

Bufs still undecided at QB

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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The Colorado football team still doesn't know who its starting quarterback will be when the season begins on Sept. 6 at Folsom Field against the Colorado State Rams.

And no one seems the slightest bit concerned.

Coach Dan Hawkins and offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau each said the offense is right where they want it to be entering game week following the third scrimmage of fall camp Saturday evening.

"I think we're going to be very well balanced," Kiesau said, after watching a scrimmage heavy on game situations. "I was a little nervous early, thinking 'Boy, we could have a strong running attack.' But right now going into the last week I see us being very balanced and that fires me up."

Kiesau said the addition of wide receivers Andre Simmons and Anthony Wright have changed the dynamic of the offense. Both players add a deep threat that had been missing.

"Sometimes they're going west when they're supposed to be going east, but they've got some talent," Hawkins said.

On the defensive side of the ball, coordinator Ron Collins said there were still some decisions to be made on the depth chart after reviewing film of the final scrimmage.

He wasn't ready to discuss specific position battles Saturday evening but he did say true freshmen have earned playing time.

The true freshman expected to play on defense for CU are defensive linemen Nate Bonsu and Forrest West.

It's also possible safety Parker Orms could play as a kick return man because he is one of the fastest players on the team.

"We're going to play a lot of guys," Collins said of the defensive line. "We're going to rotate guys in there and I think we've got enough depth that we can rotate guys and feel good about it."

Coaches are confident in both junior Cody Hawkins and sophomore Tyler Hansen at quarterback. So confident, in fact, that the competition between the two will continue this week because it's too close to call.

Dan Hawkins said that a decision will be made several days before the game and the two quarterbacks will be told so they won't have any added stress prior to the opener.

But Hawkins did not say exactly when the decision will be made this week. Hansen returned to the field Saturday after missing two days earlier in the week with the flu.

He was tested for Swine Flu and asked not to come to the Dal Ward Center until the test came back negative.

Team doctors and coaches are guarding against the spread of the virus, which has affected dozens of students on campus.

Dan Hawkins said he believes the team might have had Swine Flu in the spring when dozens of players and several coaches became "deathly sick."

Hawkins said team got through the scrimmage without any significant injuries.

Hansen said he is healthy again and believes he performed well in the final scrimmage.

He said Cody Hawkins helped him catch up on some of the CSU game plan that was installed in practices he missed.

"I still was in the mental part of the game," Hansen said. "I just couldn't be out there with my teammates."

Kiesau also has not decided who will serve as the third-string quarterback.

He has whittled the list from three to two, with true freshmen Clark Evans and Seth Lobato continuing to battle for the job. Lobato is a lanky, 6-foot-5 walk-on who has been impressive at times this month.

Running back Rodney Stewart, who has practiced on a limited basis for much of the past two weeks, did not participate in the scrimmage as a precaution against aggravating his pulled hamstring.

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CU, CSU series likely set for Denver

Deal through 2021 expected to be released Monday

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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When Colorado and Colorado State meet at Folsom Field a week from today, it will likely be the final time they do so on either institution's campus until at least 2021 and maybe even longer.

Administrators from both schools, along with Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper, are expected to announce an agreement Monday that will return the series to Invesco Field in Denver beginning next season. A press conference has been scheduled for Monday morning at Invesco Field.

When CU opted to bring this year's game back to campus to satisfy its promise to fans to have at least six true home games each year, Colorado State responded by promising to move the 2010 game to Fort Collins. The 2010 game is the final contest in the current five-year deal.

However, earlier this month, CSU athletic director Paul Kowalczyk told the Camera that it was possible the 2010 game would be played in Denver as part of an agreement for the future of the series.

"The only thing that is written in stone right now is that we've got a game to play in Boulder on the 6th," Kowalczyk said at the time.

CU athletic director Mike Bohn did not respond to messages left for him Saturday. Both athletic directors have previously acknowledged serious discussion about expanding the parameters of the next deal to 10 years instead of keeping the series on a five-year clock.

They say it makes sense to agree on a long-term contract because they are committed to playing every year. Doing so in Denver is a big financial boost to both athletic departments, especially CSU because its stadium seats fewer than 40,000 fans.

In order to agree to playing 10 consecutive games in Denver, Colorado must make some adjustments to its future schedules.

The Buffs have just five home games scheduled once again in 2012.

CU has road nonconference games that year with Fresno State and Minnesota. It's likely one of those contests will become a home game. The most likely choice is Minnesota because Fresno State comes to Boulder in 2011 and probably would not want to do so in consecutive seasons. The Fresno State deal is a two-for-one agreement.

Nine of the past 12 games in the series have been played in Denver, beginning in 1998.

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CU Buffs football: Statement season

Hawkins at a crossroads in fourth year at Colorado

By Kyle Ringo, Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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Is Dan Hawkins all talk?

It's a question on the minds of fans of the Colorado football program and interested observers around the Big 12 Conference and the nation as Hawkins begins his fourth season as head coach.

To this point in his tenure in Boulder, Hawkins is still best known for the results he produced in his previous job at Boise State and, perhaps, even more for his rhetoric since becoming the head Buff.

Most football coaches are masters of managing expectations, especially during hard times. Hawkins ratchets them up, never more so than in the nine months between the end of last season and now.

"I believe one hundred percent, I put it on our team, I am going to tell you right here publicly, I expect to win 10 games next year; I expect to win 10," he said in December at the team's senior banquet following a 5-7 season. "You might say, 'Jeez, coach. Isn't that kind of steep?' No, it's not."

Bold words from Hawkins probably shouldn't have surprised anyone as some might say being unconventional in his thinking is the one part of his reputation he has lived up to at Colorado. However, his prediction did garner quite a bit of attention.

"Ten wins? That's quite a statement," one Mountain West Conference coach said during a casual conversation earlier this summer. "Why would he say that?"

Hawkins set goals of winning a national championship and recruiting the next CU Heisman Trophy winner on the day he was hired in 2005. Everyone learned just how serious he was on national signing day 2007 with his famous words about an anonymous letter he received from a player's parent complaining about the lack of vacation time for the Buffs.

"It's Division I football. It's the Big 12. It ain't intramurals," remains his calling card 2 1/2 years later.

Even at some of his lowest points he has continued to sound off. Last year after losing five of six games in the middle of the season, he spent more than two hours with reporters on the afternoon of Nov. 4 explaining in detail, and at times off the record, many of the challenges he has faced.

"When we sit here in a year or two and we've got some experience and we're not banged up, it will be a whole different scenario," he said. "It will be."

He followed that prediction up a little more than a month later with what is probably his most audacious statement to date during his remarks at the senior banquet.

They are words that will follow the 2009 team throughout its season. The charge toward fulfilling that 10-win goal begins a week from today on national television at Folsom Field against in-state rival Colorado State.

"You always set goals at the beginning of the season and you always want to achieve those goals," sophomore quarterback Tyler Hansen said. "When the coach sets goals, it's definitely like, 'All right, we've got to get these goals cause we don't want our coach sounding like he doesn't know what he's talking about.'"

"We want to walk the walk when he talks. We want to back him up. When he talks, he's honest. He's not going to tell you we're capable of 10 wins when we're really not."

Expectations high in Year Four

Hawkins' future in Boulder definitely doesn't hinge on doubling his win total from last year. Most fans will settle for a winning season and a team that doesn't get blown out of games or fall on its face against inferior foes. A bowl game, maybe even a bowl win would also be nice. They want tangible progress.

If the Buffs come up well short of those marks, Hawkins' job could be in jeopardy even though athletic director Mike Bohn is firmly on his side and gave him a contract extension through the 2012 season just last year. After all, history is filled with coaches who had the backing of their bosses at the beginning of the year only to lose it later on.

"Dan represents a level of integrity, a level of work ethic, a level of passion that is exemplary," Bohn said in a recent interview with the Camera. "We're proud of that. Would we like to have those results show up on the scoreboard quickly? Absolutely. I think a lot of factors play into that.

