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Longmont, Colorado
Wednesday, August 12,
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Burney back in black

CU coaches say cornerback appears to be better than ever

By Patrick Ridgell
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BOULDER — In so many ways, he's the same old Ben Burney.

Big smile. Likes to laugh. Engaging. As at ease talking football as he is discussing Homer's Iliad, in which, he said, he reads about the rage of Achilles almost every night before he goes to bed these days.

The former cubuffs.com blogger has already written a book under a pseudonym — to keep the NCAA folks happy — that he said is doing really well. He said he might reveal its title once his eligibility expires following the 2009 season. He also might try graduate school for film once his football days end because "I like to write scripts."

Lately he finds himself getting into the works of Edgar Allen Poe, and he likes to read the Bible for its literary tales.

"Great anecdotes," Burney said.

The Colorado football program hopes the story with Burney this year will pretty good, too. He's back for his senior season after he redshirted in 2008 to recover from surgeries on both shoulders, both wrists and one of his knees. We probably won't know for certain until some time in September what Burney's story will be on the football field, where, according to defensive backs coach Greg Brown, he "held his own" in 2007, when he started 13 times at cornerback opposite all-Big 12 corner Terrence Wheatley.

Coaches expect him to still be a physical presence in the backfield. He's listed at 5-foot-11 and 195 pounds, which he called his natural weight. So far, coaches say he looks like the same old Burney.

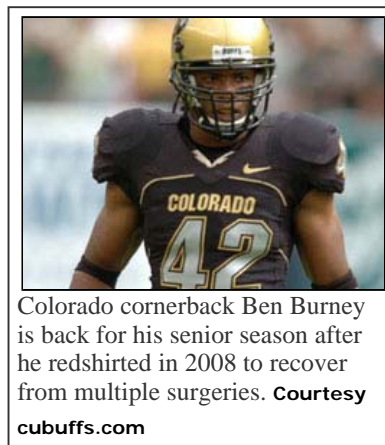
"He appears to be," Brown said. "Proof is in the pudding, and we'll know a lot more when we put the pads on. But hey, he looks like the same old Ben. He's tough; he's a physical guy; he's a bump-and-run press guy. We're fortunate to have him back."

To review, Burney's surgeries following the 2007 season included reparations on torn labrums in both shoulders. He had a torn ligament in one wrist, and arthroscopic surgery on the other. His knee was so worn down from tendinitis it was "decrepit," Burney said.

But now, "I feel great," Burney said. "Very healthy. The healthiest I've been in a very long time, like, years."

Said Brown: "That's an unbelievable feat the guy has gone through. He's a tough person."

CU has options at cornerback with Jimmy Smith, Cha'pelle Brown, Jalil Brown and Anthony Wright, among others. Greg Brown said he does not anticipate settling anything at either cornerback position for a long time because "We have too many good players ... that's a great thing."



Asked if he can still do what he did before all the injuries, Burney said, “definitely. ... I did most of spring ball and stuff like that.

“I don’t feel hesitant. I go now if I feel like going. I don’t have to worry, if I fall, if my leg is going to give out, or if I have to practice on this shoulder and not that shoulder, you know what I’m saying?

“I don’t have to think as much. I can just go.”

Head coach Dan Hawkins said Burney is better now than in 2007 because he’s healthy. But there’s more to it.

“He’s a lot more assertive and a lot more confident,” Hawkins said. “The poor guy, up until he had all of those surgeries, he was always dealing with something. He had so many little different nicks. I just think he’s playing at a whole other level.

“The awesome thing is, we’re really good at corner, and he’s really good.”

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CU's Tuioti-Mariner changes plans, is now seeking to play

By Patrick Ridgell
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BOULDER — Colorado coach Dan Hawkins said Friday that offensive lineman Max Tuioti-Mariner was leaving to serve a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and wouldn't return to the program until 2011. Those plans have changed.

CU reported Monday that Tuioti-Mariner is indefinitely putting his mission plans on hold and will undergo an accelerated rehabilitation program intended to enable him to play in CU's Big 12 opener Oct. 10 at Texas.

