at 100 miles an hour."

Although he never wanted to go anywhere else, Orms has something to prove because he wasn't heavily recruited. In the five-TD title game against Greeley West to cap his high school career, Orms rushed for 275 yards on 38 carries, added 137 return yards and played a tough safety on defense.

"He's got a little chip on his shoulder," Brown said. "You look up and there's Parker making another play. It's surprising, but he gets it done. It's starting to become expected of him."

Orms said it was painful to watch as a redshirt freshman, especially after waiting for CU to come around with its scholarship offer the fall before. But he never really considered anywhere else, though Wyoming and UNLV made offers.

He insists he was destined to be a Buff, born 3 1/2 months after Colorado's 1990 national championship game. He is the family's third generation to attend CU and draws the biggest cheering section at spring practices.

"I think every freshman class wants to come in here and be the best class," he said. "We're going to work every day as hard as we can."

Natalie Meisler: 303-954-1295 or nmeisler@denverpost.com

Help on the way

After a season of growth, three redshirt freshmen who could help the Buffs' roster next season:

Parker Orms, safety

5-feet-11, 185 pounds, Wheat Ridge

Bidding for starting safety or nickel.

DeVaughn Thornton, tight end

6-4, 230, Denver East

Brings depth to a wide-open position.

Derrick Webb, linebacker

6-0, 220, Memphis Whitehaven

Doubles as a short-yardage fullback.

Natalie Meisler, *The Denver Post*

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colorado football

Bufs' offense has tough day

The unit struggles to find its rhythm because of penalties and poor execution.

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 04/03/2010 01:00:00 AM MDT

Updated: 04/03/2010 02:05:15 AM MDT



Colorado quarterback Cody Hawkins throws a pass over a defender toward the end zone on a fake field-goal attempt during Friday's scrimmage at Folsom Field in Boulder. (Karl Gehring, The Associated Press)

BOULDER — This is just spring practice, and Colorado's scrimmage Friday was, for the most part, structured and situational. It's not yet time to panic when subpar performances rule the day.

But, as junior quarterback Tyler Hansen put it, "We definitely have to pick things up. We had a tough day."

That was an understatement. The offense did not score a point, not even a field goal, during the portion of the scrimmage that resembled game- like conditions requiring sustained drives.

Granted, the offense was missing several key components. The top two tailbacks, Rodney "Speedy" Stewart (hand) and Brian Lockridge (leg), are banged up and were held out. Also not suiting up were wide receivers Will Jefferson (head)

Colorado Football

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and Markques Simas (leg), as well as place-kicker Aric Goodman (hip) .

Hansen and senior Cody Hawkins took snaps behind jumbled personnel groupings. The offense was moved around to work on situations such as third-and-5, first-and- goal, and in the red zone. But coach Dan Hawkins said that did not explain all those flags (11 penalties for 72 yards) and poor execution.

"It's hard to get in a rhythm (on offense) when you're doing segment stuff," Dan Hawkins said of the situational work. "But I'm not into excuses. We've got to clean some things up."

Place-kicker Zach Grossnickle, a redshirt freshman from Denver East, had a tough day, as did walk-on Marcus Kirkwood. They combined to miss five field-goal tries (all inside 45 yards) before Grossnickle booted a 27-yarder. Grossnickle also struggled mightily with his punting.

"A young guy gets rattled and then his rhythm gets off," Dan Hawkins said of Grossnickle. "He's just got to make it."

As a fullback, Derrick Webb turned in one of the best offensive performances, knocking defensive linemen and linebackers off the line. Oh, and the redshirt freshman from Memphis, Tenn., also was a star on defense. Middle linebacker is his specialty and primary duty, where he backs up senior starter Michael Sipili.

Webb, 6-feet and 220-pounds, said he had never played fullback. "But I was a tailback my junior year of high school," he said with a grin. "Fullback and linebacker are not that different. You just go hit somebody."

If Friday's scrimmage was an indication, CU will be hard-pressed to keep Webb off the field this fall. "He has only one speed," Dan Hawkins said of Webb's all-out effort.

In addition to Webb, young defensive players that stood out included redshirt freshman safety Parker Orms, redshirt freshman cornerback Deji Olatoye, sophomore defensive end Nick Kasa, sophomore linebacker Jon Major and sophomore safety Ray Polk.

"I definitely feel we're going to be good," Webb said. "We have a lot of young guys that are getting reps."

As for the top two quarterbacks, Hansen (12-for-22, 102 yards) and Cody Hawkins (10-for-22, 11) finished with similar passing statistics. Hansen threw for the only two touchdowns, both to Michigan transfer Toney Clemons during goal-line situational work.

Offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau said the scrimmage produced "no separation" between the two quarterbacks. "That's the way I like it right now," Kiesau said.

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APRIL 3, 2010, 11:44 AM

CU's annual QB battle to go into August camp

By **TOM KENSLE** |  1 Comment

Following Friday's scrimmage, Colorado offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau was asked if there is enough time left in spring drills to make a QB decision between junior Tyler Hansen and senior Cody Hawkins.

"Probably not," Kiesau said. "I don't know the answer to that, but probably not. I don't see it, I really don't, to be honest."

Three regular practices — Monday, Tuesday and Thursday — remain before the spring game on Saturday, April 10 (1:30 p.m. kickoff in Folsom Field).

Hansen (12-for-22, 1 interception) and Hawkins (10-for-22, no picks) turned in similiarly mediocre performances Friday in the scrimmage. Neither was able to move the team for a touchdown during the portion of the scrimmage that resembled game-like conditions with sustained drives. Hansen threw two touchdowns later in the scrimmage to Michigan transfer wideout Toney Clemons during goal-line situational work.

Colorado fans, perhaps a majority, were surprised that CU even has a quarterback battle, considering that Hansen started the final seven games of the 2009 season and Hawkins did not play in the finale against Nebraska. But the philosophy of coach Dan Hawkins is always to open every position to competition during spring drills.

I'll be shocked if Hansen isn't Colorado's starter in 2010.

But there's no denying that Cody Hawkins almost always has better practices.

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Offensive? Buffs out of sync as they try to figure out how to move the ball

By Patrick Ridgell
© 2010 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — No, through 11 spring practices, including a pair of scrimmages, the Colorado Buffaloes are not close to naming a starting quarterback. They appear to have plenty else to worry about.

Friday's second spring scrimmage saw an injury-depleted and simplified offense fail to score a point on any drive that did not start inside the defense's 5-yard line. Offensive coaches said their goal-line attack looked pretty good, but they should realize that defensive coordinator Ron Collins said he still needs to install the complete goal-line package. So there.



Colorado tailback Quentin Hildreth, left, is stopped abruptly by the defense during Friday's scrimmage in Boulder. **Joshua Buck/Times-Call**

Meanwhile, the Buffs are beaten up, and much of it came from Thursday's practice, spring's first inside the bubble. For whatever reason, it rendered several key Buffs unable to play Friday. Tailback Rodney Stewart hurt his hand. Receiver Markques Simas hurt his leg. Receiver Will Jefferson hurt his head.

In addition, Friday's scrimmage — which was heavy on third downs and red-zone and other specific situations — was played without leading receiver Scotty McKnight due to his ankle ligaments, and starting right tackle Bryce Givens didn't practice again for reasons that are unclear. Reserve tailback Brian Lockridge was injured during individual drills prior to the scrimmage. Starting right guard Ryan Miller has been out since the spring's first practice, when he broke the plate in his arm. CU has not said whether any of the injuries are serious.

Without Stewart and Lockridge, CU had two tailbacks Friday: walk-on Quentin Hildreth and former walk-on Cory Nabors. The offense continues to be pass-heavy.

What's it all mean? Hard to say, but no one seemed too thrilled.

"I thought we practiced really good Tuesday and Thursday, and maybe the length and the intensity of yesterday took a little bit out of them (Friday)," head coach Dan Hawkins said. "But that's not an excuse. We still have to get lined up and know the snap count and make kicks when have a chance to make them.

"I think we're a lot more physical than we've been since I've been here. I think that's good, and we continue to point that out and promote that."

Kicker Aric Goodman (hip) missed his fourth straight practice, and the kicking team failed on its first five field-goal attempts — one came on a bad snap, and another one was blocked. There were 11 penalties during the 87-play scrimmage.

As for the quarterbacks, Tyler Hansen and Cody Hawkins have yet to separate themselves at all, coordinator Eric Kiesau said. And that's just fine with Kiesau. He said their battle to win the starting job could come down to Sept. 3, the day before CU plays Colorado State.

"Those guys have to separate themselves," Kiesau said. "It's whenever they decide to separate themselves. I like the

way they're both playing."

Kiesau reserved much of his judgment until after he studies the film, but he did say this: "I thought Tyler was a little out of sync early, not mentally into it like I was hoping. Cody was sharp, or sharper, I should say. ... He made better reads."

Hansen said he "definitely" has to play better than he did Friday to earn the starting job. He said he needs to improve his accuracy and make good decisions.

"We didn't really have a rhythm," he said. "For some reason, we started off pretty good then hit a lull and relaxed a little bit. We definitely have to clean things up before the spring game."