"Let me tell you why he's not on the hot seat. First, what he inherited, and all you have to do is look at the NFL draft over the past two years to give you an idea of the talent. Also consider what he inherited in terms of our overall foundation of the program. Obviously, that's academics. That's the social aspect. That's the strength aspect. I mean, when he arrived to have 11 players who could power clean over 300 pounds and now we have approximately 60, those are huge fundamental hurdles that are not cleared in a normal four-year cycle. Many people feel that's the magical number to turn it around."

The fourth year might not require 10 wins for CU fans, but it probably needs to be the beginning of a turnaround. Season-ticket sales are down by about 2,000 from last year, in part because of a struggling economy, in part because the school raised most ticket prices and in part because of the product it has put on the field.

Another subpar season would likely strain the budget further in an athletic department that annually struggles to keep up with the Joneses in the Big 12 Conference. CU has poured millions into facilities and technology upgrades for Hawkins over the past three years and hopes this season brings a payoff.

Season four is also big for recruiting. Hawkins was able to sign a top-20 class in 2008 on the heels of a bowl loss to Alabama. But the program lost out on several highly rated prospects late in the process in the last cycle and recruits appear to be taking a wait-and-see approach once again this year.

"I said when I first came here that I'd be shocked if we weren't right back in it, because I'm just used to that," Hawkins said late last year. "I'm used to being right there. So is it taking longer? Yeah, it is, but again I don't think you ever truly know. You throw a rock on the gas pedal and shoot for the moon and that is where you start climbing."

Patience can pay off

Some programs don't have the patience to give a coach even four or five years to make that climb. Kansas State fired Ron Prince last fall before he even reached the end of his third season. He was hired the same year as Hawkins. Ole Miss fired Ed Orgeron in 2007 after only 10 wins in three seasons.

Other schools choose to fire coaches who have achieved much more than Hawkins has at CU. Arizona State fired Dirk Koetter in 2006 after six seasons and three consecutive bowl games because he couldn't beat the elite teams in the Pac-10 Conference.

Hawkins' critics point to the fact he inherited a program that had won four of the previous five Big 12 North Division titles as evidence he didn't have far to go in the first place. Brian Cabral who has played and coached under five different head coaches in Boulder disagrees.

"I think it does say something for what was accomplished under the previous regime, but the issues that were inherited with this staff in terms of all that stuff that went on before, that's unique to any program," Cabral said. "It was an uphill battle from Day One."

Several of Hawkins' peers in the Big 12 Conference are examples of what can happen when a coach is given more time and patience starting from much more normal circumstances than the two-year recruiting scandal that led to Hawkins' hiring.

Missouri coach Gary Pinkel produced one winning season in his first four years in Columbia, Mo., and that came in Year Three. Pinkel's fifth season on the job was 2005 and it marked the beginning of a four-year streak of winning that included

consecutive double-digit win seasons. The Tigers have also won the past two Big 12 North Division titles.

Pinkel's overall winning percentage at Missouri is only now reaching respectable levels (59-41) entering his ninth year.

It took Kansas coach Mark Mangino a little less time to turn around the Jayhawks.

Mangino took over a program at Kansas in 2002 that hadn't enjoyed a winning season in any of its previous six years. During his seven years on the job he has led the Jayhawks to four bowl games, which accounts for one-third of the program's bowl history.

Mangino's first three seasons nearly mirrored Hawkins' first three in Boulder. The Jayhawks went 2-10, 6-7 and 4-7. He faced mounting pressure to succeed entering his fourth year in 2005 and he answered with the program's first bowl win since 1995. The Jayhawks have been bowl eligible for four consecutive years now.

Hawkins' plight might best be paired with South Carolina coach Steve Spurrier, who was as highly regarded at his previous college job at Florida as a coach could hope to be.

Spurrier inherited a South Carolina program with serious problems created under its former coach Lou Holtz and has struggled to find its groove. Spurrier is entering his fifth season and is still trying to find a way to crack the top three in the Southeastern Conference East Division. Unlike Hawkins however, Spurrier does have a winning record (28-22).

Hawkins admits there have been some surprises at CU, but he has never doubted he can build the Buffs back into a perennial contender in the Big 12.

"There is so much learning the climate of your school, the climate of your recruits, the climate of your academic support of figuring that whole picture out of what goes," he said. "I think we have a pretty good idea about what's going on and what we need to do and where we need to go and all that."

Numbers tell the story

Hawkins came to Colorado with a 53-11 mark as a Division I head coach at Boise State, but a closer examination of that record shows it was heavy on wins against cupcake programs and light on the elite competition he faces almost every week at CU.

Hawkins' five teams at Boise State played 10 games against teams from Bowl Championship Series Conferences and won only twice. His teams won 37 of 40 Western Athletic Conference games in five seasons, beating up on the likes of Idaho, San Jose State and Louisiana Tech.

Some questioned those credentials when he was hired and are not surprised his three teams at CU went a combined 13-24. He hasn't produced a winning season yet, though the Buffs did play in a bowl game after a 6-6 campaign in 2007. He is the first CU coach to preside over three consecutive losing autumns since Bill McCartney's early years during Ronald Reagan's first term as president.

Others believe he is on cusp of once again coaching a winner. Cabral knows Hawkins' plight better than anyone, and appears to have the same sense of optimism about this season as his boss.

"Hawk has been pretty consistent and pretty steady," Cabral said. "In every season, every game, every week, I think he has been very consistent. I think he has been pushing his imprints and pushing his attitude. He's been pretty consistent in doing that and that's why I think we are where we are today. You know, we haven't won a game yet, but there is no question the attitude and effort of our players is where we've always needed it to be."

Offensive letdown

Hawkins was hailed as an offensive guru when he was hired, but the Buffs haven't been able to get out of the bottom third in the Big 12 in offense since he took over. Finally doing so could lead to the huge turnaround Hawkins has targeted.

It won't be an easy task with a different offensive mindset for the fourth year in a row. The Buffs hope to establish a power running game with four talented tailbacks and offensive line with three new starters.

The Buffs finished last in total offense and scoring offense in the Big 12 last season. In 2007, they were 10th in total offense and ninth in scoring. In 2006, they were 10th in total offense and 11th in scoring.

The Buffs have seen more punch lines than goal lines and even allowed the ninth longest scoring streak in major college football history to end at 242 games last year in a 58-0 shutout at Missouri. The streak covered nearly 20 years.

A revolving door at offensive line coach and former offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich's tendency to constantly tweak the offense have probably stunted the growth and development of the entire unit.

CU was forced to use a very limited scheme in 2006 because it didn't have a quarterback capable of executing more. It broadened dramatically in 2007 when Cody Hawkins became the starter as a redshirt freshman and threw for more than 3,000 yards including bowl game statistics. Then last year the Buffs joined the parade of programs switching to spread, no-huddle systems, an ill-advised experiment that went awry when a slew of injuries struck, making one of the nation's least experienced teams even younger.

"That was not plausible after a while," Hawkins said.

This year the offense was switched back to much of what was used in 2007 while still incorporating the best of 2008. And it is overseen by a new offensive coordinator in Eric Kiesau, who has vowed to stick with one approach.

"From last year to this year, it will be extremely different," Kiesau said. "We're not going to do the spread like everyone else is going. It will be more of a two-back, traditional, NFL-style offense."

A new game face

To some on the outside of the program, Hawkins seems to have changed in recent months. He is more guarded with his words and with whom he shares them. Maybe it's a lesson learned and maybe it's a natural reaction to more pressure to perform than ever before in his time at CU.

He began answering more and more questions with short and occasionally terse responses, during spring practices. He eventually closed those practices to the public claiming he was being scouted through Internet practice reports.

"I'm not sure any coach I've worked with here in any sport was or is the same in Year Four as they were in Year One," veteran sports information director Dave Plati said. "Once they get the run of the terrain, understand the territory and the red and green lights working in this particular campus environment, they morph into someone who's a little different.

