

Hawkins won't name Colorado starting QB until day of CSU game

Camera staff
Boulder Daily Camera

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Colorado football fans have waited nine months to find out who their starting quarterback will be in 2009. What's another 10 days?

Coach Dan Hawkins said following Thursday's practice he will not name a starting quarterback publicly until game day, Sept. 6, when Colorado State visits Folsom Field. It's possible those who arrive early for warm-ups might still be guessing who the starter will be for both teams.

Colorado State coach Steve Fairchild also has refrained from choosing his starter, but Fairchild's public dissatisfaction with his options probably has more to do with it than being coy with the Buffs.

"We're probably not going to say anything before the game," Hawkins said. "That's probably the reality of it."

Cody Hawkins, the coach's son, and Tyler Hansen have been competing for the job since the beginning of spring football in late March. Offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau has characterized the battle as close within the past week.

Hansen has missed practice time with an illness in the late stages of the competition. If it persists, it could affect the outcome, at least for the season opener. Dan Hawkins said there isn't much difference between the two players at this point.

When asked about the philosophy behind not announcing a decision, Hawkins said, "I don't know that there is really a necessity to do that. It's not like we have to go a certain direction with one guy or whatever."

Cody Hawkins is a returning two-year starter with 25 games under his belt and nearly 5,000 passing yards to his credit, including bowl game statistics.

Hansen played in five games last season as a true freshman, including one start. He shared time with Hawkins in the other four. He has thrown for 280 yards so far in his career.

But there was one more starting job settled on Thursday. While no one knows who the starting quarterback will be this season, the men blocking for him have been determined.

Offensive line coach Denver Johnson said third-year sophomore Ethan Adkins has won the starting job at left guard. The position was really the only spot on the line contested in camp.

Adkins joins left tackle Nate Solder, center Mike Ittis, right guard Ryan Miller and right tackle Bryce Givens in the starting group. Three of those five players are rookie starters and two have no collegiate playing time at all under their belts.

Ittis and Givens will see the first action of their careers against the Rams and Adkins will be playing in his fourth career game.

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Patience will finally pay for CU Buffs' center Ittis

It's been three years since soph has played in actual game

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 08/28/2009 12:02:39 AM MDT

If Mike Ittis was the superstitious sort, he might not be the starting center for the Colorado football team this fall.

Ittis, a third-year sophomore from Sarasota, Fla., had never played the position before coming to CU. He redshirted his first year in the program in 2007 and officially made the move during the first practice of fall camp in 2008.

He tore the anterior cruciate ligament in left knee that day during a non-contact drill ending his season, but not his desire to be the catalyst on every play the Buffs run.

After a year of rehabilitation, Ittis began fall practices earlier this month with a fire to prove himself and a deep desire to get back on the field. When the Buffs square off with Colorado State in Folsom Field in nine days, it will have been nearly three years since Ittis last played in a game.

"It has been a long time since I've played an actual football game, but at the college level I feel like when you're in practice and you do spring ball and the spring game and stuff like that, it's so game-like that you're out there and you're so focused on what you're doing," he said. "I don't feel like it's going to be a big shock to me."

Ittis is one of three starters on the offensive line with little or no playing experience at the college level, but he doesn't act like it in practices or the film room.

Ittis said what has allowed him to grab and hold on to the starting center job is being proactive and hungry to learn the position, even while he was sidelined with the injury last season. It also doesn't hurt that he's 6-foot-3 and 290 pounds and one of the strongest players on the team.

"I'm trying to be the guy who is always on top of it and able to pick up everything, but you can't," he said.

It's a lesson offensive line coach Denver Johnson has taught his new snapper.

Johnson said when Ittis makes mistakes it's generally because he is trying to do too much and not because he doesn't know his assignments. He's thinking about two blocks instead of one.

"It's so important to him and he's so conscientious about being that guy that everybody can count on and he can be the leader of the group and the traffic cop in there, sometimes he tends to over-think it too much," Johnson said. "But he will be just fine."

Mastering the mental part of the game at his position probably still won't come for awhile, but Ittis says he is now completely comfortable with the physical part. It does take time to learn the fundamentals of what seems like the easiest part of any play ---- the snap.

Ittis said he spent time during the summer a year ago working on snaps believing he was probably ticketed for a season as the backup to former starting center Daniel Sanders. He spent more time on it as his knee began to heal in the winter and spring.

"I feel like I've been playing center for the longest time now."

The offensive line is playing under a new position coach in Johnson for the third time in four years. They've been practicing under Johnson for nearly two full months now, including all of spring ball, and are excited about his aggressive style.

The only player who has been around long enough to have experienced all of those coaching changes is Iltis' backup.