Hawkins said, "We'll see," when asked if he'll be ready. Hawkins said he knew what changed Tuioti-Mariner's mind about his mission plans, but declined to specify what.

"When you deal with teenagers in the modern era ... you can't even come close to imagining the things that go on and the things that happen where they are," Hawkins said. "So nothing ever surprises me. You're talking about guys getting twisted and turned.

"Their lives are infinitely more complicated."

Tuioti-Mariner was unavailable for comment following Monday afternoon's practice.

Tuioti-Mariner earned a starting job at guard on CU's offensive line by the third game of his true freshman season in 2008. He tore his right ACL during a non-contact drill in practice on Sept. 23, ending his season early.

The NCAA has already given Tuioti-Mariner a medical hardship, meaning he still has a redshirt year available to him and he's still listed as a freshman.

The right ACL was beginning to come around in March when Tuioti-Mariner tore his left one doing another non-contact drill, running an L drill through cones in winter conditioning. He initially tore his left ACL during the spring of his junior year of high school in Corona, Calif. It cost him his senior season.

Surgeons repaired the left one, again, last spring.

STILL WAITING: Receiver Andre Simmons remained out of practice Monday while CU awaits his transcripts from his former school, Independence Community College in Kansas. They did not arrive Monday, as CU reported it had expected.

"They just haven't gotten the paperwork in yet," Simmons said Monday.

CU reported Thursday that Simmons will be cleared to play once his transcript arrives and it verifies what the program has been told it contains. Simmons cannot practice with the team until it arrives. Simmons said he is not frustrated with waiting.

"I'm pretty calm," he said.

Said Hawkins: "It's a formality of getting all of his grades together and getting them posted and getting him cleared. You're talking about a ton of administrative loops."

BAHR ASSUMING ROLE: Offensive lineman Matt Bahr said he rolled his ankle during Monday morning's practice, but added that X-rays taken revealed that it's fine and that he expects to practice today.

"I just rolled it; it's fine," he said.

"They kept me out of the rest of practice as a precaution."

Asked about the injury, Hawkins said, "He's out here."

Bahr needs all the practice time he can get. Coaches appear to be grooming him to be CU's sixth offensive lineman this year, meaning he'll be the first one off the bench if an injury forces a starter out.

Bahr said he's playing both guard and tackle positions. Bahr made eight starts at right tackle last season after Ryan Miller broke his leg against Florida State in Jacksonville, Fla.

Bahr, a third-year sophomore, said in spring ball he played "a ton of guard," which is probably the position with which he's least familiar.

"I played more on the right side last year, so obviously I have more experience at right tackle, so just playing left tackle is a little bit difficult for me just because I'm not used to that set," Bahr said. "At the same time, I played left tackle in high school, so it's a lot of the same. But at the same time, when you get so many reps at one side, it's a little different when you go over to the other side."

Bahr is sporting a Mohawk hairstyle in camp. He cut it that way during the summer.

"Just a little bit of an attitude, just a little bit of a statement that we're going to ball this year," he said when asked why. "Just like coach says: No excuses."

EXTRA POINTS: An injury to Cody Hawkins or Tyler Hansen means one of the three freshmen quarterbacks — Clark Evans, walk-on Seth Lobato or walk-on Jerry Slota — will be forced to get ready as the backup. "They're a long ways away ... from being functional," Hawkins said about the three freshmen. "They'll get there." ... The entire team practices once today, from 9:45 a.m. to noon. It will be the first time for the team in full pads.

"They're getting a little agitated. We'll see how they go (today)," Hawkins said.

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cu football

Bufs tailback Brian Lockridge adds speed to CU football backfield

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 08/10/2009 10:40:20 PM MDT

Updated: 08/11/2009 12:21:03 AM MDT



Brian Lockridge gives the Buffs a versatile threat at tailback after a redshirt injury season.

BOULDER — What could possibly be quicker and more elusive than somebody nicknamed Speedy?