"Sometimes a lot, as I would say would have been the case with Bill McCartney, Rick Neuheisel, Ceal Barry and Ricardo Patton, and sometimes a little; Richard Rokos is probably as close as he was on Day One as he is now in Year 20."

At the outset, it appears Hawkins' fourth season with the Buffs could be his most interesting, if only to learn whether he or his detractors are more on target with the preseason evaluation of what his team might be capable.

In all the hubbub about his belief that 10 wins are possible, many have forgotten that Hawkins has made bold predictions that have come true before. He predicted his former team would upset Oklahoma in the 2007 Fiesta Bowl and in the days before playing then No. 3 Oklahoma in 2007, he predicted the Buffs were ripe for a break-through moment.

If he is right once again, he will surely go from hot seat to hot commodity.

"I'm not going anywhere," he said. "I'm not. I like it here at Colorado. I came here because I like it here. I like the school. I like the community. I love Mike Bohn. I'm at the upper echelon. There is no place to go, to me, that is better than here."

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Woelk: Hawk still believes integrity, winning not mutually exclusive

Neill Woelk Camera Sports Writer
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Recently, I listened to a friend of mine rant about the lack of accountability and responsibility being displayed by a rather large number of college graduates these days (at least from his perspective).

His complaints were the type you hear more and more from us old fogies about today's kids: a lack of respect, no sense of responsibility and a huge sense of entitlement. Said my buddy, "They don't think they have to work for anything and they think they deserve everything."

A few minutes later, the conversation turned to Colorado football -- and my friend had a few choice words for Dan Hawkins, particularly Hawk's decision to suspend one of his standout wide receivers for the first two games of this season.

My pal suggested that Hawk's decision was ludicrous, particularly given CU's dearth of experienced wide receivers. And, given that the player's transgressions were apparently minor -- so minor, in fact, that they never as much as showed up on a police report -- my friend said Hawk could have taken the route popular among plenty of other coaches these days.

You know the drill. The ever-popular "he will be disciplined internally" plan, the method especially prevalent at programs where winning games transcends all -- including ethics and integrity.

Anyone else see the irony here? Too often, college football fans are willing to suspend their real-world belief systems in order to win, and college coaches are more than happy to comply with those wishes.

I say baloney. In a day and age when accountability, responsibility and integrity do seem to be in short supply, I don't mind a college football coach sticking to his guns.

In Hawk's case, that means doing things the right way. No shortcuts, no sense of entitlement, no free pass when it comes to the basic principles of discipline.

I fully realize that Hawkins' job is to win football games. That's what coaches are hired to do, and if they don't meet whatever standard is set for them by the administration and -- at least to a degree -- fans, they sooner or later become ex-coaches. It's the way the game is played, and every coach is well-aware of the rules.

But when Dan Hawkins arrived in Boulder in 2006, winning football was just part of the equation he was asked to restore. Also included was the task of rebuilding the culture of the program and the trust of the public, both of which had eroded in the wake of a recruiting scandal.

He's done a solid job in both of those areas.

Slowly but surely, Hawk has changed the attitude of the program. Responsibility has become a requirement, not an option. Players are accountable not only to the coaching staff, but to their teammates. When Hawkins sets forth rules, he doesn't alter them on a sliding scale relative to how important a player might be to the team's fortunes.

And, on a broader scope, the entire athletic department has changed. There is no "good-old boy" network. When Mike Bohn was hired as athletic director, one of his first tasks was to change attitudes and the culture, and the public perception of such. He's accomplished that. Academic performance has improved across the board, athletes have become more involved in the community and just recently, CU was lauded for its work in improving its Title IX performance.

Those are areas fans of the university -- not just the athletic department -- should appreciate.

But in the end, we all know it will still come down to winning games. We all know that no matter how many kids graduate, no matter how many solid citizens Dan Hawkins and his staff produce, the bottom line will be the win-loss column.

That doesn't mean Hawk's job is in jeopardy this year. I can't imagine a scenario -- including losing 10 or 11 games -- that would cost him his job. The idea of starting from scratch again is simply not plausible, not with a department facing economic troubles and not with a coach in just his fourth year. Look around the nation, and you'll see that pulling the plug early proves disastrous more often than not.

But I also don't think that will be an issue. I believe fans will see improvement in CU's football team. I believe they'll see that a foundation is being established, and that the improvement won't be a one-year aberration. The Buffs have only a handful of seniors on the current team, meaning that a significant step forward this year will be a signal of more to come.

Meanwhile, Hawkins will continue to do things his way because he believes it's the right thing to do. He won't change his style to win games and save his job; rather he'll continue to adhere to principals and scruples and morals because he believes winning and integrity are not mutually exclusive.

Just a few days ago, I watched as a former Nebraska running back was led out of court after being convicted of murder, a crime he continues to insist he did not commit. It was not his first encounter with the judicial system; he had a lengthy criminal record, including several brushes with the law when he was still at NU.

I wondered if things might not have turned out differently for him had his former coaches -- all the way from junior high on up -- taught him to be accountable instead of fostering a sense of entitlement.

Maybe so. Maybe not. But every time Dan Hawkins disciplines a kid for a seemingly minor transgression, maybe that sense of entitlement so prevalent in today's athletes will also be reduced just a little.

In the real world, most of us would applaud such a scenario.

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Pieces in place for success for Colorado quarterbacks

Experience, depth, schedule on Buffs' side

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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The Big 12 Conference has become a quarterback's paradise. Almost every team in the league is winging the ball all over the field and developing stars under center.

Sam Bradford won a Heisman Trophy at Oklahoma last year and Colt McCoy was the runner-up at Texas.

Half the league's quarterbacks begin this season on the Davey O'Brien Award preseason watch list. The award is given to the best quarterback in the nation each year.

None of those quarterbacks play for Colorado.

The Buffs have been shut out of the aerial show lately, not necessarily because they lacked a quality player doing the throwing, but because the pieces were not in place around him.

It's a different scenario this season. Junior Cody Hawkins and sophomore Tyler Hansen have battled for the job since the beginning of spring ball back in March. Both are likely to see playing time this fall and with more depth and experience surrounding them in the offense and a more favorable schedule, their performance could mean the difference between a bowl game or more frustration.

"We've got the guys in place to have a real big year this year," Hansen said. "Offensively we've got the pieces in place to make a big run at this thing and with me and Cody, whoever plays has got to be, not the playmaker, but more of the game manager. Manage the game. Make the right decisions. Don't do anything really dumb or anything that will hurt the team and we'll be fine."

Hawkins and Hansen both played last season and managed to produce a few shining moments. Hawkins led the Buffs to a 3-0 start, including an overtime win against West Virginia. Later in the season he came off the bench against Iowa State to throw four second-half touchdown passes.

Hansen made his debut at home against Kansas State and helped the Buffs beat the Wildcats 14-13 with his only touchdown pass of the season and 86 yards rushing.

But injuries, inexperience and a lack of depth robbed the offense of more and more players as the season wore on and the quarterbacks went through long droughts and numerous possessions of ineffective play. CU went seven consecutive games without scoring more than 21 points and the two quarterbacks combined to throw for less than 2,200 yards. Ten other quarterbacks in the conference topped that total.

Hawkins' numbers dropped significantly from what he accomplished as a first-year starter during his redshirt freshman year in 2007. A player who prides himself on efficiency completed only 57 percent of his throws and mixed 17 touchdown passes with 10 interceptions in 2008.

The last one was the most humbling of all. Trailing at Nebraska in the waning moments after a miracle 57-yard field goal from the Huskers, Hawkins' pass was batted at the line of scrimmage and returned for a touchdown by defensive tackle Ndamukong Suh.

As he enters what could be his third year of significant playing time and his fourth year in the program, Hawkins says he is tired of producing mediocre results, but he tries not to put too much pressure on himself to single-handedly be the difference.