Fourth-year walk-on Keenan Stevens has impressed coaches so much in spring and fall practices that it wouldn't be a surprise if he steals playing time from someone this season. Stevens came to the program from Lewis-Palmer High School in the Colorado Springs area and has persevered without a scholarship.

"We're probably as pleased with Keenan as anybody on the offensive line, maybe anybody on the offense, as far as his improvement, how far he's come." Johnson said. "We have a lot of confidence in him right now. I have absolutely no reservation about putting him in a ball game."

Johnson also has two other players in sophomores Blake Behrens and Matt Bahr who received extensive experience last season when they were called upon in place of injured starters. If a similar injury big were to hit the team again this season, the Buffs would be in a better position to handle it.

But top to bottom, the experience level is not where Johnson would like it.

"By any objective measure we are very young and relatively inexperienced," Johnson said. "You add them up and there is not a whole lot of starts collectively in that group. But we've got talent. We've got the right type of demeanor and the right kind of guys. We've just got to get there."

"It's kind of like credit, you can't get it unless someone gives it to you. It's like playing time, you've got to get in the game to get it. All those guys will get a good dose of it here in a few weeks."

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Green campus

Ralphie's Green Stampede: CU-Boulder expands zero-waste efforts

Program that started at football games extends to all sporting events

By Erica Meltzer, For the Colorado Daily
Colorado Daily

Posted: 08/27/2009 08:28:42 PM MDT

The University of Colorado's zero-waste program will become a feature at all sporting events this year.

CU rolled out Ralphie's Green Stampede for last year's football season, with cups and food containers made of compostable material and zero-waste stations staffed by volunteers directing trash into the correct containers.

This school year, the program will expand to all sporting events, from soccer to skiing.

CU Environmental Center Director Dave Newport said expanding the program won't mean a lot of extra work. The biggest part of last year's push was working with vendors to make sure food and drinks were served in containers that could be recycled or composted.

"Now the vendors have experience," Newport said. "We learned some lessons. At this point, it's really just a trash can with a different sticker, a different bag and it goes to a different location."

Zero-waste describes the program's goals, not its achievements. Last year, 80 percent of football game waste was diverted from landfills. Newport said he hopes to improve on that number this year, but he expects the decrease in landfill waste will be more incremental from here on out.

The program cost \$20,000 last year. Newport said about half of that cost was one-time start-up expenses. He hopes the program eventually will save the university money.

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THE DENVER POST

cu football

Name a QB? maybe not before opener

By The Denver Post

Posted: 08/28/2009 01:00:00 AM MDT

BOULDER — Colorado coach Dan Hawkins said Thursday he likely will not name a starting quarterback before the Sept. 6 season opener against Colorado State at Folsom Field. Not publicly, anyway.

"We're probably not going to say anything before the (first) game," Hawkins told reporters after practice. "That's probably the reality of it."

Hawkins did not say whether it's a bit of gamesmanship to keep CSU defensive coaches guessing or because junior Cody Hawkins and sophomore Tyler Hansen are locked in such a tight battle that it is too close to call.

Whatever the case, Dan Hawkins evidently does not feel a sense of urgency to name the QB who will take the first snap of 2009.

It would be a surprise if Hawkins and Hansen do not both see action.

Colorado Football

View slide show of

Colorado football coach Dan

- Hawkins .

View slide show of CU's

- running backs .

View slide show of CU

- football practice Aug. 10 .

View slide show of CU's first day

- of football practice Aug. 7 .

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- CU sports .

"I don't know that there really is a necessity to (naming a starting quarterback ahead of time)," Hawkins said. "It's not like we have to go a certain direction with one guy or whatever."

"Plus, it provides good drama, right?"

Cody Hawkins said after the Aug. 20 scrimmage the squad has accepted the fact two quarterbacks have split a majority of the repetitions throughout August drills. "I think the team feels good about the (quarterback) situation," he said.

Hansen, who made two starts in 2008, has said that being friends with Cody "takes the edge off (the quarterback battle)."

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THE DENVER POST

Helfrich thriving.

It sounds like former Colorado offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich is enjoying himself during his first season at Oregon.

Helfrich, a native Oregonian, recently told the Eugene (Ore.) Register-Guard that he is impressed with the camaraderie among the Ducks.

"There's a lot of guys who are good people . . . guys that you can tell care a lot," he said. "That stuff matters, and it will pay off."

Said Oregon quarterback Jeremiah Masoli of Helfrich: "He's so energetic . . . and he's definitely a perfect fit for our program."

Helfrich brought the helmet camera to the Oregon program. It was used during spring drills by CU.

Footnotes.

