



# Starter not only question at QB for Colorado

## Bufs must select third-string signal caller, too

By Kyle Ringo  
Monday, August 17, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — There are two competitions taking place this month at quarterback on the Colorado football team and the one consuming much of offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau's attention is a bit of a surprise.

While Cody Hawkins and Tyler Hansen continue to fight for the starting job, Kiesau is trying to figure out which one of three true freshmen -- Clark Evans, Jerry Slota and Seth Lobato -- is most ready to serve as the backup to the backup. After all, if either Hawkins or Hansen was to miss significant time with an injury this fall, one of those youngsters would be needed to run the second team in practice and might be called upon in a game.

Evans is the only scholarship player among the freshman quarterbacks. He was recruited to CU from Los Alamitos, Calif., and to this point in camp, he most often seems to be the first of the three freshmen to receive practice repetitions. Slota and Lobato joined the program as invited walk-ons from area high schools, but that doesn't necessarily mean Evans has a built-in advantage.

Kiesau said the most consistent performer will earn the job.

"I will say that a lot of my focus is on the third guy rather than the first guy," Kiesau said. "I think the first guy will handle itself on film. I do spend a fair amount of time with the threes because we do have to figure out who our third guy is."

Game day for the team is less than three weeks away and game week preparation starts two weeks from today. Neither Kiesau nor coach Dan Hawkins is ready to set a timetable for naming starters and reserves.

"We'll see. We're going to let it play out," Hawkins said when asked about a timetable for naming the starter. "We don't really have one."

The Buffs have two more scrimmages scheduled in fall camp. One comes Thursday and the final scrimmage is scheduled for Aug. 29. Kiesau said coaches could wait until after that to make either decision.

Hawkins and Hansen have been competing for the job since the start of spring football back in March. Hawkins emerged from spring with an advantage, according to former offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich, who took the same job at Oregon.

Kiesau is now the man doing the evaluations and if one player has taken any kind of lead in his eyes, he

isn't saying so.

"They're both battling well," Kiesau said. "I mean, every day is a new challenge. Cody will have a good day. Then Tyler has a good day. It's kind of back and forth, but we're not near a decision right now."

It's possible another quarterback could be added to the mix at some point this month. Josh Moten, a talented athlete from California, was promised a shot at the quarterback position during recruiting. He hasn't reported to camp yet because he had to re-take his ACT to qualify academically. He is waiting at home for the score.

Kiesau said the three freshmen are somewhat overwhelmed at this point trying to learn the entire offense and lead it efficiently with few mistakes. It's a challenge made even more difficult this year because of the change in coaches.

Kiesau said he demands more from the quarterback pre-snap than used to be asked from the position under Helfrich.

"For a freshman to come in and throw the ball all over the yard would take a special person," Kiesau said. "I'm not saying it can't be done, but there is just a lot on the quarterback."

Kiesau said none of the freshmen played in an offense in high school that is similar to what the Buffs do, meaning none of the three has an advantage in familiarity.

## **Notable**

Offensive line recruit Shaun Simon from Tulsa, Okla., planned to greyshirt this fall and report to Boulder in January, but he must earn an Associate's degree from a junior college before he is academically qualified to attend any Big 12 Conference school. Simon told Rivals.com he did not pass the NCAA Clearinghouse. He will likely attend Hutchinson Community College in Kansas. ... Dan Hawkins said the team will elect captains later this month. ... Wide receiver Will Jefferson and defensive linemen Nick Kasa, Nate Bonsu and Forrest West were true freshmen Hawkins named as having a good chance to play right away this season. ... Hawkins said redshirt freshman Ray Polk has looked "awesome" so far in camp making the transition from tailback to safety after two offseason shoulder surgeries. ... Hawkins said the defense "got a little swagger going" Sunday during what might have been the best overall practice to this point in camp on that side of the ball. ... The Buffs have two practices scheduled for today.



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## QB won't be passed over

Bufs' Lobato relishes chance to become future face of CU

*By Justin Williams*  
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BOULDER — Seth Lobato's high school numbers are staggering.

During his senior year, the quarterback completed 158 of 276 passes for 2,741 yards. He threw 34 touchdowns and just four interceptions, and he carried the ball for 594 yards and eight touchdowns. The 6-foot-5 gunslinger also was a recruited basketball player and standout track athlete.

But throw in the fact that Lobato accomplished all this at Class 2A Eaton High School, and those achievements suddenly lose their luster. He was hardly recruited for football, getting modest looks from Colorado State and Wyoming and a few scholarship offers from smaller schools.