"I don't know how much I would say it's just me, but I know I expect a lot out of myself," Hawkins said. "So much of what I expect is leadership and putting in the time. I feel like if I totally can absorb myself in it, I know I'm talented enough to do

this. I can make throws, I'm getting a lot better at moving in the pocket. I'm playing. I'm having fun. I feel like I'm going out and doing my thing. That's got to be my deal."

Colorado is viewed as a wild-card team in the Big 12 North Division title race by many this season. Whether the Buffs are in the hunt -- not to mention meeting the 10-win challenge their coach has set for them -- will probably have a lot to do with how the quarterback performs, especially in a handful of games that might be toss-ups.

The Buffs will be favorites in the early going against Colorado State, Toledo and Wyoming and they will be underdogs at Texas and Oklahoma State, barring collapses from those teams. Games against West Virginia, Kansas, Missouri, Texas A&M and Nebraska could make the difference. And quarterback play in those contests could be the deciding factor.

"There is definitely more on the quarterback and that's how I want it because that is Cody's strength and Tyler's as well," offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Eric Kiesau said. "They are both smart guys."

"But it's tough to say, 'Are the wins and losses on the quarterback?' Well, the quarterback can know everything he is doing, but we need 10 other guys working to their full potential and blocking the right guys, running to the right holes and running the right routes. It's all 11 guys on offense."

A big part of the problem last year was doubt in the quarterbacks' mind regardless of who that player was. Injuries made a young offensive line younger and a lack of playmakers at other positions often left the man under center with one option through the air or run.

"Now I'm just walking up and this is what I see and these are my reads," Cody Hawkins said. "It's not what if, what if, what if. Because I may have all the answers to what if, what if, what if, but to react to that with a lot of young and inexperienced guys and worrying about your job, too, that's tough stuff."

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TV revenue, exposure dictate strange schedule

Five CU games won't be played on Saturday this season

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
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One of the most popular college football related Web sites is Everydayshouldbesaturday.com. It's a funny diversion from work and a nice concept, but not one that applies to the Colorado football program in 2009.

There are two schools of thought about the Buffs' schedule this fall. It will definitely allow fans of the program to see plenty of other teams in action on Saturdays, but it will also demand a mature and focused team to handle some of the traps it sets up.

"It's going to be really weird this fall," junior quarterback Cody Hawkins said. "I mean, as big as college football is getting now, people are trying to get national exposure, and they're doing anything. I mean, they will do a back handstand and play on a Wednesday night in clown outfits if you ask them to."

Colorado will play games on days other than Saturday five times in 2009. The Buffs start the season on Sunday, Sept. 6, the day after most of the rest of the nation has gotten its fix following a long offseason. CU and Colorado State moved the game to Sunday for the second consecutive season to attract a national television deal from Fox Sports Net, which fattens the coffers of both athletic departments.

Television money is the core reason why the Buffs will also play two Thursday night games and two Friday games this fall, one of which is the traditional feud with Nebraska on the day after Thanksgiving.

The Buffs are already assured of playing at least five nationally televised games before the first snap of the season.

Athletic director Mike Bohn said he consulted coach Dan Hawkins in designing the schedule and Hawkins didn't like parts of the plan.

"We both recognize it's a risk and Dan presented his view, as he always does with great passion, enthusiasm and professionalism, but in the end, he understands it's a significant opportunity for exposure and revenue stream for the department and how that helps us," Bohn said.

Hawkins has always said he prefers playing college football games on Saturday afternoons on campus and on natural turf the way it was started more than a century ago. He's an old-school guy.

If Hawkins does have problems with the schedule as Bohn indicated, he hasn't shared them publicly. But one can easily pinpoint the points of concern.

The Buffs have several short weeks and several long weeks of preparation creating inconsistency. Coaches despise inconsistency.

"It's really what your attitude is toward it," Dan Hawkins said. "You can fight it whether it's an early game, late game, Sunday game. It is what it is and you need to get ready to go. I think that is the most important thing."

After opening against the Rams, the Buffs will have just four days to prepare for a road game at Toledo on Friday, Sept. 11. The Buffs play their first Saturday contest on Sept. 19 at home against Wyoming and then have nearly two weeks to prepare for a road trip to West Virginia, where they will face the Mountaineers on ESPN on a Thursday night for the second consecutive year.

Later in the season, and perhaps at a pivotal time for earning bowl eligibility, the Buffs play on the road at Iowa State on Saturday, Nov. 14 and then have to go on the road for another Thursday night game at Oklahoma State on Nov. 19.

Dan Hawkins said he hopes his team starts fast as it did last year when it produced a 3-0 record, but he doesn't necessarily emphasize any part of the schedule above the rest.

"They all are critical," he said. "I've said this before. If you win your first game, it's about 70 percent you're going to have a winning season. That's usually how that plays out. So that's a big deal. You have the rivalry game and the start of it. But as we saw last year, you go 3-0 and you've got to finish.

"It could go either way. I just think either way you can't jump on the bandwagon and go, 'Yeah we got it.' Or, if you lose one of those games or a couple of those games, you can't go, 'It's all over.' I still think we have an ever-evolving football team here."

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Big 12 North race looks to be toss-up

KU, Nebraska favorites to reach Big 12 title game

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 08/29/2009 05:44:38 PM MDT

Last year the South Division of the Big 12 had three teams in the hunt for a national championship down the stretch.

Texas beat Oklahoma. Texas Tech beat Texas. And Oklahoma beat Texas Tech.

That left it up to the conference's controversial divisional tiebreaker format to decide which powerhouse would advance to the Big 12 Championship with an opportunity to get to the BCS title game.

The Sooners were the pick because they were the highest ranked of the three in the BCS standings.

There won't be as much at stake nationally, but it won't be a surprise -- based on the schedules -- if three teams tied for the North Division this season with 5-3 records.

Nebraska and Kansas are the favorites. Colorado is the dark horse. And Missouri is the great unknown entering the 2009 campaign.

The Jayhawks believe this is their year to finally advance to the Big 12 Championship with Todd Reesing under center for his senior season.

"The quarterback is the chauffeur," KU head coach Mark Mangino said at the Big 12 media days last month. "If you don't have a chauffeur, the car doesn't move. He's the guy that makes it roll."

KU gets to play Nebraska in Lawrence and Missouri on a neutral field (Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City), and Reesing will be looking to improve to 4-0 against CU in Boulder on Oct. 17.

The problem for the Fighting Manginos is the fact that Oklahoma, Texas and Texas Tech are all on the schedule, too. The Jayhawks have lost five consecutive games to the Sooners, are 0-10 against the Longhorns and 1-10 against the Red Raiders.

"We want to be a team that competes for championships and be among the best teams in the Big 12. And we're not there yet," Mangino admitted. "We're headed that way, but we're not there. And the only way you do that is you have to consistently win and you have to be able to beat what are the best teams in your league. You have to start doing that.

"For us to really get where we want this program to be, we have to start winning against teams that are considered the elite teams in the league and beat them from time to time."

The Huskers were the media's preseason pick to win the North in Bo Pelini's second season. However, offensive coordinator Shawn Watson will be breaking in a new quarterback, Zac Lee, after enjoying a great run with Joe Ganz breaking the huddle.

Nebraska also has to play Colorado, Kansas and Missouri on the road.

"Our players don't feel like Nebraska's back," Pelini said. "We made some strides last year, and I believe that we're headed in the right direction in that regards. We're not going to be satisfied until we are a dominant defense."

Missouri lost offensive coordinator Dave Christensen (now the head coach at Wyoming), quarterback Chase Daniel (Washington Redskins), receiver Jeremy Maclin (Philadelphia Eagles) and tight end Chase Coffman (Cincinnati Bengals).

"We've got a lot of good athletes. I think we've recruited well," Mizzou head coach Gary Pinkel said. "It's the fastest

football team we've ever had since we've been here. I'm excited."