Hansen, on the steep learning curve facing new arrival Andre Simmons, the junior wideout from Independence (Kan.) Community College who finally was cleared to practice Wednesday: "It might take him a couple of weeks (to learn the offense). We'll package some stuff for him and simplify some plays for him so he can be ready to help us for the first game." . . . As of midweek, about 5,000 tickets remained for the season opener.

Tom Kensler, The Denver Post

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THE DENVER POST

csu football

Rams replicating CU atmosphere

By The Denver Post

Posted: 08/28/2009 01:00:00 AM MDT

FORT COLLINS — Colorado State coach Steve Fairchild is sending more subliminal messages through the media to opening foe Dan Hawkins of Colorado.

"If we practiced like that, we'd get beat," Fairchild said Thursday after the two-hour plus workout at Hughes Stadium timed to replicate lighting for the opening kickoff Sept. 6 at Folsom Field.

At least Fairchild didn't rake over his quarterback candidates as he has been doing all month. This time he spread the blame for not having the edge he wanted. Part of the problem was organizing the scout team to give a more accurate look of the Buffs.

The last time Fairchild sent smoke signals to Hawkins about only running the ball, the CU coach said he didn't read the newspaper.

Colorado State Football

View slide show of CSU

- football practice Aug. 10 .
- **Visit** the CSU Stats Page for boxscores, MWC standings, team leaders and more .
- **Visit** Natalie Meisler's All Things Rams blog for a behind-the-scenes look at
- CSU sports

Today the Rams will go indoors to pump in crowd noise and likely put in some plays hidden from anyone outside the team.

Saturday, Fairchild wants to see a perfect practice for the annual mock game situation review. He made a mental note this week to keep kicker Ben DeLine away from contact. Last year, starting place-kicker Jason Smith broke his arm on a botched kicking attempt.

QB quandary.

There's still no timetable for naming a quarterback. Fifth-year senior Grant Stucker continued to take more snaps, while Jon Eastman continued to play catchup from a finger injury.

During a period of live hitting, Stucker connected with wide receiver Rashaun Greer for a 50-yard scoring play.

New medical term.

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THE DENVER POST

Senior safety Klint Kubiak, who has had his best camp, had ice bags strapped to both knees by the time the team left for dinner. Nothing is wrong, he said: "It's preventive maintenance."

Natalie Meisler, The Denver Post

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Longmont, Colorado
Tuesday, September 01,
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Geer, Burton overcome adversity to earn spots

By Patrick Ridgell
© 2009 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — There's something a little different about the captains the Colorado football players chose for their team in 2009. Quarterback Cody Hawkins described it well.

"People thought they were going to be legitimate candidates to be captains from the start just because I think they're all seniors and have been here for a long time and put a bunch into this program, so they definitely deserve it," Hawkins said.

"And I think it's neat how they each have their own little story to tell, just because they've fought through a lot of adversity."

CU announced Sunday that linebackers Jeff Smart and Marcus Burton, plus tight end Riar Geer, were selected its captains. Burton and Geer took paths to the position that aren't typical.

In March, 2008, Geer was arrested and booked into the Boulder County Jail on suspicion of second-degree assault and harassment for his role in an incident that occurred at a party. He was later charged with second-degree felony assault. The university suspended him that spring.

Geer eventually received two years of probation and 50 hours of community service. He rejoined the team in time for the 2008 season, and the tight end did not miss any games due to his legal trouble.

Burton's grades fell so far in 2007 that he became academically ineligible. He has made one career start at linebacker. He also became a father in September 2008, and he and his wife are expecting their second child on Sept. 21.

Geer doesn't want to relive the fight, and Burton doesn't want to rehash his academic struggles. But both say these events helped provide them with the skills and character that teammates deemed necessary to be a CU captain.

"Definitely," Geer said. "I think I've been through a lot up here, and it made me become a man. With that I had to become more responsible, more accountable. All of those things are very important to being a good teammate. I think everybody saw that, and they rewarded me for it."

Burton said the adversity was part of several things that changed him.

"Like coaches giving me more responsibility last spring," he said. "I think there's something you take out of everything."

Their head coach would agree.



CU's Marcus Burton is ready to lead the Buffs this season. **Lewis Geyer/Times-Call**

“They are so much more mature and focused and on it,” Dan Hawkins said. “I think that’s why they’re the captains. I’m proud of those guys.”

Geer and Burton describe their captain responsibilities as similar to those assumed by an assistant coach. They have “to pick guys up when they need to be picked up, and you need to get on them when you need to get on them. You have to be the eyes and the ears of the team,” Burton said.