Perhaps Brian Lockridge. Colorado football coaches likened the tailback to the Energizer Bunny during his 2007 freshman season because the 5-foot-7, 180-pound Californian ran around nonstop. Lockridge had to redshirt last season while healing a sports hernia and befriended Rodney "Speedy" Stewart, who led the team in 2008 with 622 yards rushing as a freshman.

At 5-6, 170, Stewart is about Lockridge's size.

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They have developed a good-natured rivalry. Stewart also is coming back from an injury, having suffered a season-ending leg fracture against Texas A&M.

Now they're healthy and try to outdo each other at anything and everything.

Colorado Football

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- [View](#) slide show of CU's first day of football practice Aug. 7 .
- [Visit](#) the CU Stats Page for boxscores, Big 12 standings, team leaders and more .
- [Visit](#) Tom Kensler's All Things Bufs blog for a behind-the-scenes look at CU sports .

Game on.

"It's a pretty good competition they have going," running backs coach Darian Hagan said Monday. "Each one wants to have the best body. They want to be the fastest. They go at it."

Stewart added: "We both like to talk stuff. It's all in good fun. It will make us better."

It would come as a surprise if Lockridge were to leapfrog Stewart and sophomore Darrell Scott in the pecking order for carries this season. And junior Demetrius Sumler, though not flashy, has a workhorse mentality that coaches appreciate.

But somehow, coaches must find a way to get Lockridge involved, Hagan acknowledged.

"We'll line that guy up all over the field," Hagan said. "We're going to try to get the ball in his hands. Very seldom does Brian Lockridge get caught from behind. We've got to use him. His speed is something we need. We missed him last year."

Last season CU had just one running play that netted more than 40 yards: a 42-yarder by Scott against Texas A&M. A year earlier, Lockridge had two carries longer than that, bursting for 43 yards against Miami (Ohio) and for 47 against Iowa State. He also had a would-be 56-yard TD run against Miami nullified by a penalty.

"Brian is a playmaker," Sumler said. "He brings a lot of speed, a lot of energy. People talk about 'high motor.' That guy goes full speed in walkthroughs sometimes."

Already developing into a team leader, Lockridge said he will do whatever it takes to get on the field.

"If I can play running back, spot receiver, special teams, anywhere, I'll do my best to contribute," he said. "I'm at the bottom of the charts (at tailback) right now, but I expected that. I don't expect to be there long. I encourage challenges, and this is one big challenge I have to get."

Hagan said Lockridge might substitute for Stewart at times, and on occasion they could be on the field together. The redshirt year helped

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Lockridge, Hagan said, because he has become a smarter, more patient runner. It's one thing to go full speed and another to outrun the blocking.

"With their size, those guys can hide back there," 6-9, 305-pound junior tackle Nate Solder said of Stewart and Lockridge. "The defense is going have a hard time seeing them."

Footnotes.

Freshman offensive guard Max Tuioti-Mariner has decided to rejoin the team rather than begin a two-year Mormon Church mission. Tuioti-Mariner is coming off two ACL surgeries. Coach Dan Hawkins said "we'll see" when asked if Tuioti-Mariner can contribute this season. ... Still awaiting his junior college transcript, wide receiver Andre Simmons has not been cleared to practice. ... CU has one practice today, 9:45 a.m. to noon. It will be the first workout in full pads. On Wednesday, there will be two-a-day sessions (9:30-11:30 a.m. and 4-5:30 p.m.). Thursday's noon-3 p.m. scrimmage at Folsom Field will be the last session of August camp that is open to the public.

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Bufs LB ready to let it rip

Cabral believes redshirt freshman Rippy has plenty of potential

By Ryan Thorburn
Monday, August 10, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — Dan Hawkins would love to see more first-year Colorado player stories like Doug Rippy's.

Last fall as a true freshman, Rippy was best known as Rodney Stewart's cousin and for telling the Colorado coaching staff that it might be a good idea for them to recruit "Speedy" to Boulder.

While Stewart was stealing the spotlight from Darrell Scott at running back, Rippy was quietly getting bigger, faster and stronger behind the scenes, wisely serving as an understudy to Brad Jones.

Now the redshirt finally has been taken off, and Rippy is hitting the practice fields at full speed.