The schedule sets up the best for CU as Dan Hawkins looks to turn things around after posting a 13-24 record the past three seasons. The Buffs get to play Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska at Folsom Field.

"I think we have a chance, provided we can avoid some of the injuries we had last year, to get a little momentum going," Hawkins said. "We have a chance to do some really nice things this year."

Kansas State and Iowa State are expected to fight it out for last place with new head coaches. Actually, an old head coach in the case of the Wildcats as Bill Snyder returns for his second major rebuilding job in Manhattan.

"What this outcome will be, I really have no idea," Snyder said. "But as I've said many times, if we can settle the waters, it will be worth the effort."

Big 12 North capsules

In predicted order of finish.

1. Kansas

Coach: Mark Mangino (eighth season, 45-41)

2008 record: 8-5

Last bowl appearance: 2008 Insight Bowl (defeated Minnesota, 42-21)

Players to watch: Todd Reesing. He is KU's version of Sam Bradford or Colt McCoy. ... Dezmon Briscoe and Kerry Meier. Two reliable, big-play targets in the passing game.

Key game: Nov. 28 vs. Missouri -- This year the Jayhawks should be the team with a trip to the Big 12 title game on the line in the Arrowhead Stadium showdown.

Fact that matters: Jayhawks, who must play Oklahoma and Texas this season, are 8-31 against the South Division.

2. Colorado

Coach: Dan Hawkins (fourth season, 13-24)

2008 record: 5-7

Last bowl appearance: 2007 Independence Bowl (lost to Alabama, 30-24)

Players to watch: Cody Hawkins. Coach's son needs to lean on the running game and make some big plays with the play-action pass, despite a lack of play-makers at receiver. ... Aric Goodman. The consistently inconsistent place-kicker will be called upon to make some key field goals this fall.

Key game: Oct. 17 vs. Kansas -- Buffs will be coming off back-to-back road games at West Virginia and Texas before hosting the Fighting Manginos.

Fact that matters: The Buffs are 8-16 in Big 12 play under Hawkins.

3. Nebraska

Coach: Bo Pelini (second season, 9-4)

2008 record: 9-4

Last bowl appearance: 2008 Gator Bowl (defeated Clemson, 26-21)

Players to watch: Ndamukong Suh. All-American defensive tackle anchors the "Blackshirts." ... Zac Lee. New starting quarterback must pick up where Joe Ganz left off in Shawn Watson's offense.

Key game: Nov. 7 vs. Oklahoma -- Are the Huskers back? We'll find out when their old rivals from Norman visit Lincoln.

Fact that matters: Pelini was the fourth head coach to win at least nine games in his first season leading the Nebraska program.

4. Missouri

Coach: Gary Pinkel (ninth season, 59-41)

2008 record: 10-4

Last bowl appearance: 2008 Alamo Bowl (defeated Northwestern, 30-23)

Players to watch: Blaine Gabbert. The five-star recruit replaces legend Chase Daniel at quarterback. ... Sean Weatherspoon. Senior linebacker is an All-American candidate.

Key game: Oct. 8 vs. Nebraska -- The Tigers can make an early statement in the North Division by beating the Huskers in a Thursday night tilt.

Fact that matters: Tigers had a 30-11 record in games Daniel started.

5. Iowa State

Coach: Paul Rhoads (first season)

2008 record: 2-10

Last bowl appearance: 2005 Houston Bowl (lost to TCU, 27-24)

Players to watch: Austin Arnaud. Dynamic quarterback should be exciting running the no-huddle, spread offense. ... Sophomore receivers Darius Darks and Sedrick Johnson showed flashes of brilliance on a bad team as freshmen.

Key game: Sept. 12 vs. Iowa -- Rhoads can get off to a good start with the fan base and jumpstart the rebuilding project by taking down the rival Hawkeyes in Ames.

Fact that matters: Iowa State has lost 17 consecutive road games dating back to the 2005 season. That's the longest road losing streak in the country.

6. Kansas State

Coach: Bill Snyder (18th season, 136-68-1)

2008 record: 5-7

Last bowl appearance: 2006 Texas Bowl (lost to Rutgers, 37-10)

Players to watch: Carson Coffman. Must replace first-round NFL pick Josh Freeman under center. ... Brandon Banks. Last year's offensive newcomer of the year with 1,049 yards receiving and nine touchdowns.

Key game: Oct. 3 at Iowa State -- If the Wildcats can't get this one they might finish in the North Division basement, despite Snyder's return.

Fact that matters: Wildcats were 75-53-1 in conference games during Snyder`s first tour of duty in Manhattan.

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Woelk: Buffs won't quite hit 10 this season

Camera staff
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

In what has turned out to be quite possibly one of the most misquoted moments in CU sports history, Colorado coach Dan Hawkins told folks at last year's senior banquet, "I am going to tell you right here publicly, I expect to win 10 games next year."

Not a guarantee, not a prediction, but an expectation.

I admire Hawk for setting the bar that high. Given the fact that the Buffs have won at least 10 games exactly once in the last 12 seasons, it's a commendable goal.

But a 10-win season for the Buffs is quite likely still a year or two away. Hawkins has steadily improved the talent level across the board; he's changed the culture; and he has learned the nuances of coaching at the highest level of college ball. The program is in better shape than when he arrived.

But it's not in 10-win shape. Not yet. ...

Sept. 6, vs. Colorado State -- Prior to last year, the last half-dozen games in this series had been amazingly close, almost always coming down to the last minute of play. CU broke that string with a comfortable 38-17 victory in Denver. The Buffs should continue that trend in what will be the last time we'll see the Rams in Boulder for at least a decade. **CU 33, CSU 14**

Sept. 11, at Toledo -- Can you say trap? For the second straight week, the Buffs will provide an opponent with their biggest game of the season. The Rockets may have won just three games last year, but one of them was at Michigan's Big House, and they also dropped a double-OT game to Fresno State. CU, meanwhile, must play this game just five days after the CSU contest, and on the road to boot. This one won't be easy. **CU 27, Toledo 17.** **Sept. 19, Wyoming** -- New Wyoming coach Dave Christensen knows how to score on the Buffs. As Missouri's offensive coordinator, he was responsible for slapping 113 on CU over the last two seasons. But Christensen doesn't have Mizzou-type weapons at his disposal in Laramie. **CU 34, Wyoming 13**

Oct. 1, at West Virginia -- There are four "toss-up" games on the Buffs' schedule this year, and this is one of them. Make it a Saturday game and I'd like the Buffs' chances a whole lot more. But road teams in Thursday night games have a notoriously difficult time (witness the Mountaineers' visit to Boulder just last year), and WVU will keep that trend alive. **West Virginia 24, CU 19**

Oct. 10, at Texas -- This isn't one of those toss-up games. **Texas 39, CU 17**

Oct. 17, Kansas -- Hawkins is 0-3 against Kansas, and maybe no team has been more frustrating for him. Three seasons ago, the Jayhawks took the redshirt off QB Todd Reesing, and the Fighting Manginos were born. Hawk has come close to KU a couple of times -- this year, he gets over the hump. **CU 24, Kansas 21**

Oct. 24, at Kansas State -- Bill Snyder is back, but the good ol' days in Manhattan aren't. **CU 23, Kansas St. 14**

Oct. 31, Missouri -- What will likely be a Halloween night game against a team that has tortured the Buffs for three straight years. Another one of those toss-up games -- but the Buffs can't win 'em all. **Mizzou 31, CU 27**

Nov. 7, Texas A&M -- The Buffs led the Aggies at the half last year, then gave up 21 unanswered in the third quarter. They won't let it get away from them this year. **CU 33, A&M 10**

Nov. 14, at Iowa State -- Two years ago, the Buffs snatched defeat from the jaws of victory by allowing a 21-0 halftime lead to melt away. There won't be any such comeback this year. **CU 28, Iowa St. 13**

Nov. 19, at Oklahoma St. -- A tough turnaround, with just four days between games and both on the road. The Cowboys will be looking ahead to their Nov. 28 showdown with Oklahoma, but they won't overlook the Buffs. **Oklahoma St. 33, CU**

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Nov. 27, Nebraska -- The last of the toss-up games, and this one could have the Big 12 North title at stake. The Buffs haven't forgotten last year's heartbreaking loss in Lincoln, and this one will come right down to the end also. **CU 33, Nebraska 31**

That adds up to eight wins, a berth in the Big 12 title game, Hawkins' first winning season in Boulder and a decent bowl for the Buffs. (It also means the Buffs will still have a chance for 10 wins, but we're not going to pick them over Texas in the title tilt.)