Lobato's confidence in himself never wavered, however. He was determined to play Division I football, and University of Colorado coaches are feeling increasingly blessed that he wound up on their doorstep.

"He's been productive and starting to pick things up," Buffs offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau said. "He's a great kid and works very hard. He has a lot of potential."

Lobato signed on with CU back in February as a preferred walk-on. Growing up just a few miles east of Colorado State and mingling with Rams fans on a daily basis, a spot in Fort Collins seemed fitting for Lobato — particularly with CSU's quarterback situation currently in flux. But even though Lobato never considered himself a Buffs or Rams fan, CU felt like the more natural fit.

"I made this decision a long time ago," he said. "(Colorado) recruited me a little bit late, but once we started talking, I knew this was the place I wanted to be. It just had everything I wanted in a program."

Getting playing time was obviously not at the top of Lobato's list of requirements. Ahead of him are two quarterbacks already with Big 12 experience in Cody Hawkins and Tyler Hansen, but that's not where Lobato's competition lies. The Buffs also brought in Clark Evans — who received a scholarship — and fellow walk-on Jerry Slota. The three freshmen are in a battle for the team's third quarterback position, though all three are likely to redshirt this season.

"The system that I'm running, it puts a lot more emphasis on the quarterback, so it's going to take these guys time to develop," Kiesau said. "The great thing is, they're not getting forced in there right away. They can take their time."

Just a week and a half into camp, though, Lobato is beginning to turn heads with his strong arm and athleticism. Hawkins, who has taken the three young guys under his wing in a teaching capacity, has noticed Lobato's ability.

"He's accurate and has a hose," Hawkins said. "He's tall and athletic, and just because he played at a small high school doesn't mean he won't turn into an NFL-caliber guy. He's got a lot of talent, and I think we're going to start seeing it show very soon."



Colorado quarterback Seth Lobato practices at Folsom Field on Thursday. **Lewis Geyer/Times-Call**

Lobato saw action on two series during the fall's first scrimmage last week, and he wasn't particularly pleased with his performance. He was 3-of-4 for 10 yards and engineered just one drive, while Evans and Slota each had three drives. Still, Lobato said his ultimate plan remains to work his way onto the field as soon as possible.

"I definitely want to play, and we obviously have some good quarterbacks," Lobato said. "Right now, my plan is to just get myself into the weight room with (strength coach Jeff Pitman) and get some weight on me and learn the offense better.

"You never know what can happen."

EXTRA POINTS: Running back Rodney Stewart (hamstring) did not practice with the team Sunday. When asked if the sophomore will return today, coach Dan Hawkins said: "We'll see." ... Hawkins said the team will name its captains later during camp and that the players will have the vote. ... Hawkins said the defense was dominant in Sunday evening's practice. "I think today was probably the first day where the defense got most of the periods," he said.

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# NCAA Football Preview - Colorado Buffaloes

**BY FRANK HAYNES, SPORTS NETWORK**

He mused, "I think the goal is always excellence. The bar is always high."

2009 ANALYSIS:

**OFFENSE:** The key to a possible winning season rests in the CU backfield, notably the quarterback position. Hawkins' son Cody (183-of-320, 1,892 yards, 17 TDs and 10 INTs) is probably the front-runner in terms of the starting nod, but he will be pushed by athletic sophomore Tyler Hansen. Regardless of who lines up under center, efficiency will be the key as the Buffs try to improve upon numbers that had them ranked in the bottom half of the FBS last season.

Coach Hawkins has said the QB job is wide open and is hopeful one of the two guys will step up and assume the role. "I've always been one of those guys -- I don't know how you always just say, well, somebody's the incumbent, and that's the way it is, and there's no challenge to that. I think no matter who it is or where we are at any position, I think we want guys to show up every day and compete and play and make plays and play well every week."

The running game should be in decent shape with the return of sophomores Rodney Stewart and Darrell Scott, the former serving as the team's leading rusher last year with 622 yards and two TDs. Scott was highly touted coming out of high school but injuries derailed what many had hoped would be a stellar rookie season. Another guy to keep an eye on is fellow sophomore Brian Lockridge.

Helping Hawkins, or Hansen make plays down the field will be WRs Scotty McKnight and Markques Simas. While neither are true game-breakers, both should be integral in helping the Buffaloes move the chains and put points on the board. Another guy who should help in the passing game is senior TE Riar Geer.

The CU offensive line returns just one starter in junior OT Nate Solder, but the unit should be in good shape with some athletic guys expected to make themselves known from the outset.