"It was tough to redshirt, but it was a positive thing," Rippy said after collapsing the pocket a couple of times against CU's first-team offensive line during Monday's morning practice. "It was a learning experience. Any time you watch the older guys it gives you a chance to pick things up and show it on the field."

During the 2008 season, Jones led the Buffs with seven sacks and 14 quarterback pressures. He was the only CU player selected in April's draft, taken by the Green Bay Packers in the seventh round.

Rippy is expected to help fill the void at outside linebacker along with B.J. Beatty. Both players will likely be on the field during pass situations.

"The last several years we really haven't had the affordability to redshirt guys," CU associate head coach Brian Cabral said. "To be able to redshirt (Rippy) last year is going to pay big dividends. ...

"He has the ability, just like Brad had the ability. He's young, he's immature, he doesn't know and understand yet, but once he does he can be a good player."

Rippy has shown a knack for beating offensive tackles in practice and also has the speed necessary to drop back and cover tight ends.

"He can be everything we're looking for on defense," brags Stewart, who still rooms with his cousin. "He's been really quiet lately studying his playbook and working on his stuff. I'd like to see him do some good things this year. He's already more focused and ready for the season."

With an impressive list of inside linebackers — Marcus Burton, Michael Sipili, Jeff Smart, Shaun Mohler, Jon Major, and so on — coupled with the development of Rippy and Beatty, the Buffs should

be able to use both the 4-3 and 3-4 schemes with confidence in 2009.

“Last year we were 5-7 and it was tough seeing that,” Rippy said. “This year we’re going to come out with a better attitude.”



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CU special teams unit still a Riddle

Bufs trying to find replacement for speedy Smith, figure out kicking woes

By Kyle Ringo
Monday, August 10, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — One of the featured items on the to-do list for the Colorado football team in fall camp is finding a replacement for punt and kickoff return man Josh Smith.

There is a healthy list of candidates for both jobs, but it might be hard to find anyone with the speed and vision that allowed Smith to rack up more than 1,500 return yards last season and finish 10th in the nation in all-purpose yardage. Smith chose to transfer to UCLA in the offseason.

The top contenders for punt return are Jason Espinoza, Scotty McKnight, Rodney Stewart and Andre Simmons, when he begins to practice.

Espinoza is the most experienced in that group, at least at the major college level. Coaches love his sure hands and decision making.

Special teams coach Kent Riddle said with teams using directional kicking schemes and even asking their punters to roll out and kick on the run rugby style, having Espinoza return is ideal.

“Against most teams, you want a guy who is going to get back there and make smart decisions, field the ball and not let it roll all over the place,” Riddle said.

The leading candidates for kickoff return are Darrell Scott, Stewart, Demetrius Sumler and Simmons. All have experience returning kickoffs in the past. It remains to be seen if any of them can lift fans out of their seats like Smith when the ball lands in their hands.

Filling the return jobs actually could be one of the easier tasks for Riddle.

If the Buffs are going to achieve a winning season, they will have to perform much better across the board in the kicking game. They figure to be in some dogfights on the field this season and might need to win a few weeks in the kicking game. That means Riddle must coax improvement and consistency out of place-kicker Aric Goodman or find a replacement all together. Ditto for punter Matt DiLallo.

But the men doing the kicking are just part of the equation.

The Buffs finished 114th in the nation in kickoff coverage last season, allowing two kickoffs to be returned for touchdowns and a gaudy 26.74 yards per return. The good old days of former kicker Mason Crosby booting the ball out of the back of the end zone regardless of where the game was being played are long gone. CU had only 15 touchbacks in 2008.

Riddle and coach Dan Hawkins believe the Buffs can make major improvement in covering kicks and in every area of special teams this season because there are many more players with experience on the roster competing for special teams time.

“One of the things we’re talking about is speed down the field,” Riddle said. “Be fast and go make the play. Don’t wait for somebody else to do it, and really working on one-on-one battles. Most of special teams comes down to that. It’s me against you, and I’ve got to win that battle.”

CU fans remember well the Buffs’ struggles to make a field goal in 2008.