That will send them to the Jan. 2 Alamo Bowl, where they'll play Illinois and pick up their ninth win of the year.

Ten will have to wait.

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cu football

Bufs coach Hawkins still facing mountains

By John Henderson
The Denver Post

Posted: 08/30/2009 01:00:00 AM MDT

Updated: 08/30/2009 01:15:14 AM MDT



Dan Hawkins (Kathryn Scott Osler, The Denver Post)

BOULDER — He charged into town 3 1/2 years ago, talking of Zen Buddhism and swimming with sharks and quarterbacks who threw for 4,000 yards. Seemingly, Dan Hawkins could not have fit better in Boulder if he coached in Birkenstocks.

As he enters his fourth season, however,

Colorado fans still haven't found that "inner peace."

The waters are just as treacherous today as when he arrived, and no Colorado quarterback on this roster is a threat to throw for 4,000 yards.

Hawkins is 13-24 with three losing seasons. The Buffaloes, 5-7 a year ago, are picked fourth in the mediocre Big 12 North. Sports Illustrated placed Hawkins on the Big 12's "Hot Seat." It all begs one question as Colorado gets ready to host Colorado

CU Football

[View slide show of Colorado football coach Dan](#)

- [Hawkins](#) .

State in the season opener next Sunday:

Is Dan Hawkins the right man for the job?

"It took Mike Krzyzewski six years at Duke," Hawkins said. "Six years. Duke's a pretty good school. He's not going to come in there and get all the four- and five-star guys right off the get-go. You have to look at it like that for us."

Still grasping for a foothold in the tough Big 12, Hawkins is not above hyperbole. He told a booster group this summer his Buffaloes would win 10 games. It was more to drum up enthusiasm than create headlines, and you can understand why.

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Hawkins is generally credited with cleaning up the program and shifting the focus back on the field. Unfortunately his wit, honesty and integrity haven't made up for dismal on-field performances. Impaired partially by stringent recruiting restrictions in predecessor Gary Barnett's final year, and less than sterling recruiting of his own, Colorado appears woefully short of playmakers in arguably the most talented conference in the nation.

Don't be alarmed. Those birds circling the Flatirons are still eagles, not vultures. Hawkins, barring a catastrophic collapse, is in no danger of losing his job this year. It was just last October, after all,



Dan Hawkins has some words of advice for wide receiver Jarrod Darden.
(Hyoung Chang, The Denver Post)

that athletic director Mike Bohn, happy with the change in culture Hawkins has engineered, gave him a one-year extension through 2012.

But it's clear Boulder's football program has

created its own continental divide.

"I'd be lying if I said I was happy about it," said Bobby Pesavento, who, in 2001, became the last quarterback to lead Colorado to a Big 12 title. "We, as former Buffs, definitely expect the team to win and be successful and it's not happening yet."

Said Bill McCartney, the winningest coach in school history who led the Buffs to the 1990 national title: "I genuinely feel this guy knows what he's doing and is going to get it done. He's making progress. I think he's building something formidable."

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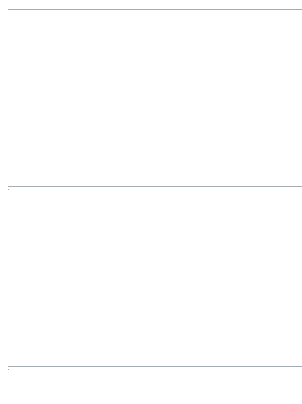
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Post Poll - Rams vs. Buffs



CU and CSU play Sunday at Folsom Field. Should the game be at the respective school's home fields or should the game have a permanent site like Invesco Field at Mile High?

He'd better build it soon. The vultures may not be circling, but they're definitely watching.

Attitude adjustment

When Hawkins was hired Dec. 16, 2005, he had an odd task. He had inherited the 2005 North Division champion, but one Texas creamed in the Big 12 championship game, 70-3. He also inherited a program racked with the aftermath of an ugly recruiting scandal.

Hawkins, 53-11 in five years at Boise State, became the new sheriff in town. While 13 of his players ran afoul of the law between June 2007 and September 2008, Hawkins' dismissals and new policies have kept Buffaloes off the police blotter since last August. Last semester they boasted what CU officials call their highest team GPA — 2.64 — in program history. When he took over, 11 players could power clean 300 pounds. Today the number is 60, he said.

"Obviously, we want to see more results on the scoreboard," Bohn said. "But the cliché that Dan talks about most often still resonates: Quit worrying about winning and be a winner. That embodies the work ethic and commitment and professionalism he brings to his position that really escalated our confidence, not only in him and his staff but his football program."

However, Bohn fired Barnett after the Texas humiliation, and not solely because of off-field issues. And yes, Hawkins has changed the culture surrounding CU football. The problem, some close to the program say, is he changed the culture on the field too.

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By the numbers

A look at Colorado's offensive and defensive production under coach Dan Hawkins:

RUSHING OFFENSE

| Season | Yards | National rank | Big 12 rank |
|--------|--------|---------------|-------------|
| 2006 | 172.92 | 22 | 5 |
| 2007 | 144.23 | 68 | 8 |
| 2008 | 124.50 | 86 | 10 |

PASSING OFFENSE

| Season | Yards | National rank | Big 12 rank |
|--------|--------|---------------|-------------|
| 2006 | 118.50 | 116 | 12 |
| 2007 | 234.31 | 54 | 10 |
| 2008 | 194.00 | 81 | 11 |

TOTAL OFFENSE

| Season | Yards | National rank | Big 12 rank |
|--------|--------|---------------|-------------|
| 2006 | 291.42 | 102 | 12 |
| 2007 | 378.50 | 72 | 10 |
| 2008 | 318.50 | 95 | 12 |

SCORING OFFENSE

| Season | Points | National rank | Big 12 rank |
|--------|--------|---------------|-------------|
| 2006 | 16.33 | 107 | 12 |
| 2007 | 27.31 | 62 | 10 |
| 2008 | 20.17 | 100 | 12 |

RUSHING DEFENSE

| Season | Yards | National rank | Big 12 rank |
|--------|--------|---------------|-------------|
| 2006 | 112.42 | 30 | 4 |
| 2007 | 128.00 | 31 | 5 |
| 2008 | 166.25 | 86 | 9 |

PASSING DEFENSE

| Season | Yards | National rank | Big 12 rank |
|--------|--------|---------------|-------------|
| 2006 | 228.50 | 94 | 9 |
| 2007 | 261.31 | 103 | 9 |
| 2008 | 215.33 | 72 | 1 |

TOTAL DEFENSE

| Season | Yards | National rank | Big 12 rank |
|--------|--------|---------------|-------------|
| 2006 | 340.92 | 66 | 7 |
| 2007 | 389.31 | 64 | 6 |
| 2008 | 381.58 | 78 | 4 |

SCORING DEFENSE

| Season | Points | National rank | Big 12 rank |
|--------|--------|---------------|-------------|
| 2006 | 22.25 | 56 | 6 |
| 2007 | 29.46 | 78 | 7 |
| 2008 | 29.25 | 86 | 8 |

TURNOVER MARGIN

| Season | Margin | National rank | Big 12 rank |
|--------|--------|---------------|-------------|
| 2006 | +0.67 | 17 | 3 |
| 2007 | -0.31 | 83 | 8 |
| 2008 | -0.58 | T94 | 9 |

SACKS

| Season | Avg. | National rank | Big 12 rank |
|--------|------|---------------|-------------|
| 2006 | 2.08 | 60 | 8 |
| 2007 | 1.62 | 95 | 10 |
| 2008 | 2.00 | 54 | 7 |

SACKS ALLOWED

| Season | Avg. | National rank | Big 12 rank |
|--------|------|---------------|-------------|
| 2006 | 2.5 | 91 | 10 |
| 2007 | 1.3 | 17 | 4 |
| 2008 | 2.5 | 102 | 11 |

Source: ncaa.org

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Defensive tackle George Hypolite played for Barnett and Hawkins. Hypolite knew all about Hawkins' prowess in Boise. He's also aware that Hawkins is the first Colorado head coach to be hired outside the CU family since 1982, when McCartney replaced Chuck Fairbanks, who had set the program back to nearly the club level.