**DEFENSE:** The Buffs will employ a 3-4 scheme this season in an attempt to alleviate some of the pressure associated with breaking in 10 new starters on defense. The lone holdover from last year is senior LB Jeff Smart (118 tackles), while junior DE Marquez Herrod (four sacks in '08) has the ability to make an impact.

In addition to Smart, the linebacking corps features the return of seniors Shaun Mohler and Marcus Burton, as well as talented freshmen Doug Rippey and Mike Sipili. The unit as a whole could be one of the better in the Big 12, provided the rookies find their footing early and the injury bug stays far away.

Junior CB Jimmy Smith has the potential to be a star, and he will receive help in the secondary from fellow corner Ben Burney, as well as safeties Patrick Mahnke and Anthony Perkins.

Playing defense in the Big 12 is always a challenge as the league boasts some of the more potent offenses in the country. Hawkins is well aware of the effort needed to combat those high-powered attacks. "I know sometimes people pick on the defenses in our league because there's so many offensive numbers, but I just think it's because of the great talent that's in our league and then obviously spreading people out. It's very difficult to defend."

**SPECIAL TEAMS:** The kicking game is in flux at the moment, as incumbent Aric Goodman had a less-than-stellar year in '08, hitting just 5-of-14 FG attempts. Freshman Zach Grossnickle can serve in a dual role (punter and kicker), and hopes to challenge both Goodman and senior punter Matt DiLallo for their jobs.

**OUTLOOK:** Despite having talent, plenty of questions surround this Colorado team, not the least of which is at quarterback. The Buffaloes open with winnable games against Colorado State, Miami-Ohio and Wyoming, but a trip to Morgantown for a clash with West Virginia will prove difficult.

The Big 12 slate kicks off with tough games against Texas and Kansas, but this CU team could make some people stand up and take notice if some of the questions get answered early. Still, expecting the Buffs to challenge for a division title is probably too much to ask at this point, but a winning record and lower-tier bowl invite could be in the cards.



Posted on Sat, Aug. 15, 2009

## Big 12 football team ratings by position

### QBs (all ratings by team)

1. **Oklahoma:** Sam Bradford\*
2. **Texas:** Colt McCoy\*
3. **Kansas:** Todd Reesing\*
4. **Oklahoma State:** Zac Robinson\*
5. **Baylor:** Robert Griffin\*
6. **Iowa State:** Austen Arnaud\*
7. **Colorado:** Cody Hawkins\*
8. **Texas A&M:** Jerrod Johnson\*
9. **Texas Tech:** Taylor Potts
10. **Nebraska:** Zac Lee
11. **Missouri:** Blaine Gabbert
12. **Kansas State:** Carson Coffman

\* returning starter

Position battles continue at a few schools. Grant Gregory, the South Florida transfer, is pushing Coffman at Kansas State. At Colorado, Hawkins got most of the snaps in a recent scrimmage but Tyler Hansen had a good day. At Nebraska, a season-ending injury to Kody Spano heats up competition for the top reserve.

### Offensive line

1. **Oklahoma State:** Russell Okung
2. **Texas:** Adam Ulatoski
3. **Missouri:** Kurtis Gregory
4. **Nebraska:** Jacob Hickman
5. **Colorado:** Ryan Miller
6. **Texas Tech:** Brandon Carter
7. **Oklahoma:** Trent Williams
8. **Iowa State:** Reggie Stephens
9. **Kansas State:** Nick Stringer
10. **Kansas:** Jeremiah Hatch
11. **Baylor:** J.D. Walton
12. **Texas A&M:** Evan Eike

Baylor coach Art Briles calls Walton the best center in the Big 12. A&M welcomes LSU transfer Matt Allen. Only Texas and Oklahoma have had more all-conference OLs since 2003 than Missouri. Colorado basketball coach Jeff Bzdelik must be envious. The Buffs will start 6-9 Nate Solder at left tackle and 6-8 Miller at right guard.

**Running backs**

1. **Oklahoma:** Chris Brown
2. **Oklahoma State:** Kendall Hunter
3. **Nebraska:** Roy Helu Jr.
4. **Missouri:** Derrick Washington
5. **Colorado:** Darrell Scott
6. **Texas:** Vondrell McGee
7. **Kansas:** Jake Sharp
8. **Baylor:** Jay Finley
9. **Texas Tech:** Baron Batch
10. **Iowa State:** Alexander Robinson
11. **Texas A&M:** Cyrus Gray
12. **Kansas State:** Keithen Valentine

Texas still hasn't identified a starter among McGee, Fozzy Whittaker, Cody Johnson, Tre Netwon and Chris Whaley and it could be a committee again this season. Florida transfer Bo Williams will vie with Robinson for carries at Iowa State, which changes to a spread this season. If he rushes for five more yards than he did last year, Sharp will be the fifth-leading rusher in Kansas' history, passing Gale Sayers and John Riggins on the list.