Cody Hawkins continued his local media ban after the scrimmage, refusing to speak.

Hansen went 12-for-22 for 102 yards and two touchdowns and an interception. Hawkins went 10-for-22 for 111 yards. Both started seven drives.

Collins said the defense's top players are performing well, but the reserves need pick things up.

"I think the guys are playing fast and physical right now, so I was pleased with that," he said.

EXTRA POINTS: The defense was missing linebacker B.J. Beatty, cornerback Paul Vigo and tackle Nate Bonsu, who's out for spring with a knee injury sustained in winter conditioning. ... Kicker Zach Grossnickle went 1-for-4 on field goals. He averaged 31.5 yards a punt. One was blocked. ... Defensive tackle Will Pericak batted down two passes and blocked a field goal. ... Hildreth ran 11 times for 34 yards and scored two touchdowns on goal-line plunges. ... There were 55 passes thrown and 28 runs, but much of the scrimmage was spent working on third-down situations. Kiesau said Thursday that over the previous six practices, the offensive had used only two running plays.

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

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Monday, April 5, 2010

Colorado RB Stewart taking control of backfield

By David Ubben
ESPN.com

BOULDER, Colo. -- [Rodney Stewart](#)'s 2009 wasn't ideal. His team won just three games. He suffered an ankle injury against Kansas and had to miss time after a hamstring injury early in the season.

But the Colorado running back still rushed for more than 800 yards and scored nine touchdowns, both career highs. This offseason, the Buffaloes talented backfield thinned out with the departures of running backs [Demetrius Sumler](#) and [Darrell Scott](#), who came to Colorado ranked No. 9 in the 2008 ESPNU 150 and the No. 2 running back.

"I'm the most experienced [running back], so I kind of feel like a leader," Stewart said.

The junior known around Boulder as "Speedy" could be a key cog in the Colorado offense.

This spring, with just four running backs practicing, Stewart isn't getting as much action as he'd want. That will change soon.

"You always want to get the ball to your playmakers, so we try, whether you want to hand it to him or throw it to him, and he's been doing a good job in the return game, too," said Colorado coach Dan Hawkins. "He's good with the ball in his hands, so we'll try to get the ball to him."

And with Hawkins' commitment to get him the ball, combined with Scott and Sumler freeing up 59 carries from a season ago, Stewart's 198 carries could rise.

Stewart said he was "disappointed" his friends chose to leave the program, but understood they wanted to make an impact elsewhere.

Stewart caught just 12 passes in 2009, and that number should rise, too.

"This spring I'm focused on catching the ball out of the backfield, completing all my pass blocks, whether its cutting the guy and getting him down or lighting him up," Stewart said. "We've done a lot more screens in practice, and they're getting the ball to me a lot more on spot routes. Behind the line of scrimmage and things like that."

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Monday, April 5, 2010

Buffs encouraged by '09 finish

By David Ubben
ESPN.com

BOULDER, Colo.—Nate Solder watched Alabama from the sidelines on a day in December two years ago in Shreveport, La. Three months ago, he watched—on TV this time—the Crimson Tide win a national championship.

On that day two years ago, Alabama was only six points better than the Buffaloes, winning the Independence Bowl, 30-24. Last January, Alabama won its 14th game and a national title.

The gap between the two teams now is much wider, but the offensive lineman and his teammates believe, despite winning just three games in 2009, that gap could have been much narrower than 11 wins.

“I never doubted that we could play much better than we did, and we did toward the end of the season,” Solder said. “It was encouraging that we stuck together and played better toward the end of the season. We kept getting better.”

Colorado closed their season with five consecutive games against teams who finished their season in a bowl. It upset Texas A&M before losing at Iowa State by a touchdown. The Buffaloes lost a fourth-quarter lead at Oklahoma State and were within a touchdown of Big 12 North champ Nebraska in the fourth quarter.

“That was due to us not being very disciplined, having a lot of dumb mistakes that could easily be correctable,” said defensive back Anthony Perkins.

That’s not acceptable for the Buffaloes, but they feel the road back to a bowl game isn’t as long as some might think.

“The biggest emphasis this year is taking care of the little things, taking care of details, being disciplined as a team, cutting down on penalties and just not doing things that beat us last year,” Perkins said. “Not beating ourselves.”

And that’s begun this spring. Its coach, Dan Hawkins, enters 2010 on the proverbial hot seat. The expectations outside the locker room are low. But hope for the Buffaloes lies in lessons learned from a less-than-ideal season.

“It was a challenge. You had to keep the faith,” Solder said of the Buffaloes’ struggles. “Rallying with the guys. Maybe the world was against you, but you’ve got to stay with the team. It’s about the guys.”

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