"I honestly think that it's difficult to re-establish a culture," said Hypolite, waived recently by the Jacksonville Jaguars. "A culture had been created at Boise State. You can see now, no matter who's the coach, it continues to roll on. What Hawk is trying to do at Colorado is very difficult because of the rich and established tradition."

Polar opposites

How did he change it? By merely being himself. Barnett was cut from the same rough, leather 1960s letterman jacket as McCartney. Barnett circled Nebraska on the calendar, as did McCartney. He talked big, like McCartney. He gave exhilarating pregame speeches, like McCartney.

Hawkins, by contrast, is more detached. He's a teacher, a soothing presence on the sidelines who gets inside a face mask only when needed.

"He's just a real different guy," Hypolite said. "For years, Colorado was the bad guy. We kicked (rear) and took names. We don't speak softly. We don't pull punches. We attack from the word 'go'.

"Hawkins is different. He flies under the radar and lets people underestimate you. Just do it to

the best of your ability and hone your craft and get on the same page and that will win football games."

Asked if Hawkins gets players up emotionally to play a game, Hypolite said, "Not really. I don't think he does. He doesn't stir up a lot of emotion. To his credit, it's the way he wants it. He's even-keeled. Let what happens on Saturdays speak for it. Unfortunately, we haven't been very good on Saturday."

The change from Barnett is not necessarily a Hawkins downfall, said Detroit Lions linebacker Jordon Dizon, who played for both coaches.

"He's a great, great players' coach," Dizon said. "He's easy to talk to. To me he gets the job done. It just doesn't show by the record."

Senior tight end Riar Geer, who signed with Barnett, said Hawkins doesn't get in players' faces for a mistake — until said player repeats the mistake. He likes Hawkins' "fun" approach, such as breaking the monotony of camp by having linebackers take snaps at quarterback, a la Pete Carroll at Southern California.

"Everything (Barnett) did was so emotional," Geer said. "You went from one extreme, then Coach Hawk is on the other extreme. It's very different playing for both those guys. It's been a hard adjustment for our whole team."

A few playmakers needed

Only 14 players coached by Barnett are still on

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the roster. This is Hawkins' team, with three full recruiting classes dotting the roster. And what kind of team is it? The general perception around the Big 12 is that CU is nearly void of playmakers who strike fear into an opponent.

Hypolite was the only player who made first- or second-team All-Big 12 team last year. No CU player made the media's all-preseason team this year.

Their best deep receiving threat, Josh Smith, transferred to UCLA during the summer. Colorado's best receiver, Markques Simas, whom Hypolite said "will break some kind of record in the Big 12," is talented but not much of a deep threat. And he's suspended for the first two games for breaking a team rule. One recent practice featured receivers dropping three passes in a 10-minute stretch.

The Buffs' most promising game-breaker could be junior college transfer Andre Simmons, who didn't start practice until this past Wednesday.

One reason the Buffaloes will rely on a bevy of talented running backs is that the arms of quarterbacks Cody Hawkins, Dan's son, and Tyler Hansen won't change many game plans. They shared the job last year and will likely do so again.

"Last year I thought they were trying to play to a system rather than play to the players," said Joel Klatt, Colorado's quarterback from 2002-05 and now a local sports talk show co-host. "Rodney Stewart is a phenomenal running back and

happened to fit the system of the shotgun offense. Darrell Scott was never going to rush or reach his capability getting the ball 5 yards behind the line of scrimmage in a dead stop in the shotgun set."

Pieces of the puzzle

Scott represents the paradox of recruiting. Rated the best prep running back in the country two years ago, he's by far Hawkins' biggest recruiting coup. He reported to CU out of shape a year ago, however, and sustained numerous injuries as a freshman, when he ran for just 343 yards.

Maybe he backs up Hawkins' claim that recruiting rankings mean little.

"In certain positions they have recruited excellent," said [Rivals.com](#)'s Jeremy Crabtree, who ranks Hawk's classes 32nd, 15th and 48th. "Obviously there are some holes (they) haven't been able to fill. It's utterly amazing they don't have a high-profile receiver, as well as any depth at the receiver position.

"What happened?"

A couple things. One, while McCartney injected his program with speedy southern California and Texas recruits, Hawkins arrived after Carroll locked the border around Los Angeles County and Mack Brown won a national title at Texas. Beating them in recruiting is now as hard as beating them on the field.

Hawkins also arrived in the middle of an arms

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race in which nearly every Big 12 school transformed its facilities into state-of-the-art training centers. Colorado's 19-year-old Dal Ward Center remains a youth hostel in a league of Ritz-Carltons.

While Hawkins landed five-star linemen such as guard Ryan Miller and defensive end Nick Kasa, both in-state products, he has been close but missed on such prospects as four-star receiver Diante Jackson (USC) of Walnut Creek, Calif.; four-star receiver Bryce McNeal (Clemson) of Minneapolis; and four-star athlete Kyle Van Noy (Brigham Young) of Reno, Nev.

"Half the guys drafted in last year's (NFL) draft were not four- and five-star recruits," Hawkins said. "Ultimately at the end of the day, you've got to get good players, but you also have to have guys who fit in the culture here."

Patience wearing thin

Much of the optimism surrounding this year's team is based on a healthy and much improved offensive line, which was devastated by injuries a year ago. And remember, the Buffs still came within a 57-yard Nebraska field goal with 1:43 left from going to a second bowl game in three years.

But at what point does the sense of urgency on the field replace it off the field? Ticket sales, Bohn said, are expected to be down slightly, primarily due to the economy, but the remaining faithful — CU averaged 49,376 last year — are getting itchy.

"I liken it to standing in the line of the DMV," Klatt said. "No matter how patient you think that you can be, human nature takes over, and at some point, you change your stance and fold your arms. That's the kind of point where people are getting with (the program) — the shifting in your seat when it's a boring movie."

Bohn said he can't foresee any scenario in which Hawkins would lose his job this year, but added, "As you know, this business can be pretty crazy."

Don't count on a change. Colorado has four of its winnable league games at home, and with a manageable nonconference slate could make Hawk feel good about his summer prediction to boosters.

"As an alum and former player, it needs to be right away," Pesavento said of a turnaround. "He's going into his fourth year. He has all his kids now. Now's the time. There's no room for excuses."

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cu briefs

Bufs' QBs will get a heads-up before opener

Posted: 08/30/2009 01:00:00 AM MDT

BOULDER — Although the public may not be informed of Colorado's starting quarterback before the kickoff of the Sept. 6 opener against Colorado State at Folsom Field, CU coach Dan Hawkins said Saturday evening after a closed scrimmage that the candidates, Cody Hawkins and Tyler Hansen, will be told beforehand. Apparently, days in advance.

"Soon," Dan Hawkins said after being asked when the decision might be made on the starter. "They'll know the plan, yeah, they'll know the plan. They won't be waking up on Sunday (game day) going, 'Well, who is it?' "

The media could not attend the scrimmage, and no statistics were released. But Cody Hawkins and Hansen felt they played well.