**Wide receivers/tight ends**

1. **Kansas:** Dezmon Briscoe
2. **Oklahoma State:** Dez Bryant
3. **Oklahoma:** Jermaine Greshman
4. **Texas:** Jordan Shipley
5. **Texas Tech:** Detron Lewis
6. **Texas A&M:** Jeff Fuller
7. **Baylor:** Kendall Wright
8. **Kansas State:** Brandon Banks
9. **Missouri:** Jared Perry
10. **Nebraska:** Mike McNeill
11. **Iowa State:** Darius Darks
12. **Colorado:** Scotty McKnight

Colorado received a blow when Josh Smith transferred to UCLA. The Buffs' wide receiver coach? None other than head man Dan Hawkins, who shifted things around after a coaching shuffle in the spring. Texas A&M's Ryan Tannehill, who caught 55 passes last season, has moved to quarterback.

**Linebackers**

1. **Oklahoma:** Travis Lewis
2. **Texas:** Sergio Kindle
3. **Oklahoma State:** Andre Sexton
4. **Colorado:** Jeff Smart
5. **Missouri:** Sean Weatherspoon
6. **Baylor:** Joe Pawelek
7. **Texas Tech:** Brian Duncan

**8. Kansas State:** Alex Hrebec

**9. Nebraska:** Phillip Dillard

**10. Iowa State:** Jesse Smith

**11. Texas A&M:** Garrick Williams

**12. Kansas:** Hulton Tharp

Plenty of uncertainty at Nebraska, but expect Dillard to climb the depth chart at middle linebacker. Kansas coach Mark Mangino said newcomers have the veterans on the run at all linebacker positions. Baylor's Pawelek led the Big 12 in tackles last season at 10.7 per game. Several, like Texas' Kindle, play a hybrid linebacker/end role.

#### **Defensive line**

**1. Oklahoma:** Gerald McCoy

**2. Nebraska:** Ndamukong Suh

**3. Texas:** Lamarr Houston

**4. Kansas:** Jake Laptad

**5. Kansas State:** Brandon Harold

**6. Missouri:** Jaron Baston

**7. Oklahoma State:** Derek Burton

**8. Texas Tech:** Colby Whitlock

**9. Baylor:** Phil Taylor

**10. Texas A&M:** Von Miller

**11. Iowa State:** Nate Frere

**12. Colorado:** Marquez Herrod

Baylor is fired up about Taylor. He was suspended from the team at Penn State after a campus fight and landed in Waco partly because defensive coordinator Brian Norwood is a former Lions assistant. Look for A&M's Miller to rank among the league leaders in sacks. Big losses along the line for Colorado, which is replacing three multi-year starters.

#### **Secondary**

**1. Oklahoma:** Dominique Franks

**2. Nebraska:** Larry Asante

**3. Colorado:** Cha'pelle Brown

**4. Texas:** Earl Thomas

**5. Kansas:** Darrell Stuckey

**6. Baylor:** Jordan Lake

**7. Oklahoma State:** Perrish Cox

**8. Kansas State:** Joshua Moore

**9. Texas Tech:** Jamar Wall

**10. Texas A&M:** Jordan Pugh

**11. Iowa State:** James Smith

**12. Missouri:** Carl Gettis

Texas Tech was very good here last season but returns only one starter. Texas has vowed to come up with more than six picks, which was a league-low in 2008. So much of the secondary's success is about pass rush and Missouri and Iowa State hope to improve in that department.



**Special teams**

- 1. Texas**
- 2. Oklahoma State**
- 3. Iowa State**
- 4. Baylor**
- 5. Kansas State**
- 6. Nebraska**
- 7. Oklahoma**
- 8. Kansas**
- 9. Missouri**
- 10. Colorado**
- 11. Texas Tech**
- 12. Texas A&M**

Iowa State has some of the league's strongest legs with punter Mike Brandtner and kicker Grant Mahoney. Wide receivers like Oklahoma State's Dez Bryant, Kansas' Dezmon Briscoe, Texas' Jordan Shipley and Kansas State's Brandon Banks give their teams superior return men. The Wildcats led the Big 12 in kickoff coverage last season.

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