Goodman and Jameson Davis combined to make only five of 17 attempts and missed eight in a row at one point.

Both players return this year, with Goodman penciled in as the starter after he found more consistency in spring adopting a two-step approach. Davis is coming off knee surgery and still isn’t allowed to participate fully in practice, but he will likely handle kickoff duties once again.

Riddle believes both will benefit from tough times in 2008 and rebound this fall.

True freshman Zach Grossnickle might be able to earn opportunities if his older teammates falter.

Grossnickle will also be the backup punter, unless he pulls a major surprise and outkicks DiLallo, whom Riddle is high on after a stellar offseason.

DiLallo was benched late last year in favor of former walk-on Tom Suazo. DiLallo’s net average was just 34 yards per punt a year ago and he had one punt blocked.

“You can ask anyone,” Riddle said. “There has been no one work as hard as Matt does to have success. You can’t guarantee success, but you can work hard enough to say, ‘Shoot, I deserve it.’ I think he does.”

Notable

CU offensive lineman Max Tuioti-Mariner has changed his mind and will not take his Mormon mission this year. He suffered two torn ACLs in the last year and he may not be healthy enough to play this season. ...

Junior college transfer wide receiver Andre Simmons continues to wait for his transcripts to arrive from Independence Community College in Kansas. He cannot practice until they arrive and CU officials review and approve them. Coach Dan Hawkins said it's a matter of getting through the bureaucracy, but he remains confident Simmons will be eligible and will play at CU this season.



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'09 Buffs short on age, longer on experience

By [Kyle Clark](#)

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Colorado players get fired up for the Rocky Mountain Showdown game against Colorado State in 2007.

The road to the 2009 season has been a painful one for Colorado football. The depth chart, players and Coach Dan Hawkins all suffered in some way during 2008 and into this summer. Now, an almost completely healthy squad is focused to deliver on an "expectation of excellence."

The Buffaloes opened their first full weekend of fall practices last Friday, and already there is a sense of urgency running through the team. "I think it's always needed to throw a rock on the gas pedal and you want to get going. That being said, you gotta take every day as it comes. People go 'are you ready, are you ready' and you're like 'no'. . . we'll be ready Saturday before the Colorado State game," Hawkins said at CU's media day Saturday.

This rush can be attributed to the young roster. Eleven first-stringers were lost in the offseason, leaving questions at many key positions. 2009 will be the year of the sophomore, with 14 listed as either starting or in competition to start. Tyler Hansen, in his second year, will battle for the QB job. Receivers, running backs, safeties and almost the entire offensive line are also dominated by underclassmen.

Although there's a lack of age on the squad, the experience level is better than you'd think. The Buffs suffered injury after injury throughout the 2008 schedule, which may have been a blessing in disguise. Freshmen were called on to rotate in, and started late in the season as the body count piled up.

Darrell Scott spoke of these problems as a positive experience. His knee, groin and ankle all broke down, forcing eight or fewer rushing attempts in just as many games. That lack of contribution lead the former No. 1 recruit to work extremely hard during the spring. "It was definitely humbling, and it made me hungrier to get out there and make plays," Scott said.

Hawkins also commented on how pain humbled him. In July he was hospitalized to remove a kidney stone. Ever the optimist, the coach used it to put things in perspective: "You know what, I really called it the gift, I did. It's a humbling thing, and when you're in that much pain, I was thankful for my wife: She did a great job in the hospital. I was thankful for our team: Those guys were texting me and on it. I was thankful for a job. I was thankful for insurance." Hawkins continued, "I think anytime you get humbled like that it's good, and I thought about the people that go to the hospital and never get out. I thought of the people that have things a lot worse than I do, so it was good."

Early on, these experiences seem to have translated into confidence among the players and coaches. Morning practice on media day saw players hustling between drills, lining up correctly and quickly, and making very few mental mistakes. On the other hand, we won't really be able to see where players stand until at least the middle of this week, when full pads are on and scrimmages begin.

Don't call the confidence quiet though. When Scott was asked what his goals for himself or the running back corps were, he smiled and responded, "We just need the 10 wins."

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