They also seem to be something like big brothers. Quarterback Tyler Hansen said that when he was a freshman, Burton introduced himself and offered guidance to a new kid who had just moved from out of state, as Burton, from Channelview, Texas, once did. Hansen said Burton offers to give rides to freshmen who may not have cars but need to go somewhere, like a grocery store.

“It’s the little things that make a big difference,” Hansen said. “All three of those guys do those things.”

Said Cody Hawkins: “Marcus came back and fought well for us. He’s playing great. Riar Geer is a guy who had his own share of legal trouble, but he bounced back.

“So I think they’re great role models for us just to show even when bad things happen, you have to turn it around and forget about yourself and give as much of yourself as you can to the team.”

Patrick Ridgell can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.

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Longmont, Colorado
Tuesday, September 01,
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Hawkins: CU won't announce starting quarterback before opener

By Patrick Ridgell
© 2009 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Anyone holding their breath for an announcement from Colorado regarding its starting quarterback should probably exhale.

Coach Dan Hawkins said following Thursday's practice that the winner of the quarterback race will probably not be revealed before the season opener Sept. 6 against Colorado State.

"We're probably not going to say anything before the game, that's probably the reality of it," Hawkins said.

"I don't know if there's a necessity to do that. It's not like we have to go a certain direction with one guy or whatever. Plus it provides good drama, right?"

Incumbent Cody Hawkins, a junior, has been battling with sophomore Tyler Hansen for the job through camp. Hawkins started 10 times last season and owns a 10-13 record as CU's starting quarterback. He's trying to become the program's seventh three-year starting quarterback.

Hansen started twice as a true freshman in 2008. He appeared in five games.

"You can go with Cody or me, and I think the offense will be good this year," Hansen said Aug. 20, following CU's second scrimmage. "Either way, we're going to be proficient at moving the ball and we'll score on some people."

Hansen said following the Aug. 20 scrimmage he believed the competition between the two was "pretty even." Coaches have given no clear indication who might be the favorite.

Dan Hawkins said it doesn't really matter which one is picked. That's a sentiment that might strike some as strange considering the contrasting styles Hawkins and Hansen possess. Hansen is more mobile, but lacks Hawkins' experience.

The coach said the battle for the third-string quarterback job is between Clark Evans and walk-on Seth Lobato. In light of the injury misfortune CU had in 2008, he stressed the third-stringer must be prepared.

"You've had quarterbacks make it through the whole season and you'd love to have that happen," Hawkins said. "But if bad-luck Schlep rock moves in and tags your team again, that third guy is going to have to come in."

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Big 12 North preview

By: Taylor Howsmon - Associate Sports Editor

Posted: 8/27/09

Colorado has seen a trend of underachieving seasons since winning the Big 12 North in 2005. Last season, they did not live up to high expectations and finished 5-7. This year, coach Dan Hawkins has most of his skill players back on offense but lost depth in the offensive line department.

The Buffs also lost a lot on defense, if the team can pull some upsets in an always difficult Big 12 they have the potential to be bowl eligible. If they do not reach the post season, Hawkins could have a hot seat by the end of the year.

Iowa State has never really been a winner and even though they have a new coach, Paul Rhodes, things might not get any better. The one thing they have going for them is a cupcake schedule.

Iowa State plays only one 2008 bowl team in their first five games - all but one at home. But with a 2-10 season last year, the expectations will stay extremely low and this could allow Iowa State to surprise many in the fall.

Kansas has built a winning program in basketball country. With the Orange Bowl win two years ago and a respectable 8-5 mark last year, Kansas looks to continue their winning ways. Quarterback Todd Reesing returns along with tailback Jake Sharp in the backfield which gives the offense a lift. The only thing really holding them back is a murderous schedule. I think they will have a very similar season to 2008.

Kansas State brought back legendary coach Bill Snyder to the sidelines, in an attempt to return the Wildcats to past glory. Josh Freeman, a 2008 NFL first round pick, is gone, but if the quarterback situation works out, this team could be a huge surprise because they have a playmaking defense. I see an average season that will produce a bowl game, but nothing further.

Missouri must somehow deal with the loss of its two best players in Jeremy Macklin and Chase Daniel. Newcomers on offense will have to figure out tough opponents and carry a Tiger team that traditionally struggles on defense. Mizzou could be respectable, but I think the program takes a serious step back in 2009.

Nebraska could be a team to look out for. Bo Pelini surprised many in his first season back in Lincoln with a 9-4 finish. He will have to replace quality players on offense, but he has a playmaking defense that could resemble great Husker defenses of old. Nebraska does have to play Virginia Tech, but other than that, they have a manageable out of conference schedule. The Cornhuskers also avoid games with elite south division teams such as Texas and Oklahoma State. The Huskers could have a huge year.

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