"The most important thing is that everybody on this team is trying to get better," Cody said. "I think me and Tyler are doing a great job of handling the situation."

"We both got reps, we both moved the ball," Hansen said. "It's about as even as it was last week."

Offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau said he would not be ready to name the starter at this point. "We're still evaluating, still looking through it," he said. "They're both doing a good job. Later in the week, I'd imagine, we'll know."

Tests negative.

Hansen missed practice Tuesday and Wednesday with a virus but was relieved that tests for the swine flu were negative. "That was bad timing," Hansen said, referring to his battle for starting quarterback. "At least I got all the (play) sheets and was watching film, so I was working on the mental side of it." Kiesau said Hansen's chances weren't diminished by the absences.

Stewart held out.

Sophomore tailback Rodney "Speedy" Stewart (hamstring) was held out of the scrimmage. "That was kind of the plan all along — to be smart and wait until next week," Dan Hawkins said.

Footnotes.

No injuries were reported. . . . Kiesau said the scrimmage was "very situational," allowing the offense to work on certain plays in relation to down and distance. New additions to the receiving corps, Andre Simmons and Anthony Wright, showed an ability to stretch the field, Kiesau said. . . . Hawkins said the battle between

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THE DENVER POST

freshmen Clark Evans and Seth Lobato for No. 3 quarterback also is still to be decided. They did not get reps during the scrimmage, Kiesau said, but gained experience in understanding the game plan and handling sideline duties.

Tom Kensler, The Denver Post

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Buffs QBs weather flu, competition

By Patrick Ridgell
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BOULDER — While cases of the H1N1 virus on the University of Colorado campus had climbed to about 50 by Friday, coach Dan Hawkins said Saturday he does not believe it's affecting his football team. That's even considering a bit of a scare from quarterback Tyler Hansen.

Following Saturday night's scrimmage, during which Hansen took lots of snaps, Hansen said he had to stay away from the team on Wednesday and Thursday due to what he called a "little case of the flu." He said he was tested for swine flu but it was negative.

Hansen and Cody Hawkins are battling for CU's starting quarterback spot, and Dan Hawkins said this week he probably won't publicly reveal the winner prior to next Sunday's season opener against Colorado State (FSN, 5 p.m.). Getting sick was not in the plans, but according to Hansen and Dan Hawkins, the timing isn't as bad as one might think.

"I was a little worried about it," Hansen said.

"It was a bad time, but it's OK," he added. "I still had all the sheets we got, still watching film, still doing the mental part of the game. I was bummed about it, but I feel like I'll be OK."

Hawkins said he's emphasizing proper hygiene to his players, including washing hands and avoiding "other people's stuff." As far as the timing of the virus on campus, Hawkins believes it struck his team last spring.

"Right after spring ball, we had guys who were deathly sick," Hawkins said.

"I think we had it then. I really do."

Assuming an illness doesn't engulf the team and makes the depth chart decisions, coaches much choose a starting quarterback. Offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau said he does not know whom it'll be. Dan Hawkins said the winner will be chosen "soon," and his son and Hansen won't go to bed Saturday night unsure what awaits them the following day.

Hansen and Cody Hawkins continue to spout the company line, saying they don't mind the uncertainty and enjoy the competition. Hawkins said he helped Hansen on Saturday morning, Hansen's first day back to work, with aspects of the Colorado State game plan that had been installed during Hansen's absence.

"There were some times last year where we weren't entirely sure what the situation was and we just ended up going with the flow," Hawkins said. "I think we're going to react well and do whatever the coaches ask of us. We're both really competitive guys and we've both done an awesome job of working."

Said Hansen: "Right now we're still competing. We both did real good (Saturday), both got reps and both moved the ball. Right now, it's about as even as it was last week."

Kiesau said Hansen will not be penalized for time missed.

"He didn't do anything wrong," Kiesau said. "He was just a little under the weather. We had to hold him out."

Kiesau's concerns go beyond the quarterbacks as he tries to improve an offense that finished last in the Big 12 in 2008 in points and yards. He said on the eve of August camp that he wanted to know by this point who the playmakers are, and the appropriate assignments and plans for them. Kiesau said he "definitely" knows who those playmakers are.

He said he has a "healthy offensive line" and "pretty good (running) backs" and "We're getting some guys to step up at wide receiver."

He admitted to feeling some nervousness earlier in camp when he thought all he'd have to work with is a strong running attack. Kiesau said he'll have more in 2009.

"I see us being very balanced and that actually fires me up going into the season," Kiesau said. "We're right where we need to be right now through camp and getting ready for our first game."

EXTRA POINTS: Reporters were not allowed to watch the scrimmage, and no statistics were provided. ... Dan Hawkins said no one got hurt during Saturday's scrimmage. ... Coaches also remain unclear whether Clark Evans or Seth Lobato will be the third-string quarterback, a position they want strong in case Cody Hawkins or Hansen get hurt. "That's still a work in progress," Kiesau said. "Both of those guys still need a lot of work." ... Kiesau said new receiver Andre Simmons had in the scrimmage "a couple of chances (on) deep vertical balls that'll help us as we get going into the season." Kiesau said Simmons and Anthony Wright, who moved from cornerback to receiver this week, are coming along fine. "We just have to be patient with them and understand their situation."

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Colorado State turns attention to facing CU

By Mike Brohard

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FORT COLLINS — After Saturday's practice, Colorado State head football coach Steve Fairchild declared that his team had gone over every possible scenario in a game, or at least all the ones on his checklist when camp started in early August.

Now the Rams' focus turns to something more specific: the season opener with Colorado a week from today at Folsom Field in Boulder (5 p.m.; FSN-26).

For many, it's about time.

"Yes. I think it gives us more of an edge now, because we don't have to pound each other anymore," running back John Mosure said. "Now it's time to pound our first opponent, which is exciting because it's national television. It gives an excitement to the group."

Saturday's mock game at Sonny Lubick Field at Hughes Stadium covered everything on the field and even some things off of it, such as coaches in the booth. Defensive coordinator Larry Kerr could tell this is Year Two of the Fairchild era, saying everything was much further along.

Now the players are ready to go from seeing everything to staring at black and gold.

"It's going to narrow our focus. I feel like we've gone over so many things, I think we're ready right now," senior safety Klint Kubiak said. "Obviously, there's going to be some more film to watch, some more situations at practice. This squad, our defense, is ready to play. We're just going to sharpen up."

Fairchild isn't quite ready to go there yet. After three weeks of camp, he's not sure this version of the Rams is up to speed with last year's team.

"I think we're talented. I like our talent level; I like the way we're practicing," he said. "We're just not sharp as we need to be to be a good football team right now."

Running backs had problems holding on to the ball, and only a few receivers took the process seriously from the head coach's perspective.

Still, Fairchild said some progress was made, and he does feel that with things narrowed down to a game plan, some of the polishing may take effect. Part of that will center on fewer people getting reps, as the coaching staff will focus on preparing those who will play in the game.

"There's still some time, and we'll be able to have a few of those Thursday-type of practices that you have during the season where you're getting situations looked at, the things you're going to call and getting them repped extra," Fairchild said.

It also means decisions are upcoming on a few true freshmen. Fairchild and Kerr agreed that defensive end C.J. James,

who showed up early for spring camp, will be in the rotation at defensive end. Also, punter Pete Kontodiakos is a lock. However, the status of safety Ezra Thompson and running backs Lou Greenwood and Chris Nwoke will spark more conversation.

The bottom line for the players: It's finally game week.

"It's something to play for other than coming out on a Saturday and having a mock game, which in reality is not that fun, but it's something you've got to do to get ready for the game," Kubiak said. "Now we play Sunday night on national TV in front of 50,000 fans. ... If that doesn't get your blood boiling, nothing will."